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মেসাঁ সরকার



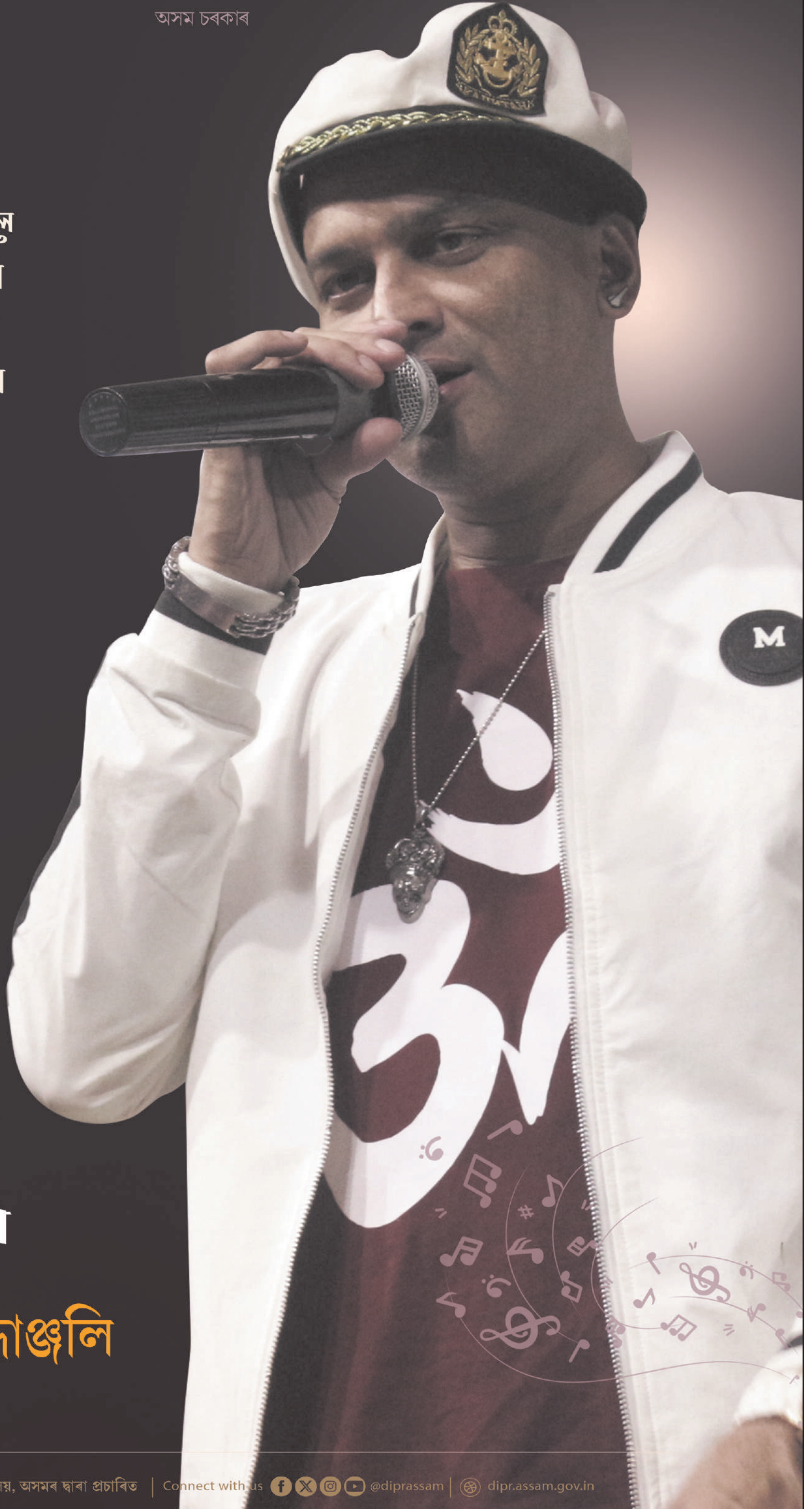
অসম চৰকাৰ

‘...প্ৰতি শৰতৰ প্ৰভাতী ফুলে  
ক’ব তোমাকোহে মোৰ কথা  
প্ৰতি মেঘালী নিশা জোনে  
ক’ব তোমাকোহে মোৰ বেথা  
ধুমুহাৰ সতে মোৰ  
বহুগুৰে নাচোন  
এন্ধাৰো সঁচা মোৰ  
বহুদিনৰে আপোন  
নিজানৰ গান মোৰ  
শেষ হ’ব  
ভাৱোঁ তোমাৰ বুকুত...’



জনতাৰ প্ৰাণৰ শিল্পী  
**জুবিন গাৰ্গৰ**  
মহাপ্ৰয়াণত

## অসম চৰকাৰৰ শ্ৰদ্ধাঞ্জলি



# GST cut to save up to ₹ 1.5 lakh cr for investors in renewable energy, says Pralhad Joshi

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** GST reduction on renewable energy will save up to ₹ 1.5 lakh crore for investors till 2030, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Monday. The comments from the Union New & Renewable Energy Minister assume significance as Monday is the first day of implementation of the Goods and Services Tax reduction. In a bonanza to consumers, the GST Council, comprising the Centre and states, decided to reduce tax rates on goods and services, from September 22 -- the first day of Navratri.

The GST cut will give a significant boost to India's ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the CII 6th International Energy Conference, Joshi said, "I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for cutting GST on renewable equipment from 18 per cent to 5 per cent, especially on the occasion of the Navratri festival."

He further said this will save Rs one lakh crore to ₹ 1.5 lakh crore for investors till 2030.

According to the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, given that India plans to add around 300 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, even a modest 2-3 per cent cost reduction can free up ₹ 1-1.5 lakh crore in investment capacity. Rooftop Solar under PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana will become cheaper by ₹ 9,000-10,500 per 3 kW System. Farmers under PM-KUSUM are expected to save ₹ 1,750 crore on 10 lakh solar pumps with the GST cut, the ministry estimates show.

Earlier, addressing the conference, Joshi said at the COP26 in 2021, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi first laid down the roadmap for the country's clean energy journey, he set a target that many thought was impossible: 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030. "Today, I am proud to say that we have already achieved over 50 per cent of our installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, and we have done it five years ahead of the timeline. We have also crossed 50



Minister of Parliament Pralhad Joshi, & Mines, Govt. of India

per cent of the 500 GW target (252 GW)," he said.

He informed that nearly 20 lakh homes have benefited from solar power under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. He further said in a recent clean energy auction, Madhya Pradesh secured India's lowest-ever price for solar power with battery storage at just ₹ 2.70 per unit. He said the transmission system has been planned for about 537 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

"Energy transition, energy storage and PPA are very serious issues, and we are consistently holding talks with states. We have already completed one round of talks with states, and very soon we will be holding the second round of talks," the Minister said.

Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav, who joined the event virtually, said solar, wind, pump hydro are various areas where the state is working through various policies in the space of renewable energy to meet India's net zero targets.

As per a statement issued by CII, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) will soon be holding the second round of talks with states on energy storage, energy transition and power purchase agreements (PPAs). Muaviyath Mohamed, Minister of State, Environment and Tourism, Government of Maldives, said his country is enhancing climate resilience by focusing on renewable energy particularly solar power and had fruitful talks with the Indian Solar Alliance (ISA). The Maldives looks forward to (working with) Indian companies to achieve its target of 33 per cent of electricity generation through renewable energy by 2028, he added.

Meanwhile, Praveer Sinha, Chairman, CII National Committee on Power and MD, Tata Power, said a huge amount of capacity will be added between now and 2030, and in order to do that collaboration and cooperation between the Centre and States is needed.

According to Girish Tanti, CII National Committee on Renewable Energy and CII RE Manufacturing Council & Vice Chairman, Suzlon. (PTI)

## Second autopsy of

be carried out with dignity and respect. "The last rites of Zubeen Garg will be conducted in a very dignified manner. No disruption by anti-social elements will be tolerated, and strong action will be taken against anyone attempting to create disorder," the chief minister asserted. He revealed that some individuals had already tried to create disturbances when Garg's mortal remains were brought from the airport to the Sarusajai sports complex via the singer's Kahilipara residence on Sunday.

"The police have identified the people responsible, and they will face punishment in the coming days," he said. To ensure a smooth farewell, Sarma announced that the funeral procession would be simple, with only the ambulance carrying Garg's body and a small bus with his wife, close relatives, and friends allowed to accompany it.

"Just as we brought him from the airport, the journey to the cremation ground will be conducted smoothly. At the cremation site, the mortal remains will be escorted by Assam Police pallbearers, and a guard of honour along with a gun salute will be accorded before the final rites are performed as per the family's wishes," he added. Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, senior representatives of neighbouring states, and other dignitaries are expected to attend the funeral. The state government has already declared state mourning till Tuesday in honour of the departed icon.

All schools and colleges across Assam will remain closed on Tuesday, while government offices in Kamrup district will also observe closure as a mark of respect.

Traffic restrictions will be in place to facilitate the funeral, with no vehicles allowed to enter from the Jagiroad side, except those heading towards Meghalaya. From the Jorabat side, traffic will be curtailed for four to five hours to enable an orderly ceremony. By opting for a second autopsy and making elaborate arrangements for a dignified farewell, the state government has sought to balance the deep emotional sentiments of Zubeen Garg's admirers with the solemnity befitting the final journey of one of Assam's most cherished cultural icons.

## BTC elections conclude

absolute majority, declaring, "Today is the day that decides BTC's future. With the support of people from all sections, the BPF will win more seats than before."

On the other hand, UPPL founder-president and Cabinet Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma cast his vote in his native Batabari under Dotma constituency, asserting that his party would form the next government. "Out of 12 constituencies in Kokrajhar, UPPL will win eight seats—four in Kokrajhar and four in Gossaigaon," Brahma said, adding that BPF and BJP's popularity had declined sharply.

From Tamulpur, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of BTR and UPPL president Pramod Boro exercised his franchise at Souraguri LP School. Contesting from Goibari, Boro also asserted that the polls had been conducted smoothly across the region. "The 5th BTC Elections 2025 has been successfully and peacefully completed. I extend heartfelt gratitude to all citizens of BTR for participating in this democratic process with such enthusiasm," he said, exuding confidence that UPPL would return to power for a second consecutive term.

Other prominent candidates also expressed optimism about their chances. BPF candidate Doneswar Goyari (Baukhungri) predicted a comfortable win for the fifth time. Salakati MLA Lawrence Islary claimed the people's demand for change ensured his victory, while fellow BPF candidate Derhasat Basumatary (Salakati) emphasised development as the key plank. In Dotma, BJP candidate Manoranjan Brahma also cast his vote, claiming rising support for the saffron party. Despite rival parties making bold claims of victory—BPF promising a comeback, UPPL asserting an absolute majority, BJP eyeing breakthroughs, and Congress hopeful of reviving its fortunes—the ultimate verdict now rests in the sealed ballot boxes.

With record participation in several constituencies and a largely peaceful atmosphere, the stage is set for September 26, when the counting of votes will finally reveal the people's choice in the BTR.

## Fans queue up in

Tuesday. The singer's body reached the city on Sunday morning from Singapore, where he died on Friday while swimming in the sea. It was first taken to his Kahilipara residence, with thousands lining the 25-km stretch from the airport. Crowds had started gathering at the Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex in Sarusajai since Saturday evening, and swelled to lakhs by Sunday as they braved scorching heat and heavy showers to mourn their beloved star. Garg's wife, Garima, thanked them for their "overwhelming love and blessings". (PTI)

## Himanta appeals to

to consumers... Under the guidance of Adamiya @narendramodi Ji let us collectively work towards ensuring the benefits of these landmark decisions reach their intended beneficiaries - India's poor and middle class," he said. (PTI)

## PM unveils ₹ 5,100cr

"double-engine" government. "Arunachal is moving forward. The new power projects announced today will make the state a major power producer, create thousands of jobs, and provide affordable electricity," he said. The PM laid the foundation stones for two major hydropower projects over the Yartjep river in the Shi Yomi district, and a convention centre in Tawang, among others.

The Tato-I project, with a capacity of 186 mw, will be developed jointly by the Arunachal Pradesh government and the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) at ₹ 1,750 crore. It is expected to generate around 802 million units of electricity annually. The 240-mw Heo project will also be developed by the state government and NEEPCO at ₹ 1,939 crore. It is expected to produce 1,000 million units of electricity each year.

The PM said the Northeast is no longer distant for the government in Delhi, and central ministers have visited the region over 800 times in the last decade, often staying overnight in remote areas. "As the prime minister, I have come to the Northeast more than 70 times. Just last week, I was in Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. The Northeast is no longer distant, neither by road nor by heart. Delhi is no longer far from you. We have brought Delhi to your doorstep," he said. He said the state, which witnesses the country's first sunrise, is now also receiving the "first rays of development" after decades of neglect.

Modi alleged the border villages were neglected by successive Congress governments, leading to the migration of people from these areas. "Through the Vibrant Village Programme, over 450 border villages in Arunachal now have roads, electricity, internet and tourism facilities. They are turning into new centres of tourism," he said. Attacking the Congress, he claimed that when the party was in power at the Centre, it kept on increasing taxes even as the common people were facing the brunt of rising costs and corruption. "Congress imposed a heavy tax burden on the people, but our government has gradually reduced taxes, giving relief," he said. Modi said that despite facing major challenges over the years, his government consistently reduced income tax rates. "GST has now been simplified to just two slabs. Many items have become tax-free. Building a home, purchasing a scooter or bike, dining out, and travelling have all become more affordable. GST Savings Festival is a milestone," he said. Ahead of the programme, the PM interacted with local entrepreneurs and members of self-help groups at an exhibition organised at the venue.

He asked them if the GST reforms were helping them, and enquired in detail about the locally made items exhibited, underlining the importance of promoting indigenous products. Speaking at the programme, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said the region has emerged as a key growth engine of the country under the leadership of Modi. (PTI)

## Blockade over Zubeen

protests. Citizens pointed out that Zubeen Garg had always stood by ordinary people and would never have endorsed actions that inflicted suffering on them.

One incident that drew particular outrage came from a young widow of Jorhat, who had lost her husband 11 days ago. Taking to social media, she expressed anguish that her relatives, who were coming to attend the shradha ceremony, had been blocked by protesters and prevented from reaching her residence. Her post highlighted the insensitivity of the agitation towards the plight of fellow citizens. Repeated efforts by the Jorhat district administration to end the blockade have failed so far. District Commissioner Jay Shivani personally visited the site late on Sunday night and appealed to the protesters to withdraw in the interest of the public.

However, the agitation continued unabated till Monday, compounding the hardships faced by commuters and residents alike. Daily wage earners, rickshaw pullers and cart pullers have also been badly hit, as work has come to a standstill, leaving them without income.

Local markets are witnessing shortages of vegetables and essential groceries. Vendors attempting to resume business at Neuville Road on Monday were chased away by protesters, further intensifying the crisis for households in the town. As Jorhat grapples with disruptions caused by the continuing blockade, many citizens have called for restraint and appealed to the mourners to honour Zubeen Garg's memory in a dignified manner, without resorting to violence or actions that deepen the suffering of the very people he inspired through his music and life.

## Zubeen's voice to be

said Garg's songs have already been archived, with the singer himself inaugurating one such archive days before his death. "Digital preservation of Zubeen's work is already underway through his YouTube channel and other internet platforms. We also want to put a 'digital signature' to his voice so that no one can pass it off as their own in today's world of AI-generated audios and videos," he said.

"It will also ensure that no one can tamper with Zubeen's voice," he added. Robin said the death of Garg has led people to "rediscover" his songs and creations, not just in the state but globally. "This outpouring of spontaneous grief, this gathering of lakhs of people to pay their respects has made the world sit up and take note of what Zubeen Garg meant for Assam and why," he said. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty plummet as H-1B visa fee shock hits IT stocks

**MUMBAI, Sept 22:** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended sharply lower on Monday, dragged by IT stocks amid concerns over the US President Donald Trump's decision to raise H-1B visa fees to USD 1,00,000 per worker.

Also, selling in blue-chip Reliance Industries took the markets down. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 466.26 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 82,159.97. During the day, it tanked 628.94 points or 0.76 per cent to 81,997.29.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 124.70 points or 0.49 per cent to 25,202.35.

From the Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Service, Infosys, HCL Tech, Tata Motors, Trent, Reliance Industries and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

However, Eternal, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports and UltraTech Cement were among

the gainers. President Trump on Friday signed a proclamation raising the fee on the visas used by companies to hire workers, including from India, to live and work in the US.

The H-1B visa fee of USD 1,00,000 would be applicable only to new applicants, a White House official clarified on Saturday.

"The domestic market traded on a lower note amid a sharp increase in H-1B visa costs, which weighed on the IT index, while mid and smallcap stocks saw profit-taking following recent gains. GST rationalisation, a normal monsoon, lower interest rates, and tax incentives are expected to support consumption, narrowing the gap between valuations and growth prospects.

"Foreign investors are gradually turning buyers, driven by expectations of earnings upgrades in H2FY25, with consumption-focused sectors likely to attract attention

and support the market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.78 per cent and smallcap index went lower by 0.71 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT tanked 2.98 per cent, IT (2.73 per cent), teck (2.09 per cent), capital goods (0.77 per cent), industrials (0.75 per cent) and auto (0.41 per cent).

Utilities jumped 2.56 per cent, power (1.66 per cent), metal (0.39 per cent), oil & gas (0.36 per cent) and services (0.08 per cent).

As many as 2,511 stocks declined while 1,775 advanced and 169 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Early weakness, driven by selling in IT stocks amid concerns over the H-1B visa fee hike, was partly offset by a rebound from the day's low. Sentiment also found some support from the GST rate cuts that came into effect today, which helped limit losses during the first half. (PTI)

## Another 25 bps rate cut best possible option for RBI: SBI study

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** A SBI study released on Monday stated that there is merit and rationale for the Reserve Bank to reduce the key benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points in the forthcoming monetary policy, as retail inflation is expected to remain benign even in the next financial year.

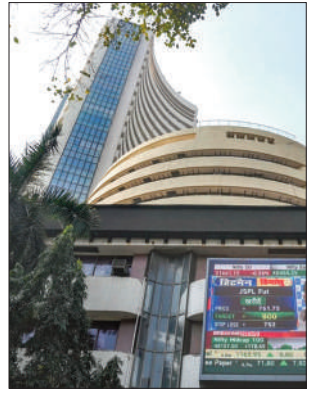
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has already reduced the repo rate by 100 basis points since February, amidst declining consumer price index (CPI) based inflation. After reducing the repo rate three times in a row, the RBI hit a pause button in August.

The Reserve Bank Governor-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which decides on the interest rate, is scheduled to meet on September 29 for a three-day deliberation. The decision will be announced on October 1.

"There is merit and rationale in going for a September rate cut... This will but require calibrated communication by the RBI as post June, the bar for rate cut is indeed higher," said "Prelude to MPC Meeting", the research report from the State Bank of India's Economic Research Department. It further said central bank communication is a crucial

toolkit for monetary policy, and post-June policy, such communication has played a major role in yields hardening. "But there is no point in committing a Type 2 error again (no rate cut with neutral stance) by not cutting rates in September as inflation will continue to remain benign even in FY27, and without a GST cut, it is tracking below 2 per cent in September and October," it said.

The report said the CPI for fiscal 2026-27 numbers are now tracking around 4 per cent or less, with GST rationalisation, October CPI could be closer to 1.1 per cent, the lowest since 2004. "A rate cut in September is the best possible option for RBI, which also projects it as a forward-looking central bank," the SBI study said. The report, authored by Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor of SBI, expects the CPI inflation may further decline by 65-75 bps due to the huge GST rationalisation. Experience of 2019 also indicates that the rates rationalisation (primarily focused on reducing rates for common goods to 18 per cent from 28 per cent) led to almost 35 bps decline in overall inflation in just a couple of months, it said. (PTI)



### NAME CORRECTION

My correct name is Kiron Lama, DoB 20/07/1996 and my father's name is Dawa Lama. In my Aadhaar Card (7818 1606 0788) my name was incorrectly recorded as Kiron Halai and that of my father's as Dawa Halai. Therefore for all intent and purposes my correct name is Kiron Lama and that the correct name of my father's is Dawa Lama.

Shri Kiron Lama, S/o- Dawa Lama, Vill- Old Kathan, PO and PS- Wakro, Dist.- Lohit, Arunachal Pradesh

### AFFIDAVIT

I Nirmala Kumari Bhagat, W/O Mohit Varma, vill, Amtola, P.O.+ PS Hojai, Dist Hojai. my all documents Nirmala Kumari Bhagat, but One my document mistakenly print my name Nirmala Devi, Nirmala Kumari Bhagat is my original name not Nirmala Devi, I am affidavit on 16 day June at Hojai, S/Nagar Court premises.

### S&T ASSOCIATED WORK AT MALIGAON

**E-Tender Notice No.: 09 of 2025-26.** E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No. N-2025-26-09-Dy. CSTE-NW.** Name of work: S&T associated work in connection with the work "Renovation of Indoor stadium at NFRSA including civil engineering works in connection with centralized AC and development of Toilets & circulating area". **Tender Value: ₹38,24,361/-.** Earnest Money: ₹76,500/- . **Date & Time of closing of tender: 15:00 hrs. of 10-10-2025 & opening at 15:30 hrs. of 10-10-2025.** The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Senior Signal & Telecom Engineer/Network, Maligaon

### RENOVATION WORKS

**Tender Notice No. : 40 of 2025, dttd: 18-09-2025.** E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Tender No.: DCESTMLG-41-2025; Name of work :** (A) At CH/Maligaon: Renovation of OPD, Doctor's chamber, physiotherapy unit and toilet block including construction of OH water tank of capacity 2.25 lakh liters. (B) At Central Hospital, Maligaon-Renovation of Mortuary and development of Mortuary area extension of casualty building and Electrical works for extension of casualty building. (Composite Tender). **Tender Value:** ₹ 4,93,16,012.69/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹ 3,96,600/- . **Date & time of closing of above tenders at 13:00 hrs. on 10-10-2025 and opening at 13:00 hrs. on 10-10-2025** after closing. For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Dy. CE/Estate, Maligaon

**অসম চৰকাৰ**  
**জনজাতি পৰিক্ৰমা সঞ্চালকালয় (ভৈয়াম), অসম**  
**কাম্বী নগৰ :: গুৱাহাটী-০৬**  
**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**DIRECTORATE OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (PLAIN), ASSAM**

EC: 338913/1352

**NOTICE**

**It is for information of all concerned that applications for financial assistance under the scheme "Financial Assistance to Scheduled Tribes (Plain) students of Assam qualified for appearing in mains examination of Union Public Service Commission/Assam Public Service Commission for the year 2025-26" belonging to Scheduled Tribes (Plain) of Assam are invited for the academic year 2025-26 through DIDS portal at <https://dids.assam.gov.in>. Applications will be entertained through online portal only for students who fulfil the following criteria;**

**Eligibility:**

1. He / She must belong to Scheduled Tribes (Plain) community of Assam.
- 2(a). He / She must have passed the UPSC preliminary exam held on 25-05-2025. OR
- (b). He / She must have passed the APSC preliminary exam held on 08-06-2025.
3. Applicants who have availed the benefit in previous years will not be eligible. There shall be no income limit for availing this benefit.

Website	<a href="https://dids.assam.gov.in">https://dids.assam.gov.in</a>
Opening Date	25 <sup>th</sup> September (Thursday), 2025
Closing Date	31 <sup>st</sup> October (Friday), 2025
Documents to be uploaded	Caste Certificate HSLC Admit Card UPSC/APSC Prelims Admit Card Aadhaar Card Proof of qualification for Mains Examination (Recent Result sheet/Mains Admit Card) Photo Signature

Sd/-  
Director,  
Tribal Affairs (P), Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/180/23-Sep-25

**অসম চৰকাৰ**  
**জনজাতি পৰিক্ৰমা সঞ্চালকালয় (ভৈয়াম), অসম**  
**কাম্বী নগৰ :: গুৱাহাটী-০৬**  
**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**DIRECTORATE OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (PLAIN), ASSAM, RUKMINI NAGAR ::**  
**GUWAHATI-06**  
**Email. [directorates-tap@assam.gov.in](mailto:directorates-tap@assam.gov.in)**

ECf No. 463816/

**NOTICE**

**It is for information to all concerned that applications for financial assistance under the scheme "Special Incentive to ST (P) meritorious students" of Assam belonging to Scheduled Tribes (Plain) are invited for the academic year 2025-26 through DIDS portal at "<https://dids.assam.gov.in>". Applications will be entertained through online portal only for students who fulfil the following criteria;**

- i) He / She must belong to ST (Plain) community of Assam.
- ii) Students must have secured 80% or above in HSLC, 75% or above in 10+2 examination (HS), 70% or above in Graduation and 65% or above in Post Graduation during 2025-26.

**Mode of Apply:**

Website	" <a href="https://dids.assam.gov.in">https://dids.assam.gov.in</a> "
Opening date	25 <sup>th</sup> September (Thursday), 2025
Closing date	31 <sup>st</sup> October (Friday), 2025
Documents to be uploaded	1. Aadhaar Card 2. Digital Caste certificate 3. Marksheet of recently declared Examination (duly countersigned by HoD) 4. HSLC Admit card 5. Photo 6. signature

Sd/-  
Tribal Affairs(Plain), Assam, Ghy-06

DIPR /D/HLT/179/23-Sep-25

## GST reforms will boost savings, directly benefit every section of society: PM

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the next generation GST reforms will boost savings and directly benefit every section of society, as he asserted that it is imperative to walk on the path of self-reliance to achieve the collective goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

In an open letter to Indians which he posted on X, Modi said that from September 22, next generation GST reforms have begun to make their presence felt, marking the start of a 'GST Bachat Utsav' or 'GST Savings Festival' across the country.

"This year, the festive season brings an added reason to rejoice. These reforms will boost savings and directly benefit every section of society, be it farmers, women, youth, poor, middle class, traders or MSMEs. They will encourage greater growth and investments and accelerate the progress of every state and region," the prime minister said.

An important feature of the next generation GST reforms is that there will mainly be two slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, he said.

"Daily essentials such as food, medicines, soap,

toothpaste, insurance and many more items will now either be tax-free or fall in the lowest 5% tax slab. Goods that were earlier taxed at 12% have almost entirely shifted to 5%. It is greatly heartening to see various shopkeepers and traders putting up then and now boards which indicate taxes pre-reforms and post-reforms," Modi said in his letter to the people. In the last few years, 25 crore people have risen above poverty and formed an aspirational neo-middle class, he said.

"Further, we have also strengthened the hands of

our middle class with the massive income tax cuts, which ensure zero tax up to the annual income of ₹ 12 lakh. If we combine the income tax cuts and the Next Generation GST reforms, they add up to savings of nearly ₹ 2.5 lakh crore for the people," he said.

"Your household expenses will reduce and it will be easier to fulfil aspirations such as building a home, purchasing a vehicle, purchasing appliances, eating out or planning a family vacation," the prime minister said.

Noting that the nation's GST journey, which began in 2017, was a turning point in freeing citizens and businesses from the web of multiple taxes, Modi said the GST united the nation economically.

"One Nation, One Tax' brought uniformity and relief. The GST Council, with the active participation of both Centre and states, took many pro-people decisions. Now, these new reforms take us further, simplifying the system, reducing rates and putting more savings in the hands of the people," he said. (PTI)

## Second autopsy of Zubeen before last rites

Police have identified the hooligans of Guwahati, says Himanta

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** The mortal remains of Assam's beloved music icon Zubeen Garg will undergo a second round of post mortem examination on Tuesday morning before his last rites are performed in Guwahati, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Monday.

The decision was taken following an outpouring of demand from thousands of fans and admirers who questioned the circumstances surrounding the sudden demise of the singer in Singapore last week.

Garg had tragically passed away while swimming in the sea during a visit to the island nation.

Speaking to reporters, chief minister Sarma said that while the Singapore authorities had already conducted an autopsy, the state government decided to allow a second round of examination to address public sentiment and ensure



Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma speaking at a podium during a press conference.

transparency. "The autopsy of Zubeen Garg was performed in Singapore, and I have full faith that it was done in an impartial manner as the authorities there have no bias either for Zubeen Garg or for Himanta Biswa Sarma. However, as the public at large want a second round of post mortem here, we have decided to carry it out tomorrow morning at the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital," the chief minister stated. He added that due permission had been sought and obtained from the late singer's wife, Garima Garg. "I asked Union Minister Pabitra

Margherita to consult Garima Garg. She conveyed that the state government has the right to decide on the second autopsy, and accordingly, we are proceeding with it. A team of doctors from AIIMS will also be involved in the procedure," Sarma said.

According to the chief minister, the examination will commence at 7:30 am and is expected to take about one and a half hours.

Following the autopsy, the mortal remains will be taken to the Sarusajai sports complex, from where the final journey to the cremation site will begin.

He also noted that due to the examination, the previously announced funeral schedule has been modified.

While emphasising the need for scientific clarity through the autopsy, Sarma also assured that the funeral procession of the music maestro would (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BTC elections conclude peacefully

Kokrajhar records 77.97% turnout  
 • Fate of over 100 candidates sealed



HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Sept 22:** The fifth general elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) concluded on Monday with heavy voter turnout across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), where citizens defied heat and long queues to cast their ballots in large numbers.

In Kokrajhar district alone, polling across 12 council constituencies recorded 77.97% turnout by 4:30 pm, while the overall voter turnout across the BTR was pegged at 72.61% according to official sources.

The high turnout has sealed the fate of more than 100 candidates in Kokrajhar, including several political heavyweights, while across the 40 constituencies of the BTR, over 26 lakh voters exercised their franchise.

Counting of votes will be held on September 26,

when the verdict on who will form the next council government will be known.

Polling commenced at 7:30 am and officially closed at 4:00 pm.

Despite the heat and scattered incidents of tension, the process remained largely peaceful in Kokrajhar and elsewhere in the BTR.

In Gossaigaon subdivision, a clash between supporters of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) briefly disrupted proceedings, but security personnel quickly brought the situation under control.

Elsewhere, the day was marked by festive crowds, with tea stalls and betel nut counters set up near polling stations as people turned up in large numbers to vote freely in what was the first BTC election since the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord.

In Kokrajhar district, constituency-wise turnout reflected strong enthusiasm: Srirampur recorded the highest with 85.65%, followed by Kachugaon at 81.53% and Parbatjhora at 80.39%.

Other constituencies like Sarabil (78.72%), Jamduar (78.60%) and Guma (78.94%) also saw robust participation, while Debagaoon posted the lowest turnout at 72.44%.

Political leaders across the spectrum cast their votes early in the day. Former BTC chief and BPF president Hagrama Mohilary voted with his wife Siuli Mohilary at Debagaoon High School.

Contesting from Debagaoon, Mohilary claimed that the BPF would secure an (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Himanta appeals to businesses to comply with GST rules

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday appealed to business houses, shops and traders in the state to comply with the rules and ensure that 100 per cent benefit of price cuts, because of the rationalised GST rates, are passed on to consumers.

The reduced rates along with increased income tax exemption limits will lead to over 2.5 lakh crore in savings for the people, he said.

"These efforts, coupled with historically low inflation in Assam will lead to the perfect trinity - fast paced growth, higher consumption and robust savings," the CM said in a post on X.

This Navratri, people will benefit from increased savings as the rationalised GST rates have kicked in today, he said, adding that it is a watershed moment for the country.

"What does this mean for you? Retail prices for most items - especially food and medicines - will be far cheaper from today," Sarma said.

"An appeal. Businesses, shops and traders in Assam must comply with relevant rules and ensure 100% benefit of price cuts are passed on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## PM unveils ₹ 5,100cr projects in Arunachal Pradesh



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at a podium during a press conference.

**ITANAGAR, Sept 22:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday alleged that the Congress has an "inherent habit" of abandoning any development work that is difficult, and this caused significant harm to the Northeast.

He made the statement after unveiling development works worth over ₹ 5,100 crore in Arunachal Pradesh, among which were two mega hydropower projects.

Addressing the function, Modi hailed the GST reforms, stating that people received a "double bonanza" this festive season with the lower rates coming into effect on the first day of Navratri.

Criticising the Congress, he claimed that it overlooked Arunachal Pradesh in terms of development, as the state has only two Lok Sabha seats.

The PM said he knew that the Northeast couldn't be developed from Delhi, and so, he sent ministers and officers more frequently to the region, and himself came here more than 70 times.

"One inherent habit of the Congress is that they never take up development work which is difficult to do; they abandon it. This habit of Congress caused significant harm to Arunachal Pradesh and the entire Northeast. In the hilly and forested areas, where development work was challenging, Congress would declare the regions backward and simply forget them," he claimed.

Modi said areas once considered impossible for building roads now have modern highways.

"The Sela tunnel, which was once unthinkable, is now a proud identity of Arunachal. The Hollongi airport has a new terminal and has flights connecting directly to Delhi," he said.

The PM said all these connectivity projects eased travelling and helped farmers send their produce to big markets.

"When I was given the opportunity to serve the nation in 2014, I resolved to free the country from the mindset of Congress. Our guiding principle is not the number of votes or seats in any state, but 'nation first'," he said.

"Modi worships those whom no one has ever asked about. That is why Arunachal Pradesh, which was neglected during Congress rule, has since 2014 become a centre of developmental priority," he added.

Referring to the BJP dispensations in the state and at the Centre, the PM said the projects he unveiled were an example of "double benefits" of the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Blockade over Zubeen Garg's last rites creates chaos

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Sept 22:** Life in Jorhat has remained paralysed for the fourth consecutive day as protests over the demise of singer Zubeen Garg took a disturbing turn, with rowdiness and hooliganism coming to the fore.

Youths claiming to be fans of the late music icon have continued their blockade of National Highway 715 at the Ajanta bypass since Sunday night, causing severe disruption of traffic across Upper Assam and immense hardship to the public.

The blockade, staged in support of the demand that the mortal remains of Zubeen

Garg be brought to Jorhat for a few hours before cremation in Guwahati, has crippled vehicular movement.

Ambulances and passenger buses were stopped, with several women travellers heading towards Upper Assam districts and Guwahati left stranded for hours without basic facilities.

Protesters forcefully obstructed vehicles, placing barricades on the highway and reportedly misbehaving with commuters.

Adding to the unrest, a section of hooligans who were blocking the NH 715 issued a threat to Jorhat Press Club, stating

that if the TV channels and newsmen did not cover their blockade, they would break the Jorhat Press Club.

A video in this regard has gone viral in social media.

Following a complaint by the Jorhat Press Club, police have deployed forces in large numbers at the Press Club to prevent further disturbances.

Despite a large section of the population expressing grief over the loss of the celebrated singer and demanding that his last rites be performed in Jorhat, people from all walks of life have strongly disapproved of the disruptive (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Varsity suspends student for making 'offensive' remarks against Zubeen

**JORHAT, Sept 22:** A private university in Assam's Jorhat district on Monday said it has suspended a student for allegedly making offensive remarks against popular singer Zubeen Garg who died in Singapore on September 19. Kaziranga University, in a statement, said the suspension covers all academic and hostel privileges and will remain in effect until further notice, pending investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

The student, hailing from Nagaland, was returning from Jorhat town to the varsity campus on Saturday when a spontaneous bandh-like situation had prevailed in the state following the death of Garg.

Unable to find transportation back to the hostel, he expressed his frustration before other students and reportedly made some offensive remarks against the singer, which went viral on social media.

The situation had escalated when a group of individuals, including outsiders, entered the university premises and attempted to create a ruckus at the boys' hostel.

Police were called in to ensure no law and order situation arose.

The university, in the statement, said it has a zero-tolerance policy towards any activity or remark that hurts the sentiments of communities or individuals.

"The administration strongly urged students to avoid making inappropriate comments on social media or engaging in disruptive actions that could disturb the peace and dignity of the academic environment," it added. Garg (52) had died while swimming in the sea in Singapore on September 19. His last rites will be performed on the outskirts of Guwahati on Tuesday with full state honours. (PTI)

## Govt employees to get Sept salary in advance for Puja festival

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** The Assam government will release the September salary of its employees in advance in view of the Durga Puja festivities, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

The disbursement process will start from Tuesday, instead of the scheduled date of October 1, he said.

"In view of the forthcoming Durga Puja, the State Government has decided to release the salary for September 2025 in advance," Sarma said in a post on X.

"The Treasury will start receiving salary bills from tomorrow," he added. (PTI)

## Digital preservation of Zubeen's work already underway

## Zubeen's voice to be digitally preserved to prevent tampering, unauthorised use

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** As Assam mourns the death of its 'heartthrob' Zubeen Garg, people close to the singer have begun work to digitally preserve his voice to prevent unauthorised use or tampering in the future.

Singer-composer Manas Robin, a long-time associate of Garg, said such digital preservation will ensure that his voice is not distorted or misused through AI-enabled or other technologies.

"With technology making massive strides, especially with AI-generated software, it is very much possible that Zubeen's voice samples taken from the internet could be



Zubeen Garg performing on stage with a guitar.

used by other singers/performers as their own in the future," Robin told PTI at Sarusajai stadium as he joined lakhs in paying homage to Garg on Monday. "We will work on preserv-

ing Zubeen's voice digitally and creating such a 'digital signature' that the moment his vocals are played, its origin can be detected," he said.

Garg (52) had died while swimming in the sea in Singapore on Friday. His mortal remains had reached Guwahati on Sunday. His last rites will be performed with state honours on the outskirts of the city on Tuesday.

Explaining the concept behind it, he said, "If a person's face is super-imposed on the body of another person digitally, it can be detected. Similarly, systems are being developed where the origin of a voice can be traced to its digitally preserved version of the original person or singer."

Robin, who is also a director and known for his folk songs, especially Bihu numbers, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** Thousands of people continued to pour into Sarusajai stadium in Guwahati for the second day on Monday to pay their last respects to Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg.

Prominent personalities, including Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, singer Papon and a representative of the king of Bhutan, also paid their respects at the stadium.

Many mourners queued through the night, waiting for hours to catch a final glimpse of the singer, whose mortal remains were kept in a glass casket draped with a traditional Assamese 'gamosa'.

Many travelled from different

parts of the state to pay their homage, awaiting their turn since Sunday to see their idol one last time.

"I reached Guwahati yesterday and came to Sarusajai. But as the crowd was massive, I could not enter the stadium. I queued up for several hours today and managed to pay my respects," Arindam Buragohain, an engineer from Sivasagar, said, wiping away tears as he came out after paying floral tribute to Garg.

A couple from Nalbari, who also could not enter the stadium on Sunday, returned again this morning and stood in the line under a blazing sun for several hours.

"We have lost a legend, someone who stood for what was right. With Zubeen's death, we have lost the fearless voice that called out whenever he saw anything wrong. We could not have missed the chance to pay our last respects," Makibul Husain, accompanied by his wife, said.

A father-son duo travelled from Mangaldai, carrying with them a 'gamosa' with the writing 'Zubeen da long live' as they paid tributes to the singer-composer.

From mothers with infants in their arms to elderly people, all waited patiently for their turn to spend a few seconds

with their favourite singer.

Many offered flowers and gamosas, while some recorded their farewell moments on mobile phones. Many of the mourners broke down while bowing before the body of their 'Zubeen da'. The fans also sang his popular songs outside the venue, refusing to leave even after offering tributes. Several people fell ill due to the heat and were treated by medical teams on the spot.

The body would remain at the stadium for public homage through Monday, before the funeral at Kamarkuchi on the outskirts of Guwahati on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts. -Eleanor Roosevelt*

## SC on POSH Act, 2023

The Supreme Court on September 15 refused to extend the scope of The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 ('POSH Act, 2013') to political parties. The decision, in my understanding, retreats from certain core tenets of how we must imagine justice. The bench led by Chief Justice of India B R Gavai stated that political parties are not employers, but 'voluntary associations', and their inclusion in POSH would open a 'Pandora's box', inviting blackmail. The Court has passed the baton to the Parliament. However, the aftermath is clear, women remain unprotected in an arena in which they have assertively instrumentalised the best possible means of exercising and living democracy. This view in *Yogamaya M.G. v. State of Kerala & Ors.* (2025) represents a departure from the historic verdict in *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997) where the Court did not let the legislative silence undermine their ability to pass guidelines by recognising a woman's right to a workplace that was safe and adherent of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution.

Transposing the Vishakha and Yogamaya verdicts, the former of which sowed the seeds for the creation of the POSH Act, makes it clear that the latter refrains from any bold, purposive approach, preferring caution where urgency should have been exercised. Political parties are entities which are not abstract in nature. They are organisations run in systematic hierarchies, powered by cadres and categories and sustained through tangible labour, often invisible and mostly by unpaid women who organise, mobilise and campaign religiously. To rule that these spaces are not workplaces is the denial of the obvious. Work is not always salaried. It is a structured activity carried out under authority, with some expectations. The specific exclusion of political parties gives enough vacuum for harassment to thrive unchecked, with women being left to navigate the danger without a remedy of an institutional recourse.

What is unpersuasive is the Court's expressed anticipation that such a ruling would be misused by women belonging to political parties. Such an observation aligns with an existing culture of patriarchal or elite dogwhistling to create judicial myths through which protective laws are subjected to often unverified apprehensions of 'misuse', from the Domestic Violence Act, to the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. Direct exclusion not just diminishes, but completely extinguishes, even the slight possibility of justice for them. Women are encouraged to break the glass ceiling, have enough representation in boardrooms and be allowed to seek redressal but women in politics. Yet, the ones who carry hopes of becoming legislators and the ones who are shaping democracy as grassroot workers, are silenced.

## Zubin Garg, my friend and classmate, as I know him

By: Diganta Barooah

Zubin Garg, just Zubin Garg, the king of music in Assam, was known to me during my graduation period at B. Borooah College (Bholanath Borooah College) in Guwahati way back in 1990-93. He was a music freak at that time. During the off-period he used to sing his favourite numbers in Assamese and Hindi inside the classrooms taking the desks as his musical instrument.

During that time he was busy with his album 'Anamika' which became a colossal hit and a rage among the people and youths. This very album 'Anamika' made him an overnight star all over Assam. From the iconic 'Anamika', he soared to new heights of success and became a national icon. He never had to look back again as he climbed to new heights of success in the music and Film industry. One incident which I still remember is, before the release of his first superhit album 'Anamika', I along with Zubin, Dony Hazarika and others got together at a common friend's home at Rehabari in Guwahati. Zubin told us about the release of his album 'Anamika' and wanted to know about our views. I told him that you will be a Rockstar and you will rock a whole generation of Assam till eternity. And lo, it became a reality. I still remember that day very clearly. Though because of his busy schedule in music and Film industry I couldn't meet him much as I wished to be still I remember his lovely smile whenever he saw me before him somewhere.

Another incident which I remember very clearly was that before the release of his smashing Hindi song 'Ya Ali' of the movie



featuring all other top-notch Bollywood singers.

These are the memories associated with my special friend and classmate Zubin Garg, the heartthrob of Assam.

Zubin, you will be forever remembered by every true music lover of Assam and India. This is my conviction. Your untimely death can never be filled up by anyone else. You were unique and your love for the downtrodden and the common people will forever be remembered by the people of Assam. Those people who knew you, can only understand you and your kind heartedness. You will stay forever in people's heart. We will all miss you Zubin. Stay at peace wherever you are. May your pure and noble soul rest in eternal peace and serenity. This is my earnest prayer to the Almighty. May the Almighty send you again among us in a new birth soon so that people will again find you in a new generation. Love you my friend, brother and people's heartthrob.

With love and tears,  
Your friend and classmate.

# Zubeen Garg: The voice that will never fade

The silence that follows the loss of a towering figure is always deafening, but when that figure is someone who embodied the soul of a people, the void feels insurmountable. Zubeen Garg was not merely a singer, not just a performer who captivated audiences or dominated charts; he was the heartbeat of Assam, a restless spirit who gave voice to its joys, sorrows, and aspirations. His sudden passing has left a wound that cuts deep, not only because of the loss of his extraordinary talent but because he was woven into the very fabric of Assamese life. To lose Zubeen is to lose a piece of Assam's identity, a melody that defined its cultural rhythm, a voice that carried its story to the world.

The tragedy of Zubeen's departure lies in its abruptness, a stark contrast to the vibrancy of his life. At 52, he was still in the prime of his creative journey, a man whose energy seemed inexhaustible, whose passion for music and for Assam burned as fiercely as ever. His life was a testament to living boldly, often defying conventions and pushing boundaries. This refusal to conform made him a beloved icon, but it also exposed him to risks that, in hindsight, seem all too tragic. To say goodbye to such a figure feels impossible because Zubeen was not just one man; he was a cultural phenomenon, a symbol of Assamese pride, and a bridge between tradition and modernity. His music was not just sound—it was a language of belonging, a thread that tied generations together, a mirror reflecting the dreams and struggles of his people.

Zubeen Garg's contributions to music and culture are immeasurable, not merely in the sheer volume of his work but in its depth and reach. He was a prolific artist, recording songs in Assamese, Hindi, Bengali, and numerous other languages, making him a voice not just of Assam but of India. Yet, unlike many who chase national fame and lose their roots, Zubeen remained anchored to his homeland. Even when he sang in Hindi or Bengali, his Assamese soul shone through, infusing his performances with a distinct texture that could never be replicated. His voice carried the essence of the Brahmaputra, the rhythm of Bihu, and the spirit of a region often overlooked by the broader Indian consciousness. Songs like "Ya Ali" brought him fame across the country, but for those who

truly understood his artistry, his Assamese songs were his true legacy—ballads and anthems that resonated in villages, tea gardens, urban concert halls, and college festivals alike.

What set Zubeen apart was his ability to transcend boundaries. His music united the rural and the urban, the young and the old, the traditional and the modern. This inclusiveness was no accident; it was born from a life marked by both struggle and triumph. Zubeen was never distant or unattainable; he was immediate, relatable, and profoundly human. He was not a star on a pedestal but a companion who walked alongside his people, sharing their joys and pains. His concerts were not just performances but communal experiences, where audiences felt seen and heard through his voice. Whether he was singing of love, loss, or rebellion, Zubeen's music was a reflection of the Assamese spirit—resilient, vibrant, and unyielding.

The emotional bond between Zubeen and Assam was palpable in the aftermath of his passing. The streets of Guwahati overflowed with mourners, markets closed spontaneously, and people from all walks of life poured out to pay their respects. This was not the orchestrated grief of a celebrity's death but a raw, collective outpouring of loss, as if a

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

family member had been taken. Zubeen was a son of Assam, a brother, a friend, a comrade. When the government announced full state honours, it was less a formal gesture than a recognition of what the people already knew: Zubeen was a cultural institution, a national treasure, and his loss left Assam inconsolable. The scale of the mourning spoke to his unique place in the hearts of his people, a testament to a life that touched millions not through fame alone but through authenticity and connection.

What makes Zubeen's absence so haunting is the sense of what might have been. At 52, he was far from done. His career was a constant evolution, from playback singing to independent compositions, from acting to directing, from live performances to social activism. He was an artist who never rested on his laurels, always experimenting, always pushing the boundaries of his craft. To lose him now is to lose not only the



music he created but the music he had yet to create, the performances he had yet to give, the stories he had yet to tell. This unfinished potential deepens the sorrow, reminding us that his was a voice still brimming with possibility, a flame extinguished too soon. Beyond his music, Zubeen was a man of conscience, unafraid to speak out on issues that mattered to him. He was vocal about Assam's struggles, its political concerns, and its fight for recognition. He was not content to bask in the glow of celebrity; he used his platform to address questions of language, identity, and justice, often at the risk of controversy. His outspokenness made him a polarizing figure at times, but it also earned him respect as an artist who understood the power of his voice. For Zubeen, music was not just entertainment—it was a call to awakening, a tool for healing, a weapon for change. He belonged to that rare breed of artists who saw their work as a responsibility, a way to give back to the land and people that shaped them.

Yet Zubeen was no saint, and to portray him as such would be to diminish his humanity. He was complex, sometimes impulsive, occasionally reckless. He faced health challenges, personal struggles, and controversies, but these imperfections only made him more relatable. His fans saw in him a reflection of their own lives—flawed, resilient, and deeply human. To love Zubeen was not to idolize a perfect figure but to embrace a man who lived authentically, who stumbled and rose, who fought and forgave. His life was not a fairytale but a real, messy, beautiful story of highs and lows, and it was this rawness that

made him so beloved.

The circumstances of Zubeen's passing raise difficult questions about the responsibilities of those around him—event organizers, managers, authorities. Investigations into safety lapses are not about casting blame but about ensuring that such tragedies do not recur. If Zubeen's death can spark a broader conversation about the safety and well-being of artists, about the conditions under which they perform and live, then his loss may serve a greater purpose. Assam owes it to him to learn from this moment, to build systems that protect its cultural icons, to recognize that their welfare is not a luxury but a necessity. His death is a reminder that artists, no matter how larger-than-life, are human, vulnerable, and deserving of care.

As Assam grapples with this loss, the question of how to honor Zubeen's legacy looms large. Statues will be erected, festivals will be named after him, tributes will be sung for years to come. But the truest homage lies not in monuments or ceremonies but in keeping his spirit alive through creativity and action. The best way to honor Zubeen is to create space for new voices to emerge, for young artists to find platforms, for Assamese music to continue its journey into the world. His legacy should not be confined to nostalgia; it should inspire a cultural resurgence, a renewed commitment to the arts, and a celebration of Assam's identity. If his music was a bridge, the next generation must cross it and build new ones of their own.

To speak of farewell feels inadequate, even impossible. Zubeen's voice is not one that can be silenced. It will echo in Assamese

homes, in Bihu celebrations, in quiet moments of reflection, and in the aspirations of young musicians. Every time a guitar is strummed in a village, every time an Assamese song is sung on a global stage, every time a community comes together in pride or protest, Zubeen will be there. His physical presence is gone, but his spirit is woven into the cultural tapestry of Assam, inseparable from its past, present, and future. To bid farewell would imply distance, but Zubeen remains close, intimate, eternal.

Death often feels like an end, a closing of a chapter. But with Zubeen, it must be different. His life was a testament to the power of art to transcend boundaries, to make a small region resonate with the world, to turn music into a force of unity and pride. If Assam channels this grief into a renewed commitment to its culture, if it nurtures the creativity he embodied, then Zubeen's story will not end but continue. His voice, his courage, his restlessness are now part of Assam's consciousness, a flame that must be kept burning through the vibrancy of its people and their art.

In this moment of sorrow, there is also a call to action. Assam must not let Zubeen's legacy fade into memory; it must make it a living force. His music showed that a single voice could carry the weight of a people's dreams, that a song could cross borders, that a man could become a movement. As long as Assam sings, as long as its music flows, as long as its spirit endures, Zubeen Garg will never truly die. His songs will remain the soundtrack of a people, his story a beacon for generations, his life a reminder that art is not just creation but immortality.

## Echoes of Loss in Assam's Sky

By: Satyabrata Borah

In the vibrant mosaic of Indian music, few figures shine as brightly and as locally as Zubeen Garg did for Assam. The news of his sudden death on September 19, 2025, rippled through the state like a thunderclap, leaving a void that echoed in every household, every roadside tea stall, and every misty hill of the Northeast. At just 52 years old, Garg, the singer whose voice could soothe a stormy river or ignite a festival crowd, slipped away during a seemingly innocuous yacht outing in Singapore. He had traveled there to perform at the North East India Festival, a celebration meant to showcase the region's cultural mosaic. Instead, it became the backdrop for unimaginable tragedy. Reports from Singapore authorities and confirmed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma paint a heartbreaking picture: Garg, along with about 18 others from the Assamese community in Singapore, embarked on a leisurely boat trip to Lazarus Island. The group included members of his team and local enthusiasts. What began as a moment of relaxation turned fatal when Garg decided to swim for a second time. Despite lifeguards' insistent warnings to wear a life jacket, he removed it, citing discomfort from its oversized fit. Moments later, he was found floating motionless in the sea, his body rigid. Crew members pulled him out, administered CPR on the spot, and rushed him to Singapore General Hospital. There, in the intensive care unit, around 2:30 pm Indian Standard Time, doctors pronounced him dead. Initial whispers of a scuba diving mishap gave way to the clearer, if no less devastating, truth of a seizure striking without mercy while he swam unprotected. His wife, Garima Saikia Garg, later shared that Zubeen had battled such episodes before, escaping death's grasp each time, only for it to claim him now, far from home.

Assam, a land where rivers carve deep emotional channels, plunged into collective grief. By evening, crowds gathered outside Garg's modest home in Guwahati's Kahilipara neighborhood, their faces etched with disbelief. Women clutched handkerchiefs to their eyes, men stood in stoic silence, and young fans, barely out of their teens, replayed his songs on their phones as if the melodies could summon him back. The state government declared a three-day mourning period from September 20 to 22, halting all official entertainment events, ceremonial functions, and government dinners. Schools postponed examinations; the airwaves filled with tributes rather than advertisements. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a bilingual post on X, expressed shock, calling Garg a "cultural ambassador of Assam whose soulful voice will continue to inspire generations." Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition, labeled it a

"terrible tragedy," praising how Garg's talent reshaped Assamese music amid personal hardships. Even as the Indian High Commission in Singapore coordinated with local authorities for an autopsy and swift repatriation of his body, the emotional undercurrent swelled. By Saturday evening, after the mandatory post-mortem, Garg's mortal remains arrived in Guwahati via Delhi. Thousands converged at the airport, a sea of umbrellas under a drizzling sky, chanting his name as the hearse passed. At Sarusajai Sports Complex, where his body lay in state, the line of mourners stretched for kilometers. People from all walks, from tea garden laborers to urban professionals, waited hours in the humid September heat to glimpse the man who had soundtrack their lives. One elderly woman, tears streaming, whispered to a reporter, "He sang our pains and joys. Without him, who will?" Actor Adil Hussain, a fellow Assamese, captured the sentiment on social media: "Devastated... His contribution to Assamese music and culture is extraordinary. He will live amongst us through his songs." In a state often fractured by ethnic tensions and linguistic pride, this unity felt profound, a rare stitching of divides under the banner of shared loss.

Zubeen Garg was no ordinary artist; he was the heartbeat of Assam's soul. Born on April 18, 1972, into a family of educators, young Zubeen Garg displayed an innate flair for music early on. His breakthrough came in the late 1990s. Songs like "Mayabini Ratir Bukut" evoked the nocturnal mystery of Assam's forests, wrapping listeners in a blanket of nostalgia. "Hiya Diya Niya," a duet pulsing with youthful romance, became an anthem for generations navigating love's uncertainties. And "Maya Mathu Maya," with its playful yet poignant lyrics, captured the elusive dance of affection in everyday life. These tracks, rooted in Assamese folk traditions yet laced with contemporary beats, propelled him to local superstardom. Garg's voice, a versatile baritone that could croon tenderly or roar with folk vigor, resonated beyond borders. His national claim to fame arrived in 2006 with "Ya Ali" from the Bollywood thriller *Gangster*, a Sufi-infused rock ballad that showcased his ability to blend Eastern mysticism with Western edge. The song's haunting chorus, "Ya Ali, madad kar de," struck a chord with millions, earning him accolades and opening doors to Hindi cinema. Yet, he never abandoned his roots. Over three decades, Garg composed, sang, and acted in over 100 Assamese films, directed music albums, and even helmed a television show promoting Northeast talents.

What set Garg apart was his transcendence of Assam's intricate social fault lines. The state, with its mosaic of Bodo, Karbi, Mising, and other indigenous groups alongside Bengali-speaking communities, has long grappled

with insurgencies, language agitations, and identity assertions. The Assam Movement of the 1980s, for instance, spotlighted fears of "outsiders" diluting local culture, leading to violent clashes. Into this charged atmosphere stepped Zubeen Garg, a unifier in singer's garb. He sang fluently in Assamese, Bodo, Mising, and even Bangla, a bold choice that bridged communities wary of each other. Garg's activism amplified this role; he championed flood relief for riverine tribes, advocated for tea workers' rights, and used his platform to decry environmental degradation in Kaziranga's grasslands. In interviews, he often quipped, "Music knows no language; it speaks the heart." This ethos made him a cultural ambassador, representing the Northeast's untamed spirit on national stages. Comparisons to Bhupen Hazarika, the legendary "Bard of Brahmaputra" who passed away in 2011, were inevitable. Hazarika's gravely epic like "Bistimo Parore" immortalized Assam's rivers and struggles, much as Garg modernized that legacy for a digital age. Both men, through melody, wove the state's fragmented narratives into a singular Assamese identity. Garg's death feels like the dimming of that second star, leaving Hazarika's glow to guide alone.

Yet, Garg's story underscores a peculiar facet of fame in India: the fierce loyalty of regional icons. In a nation of 1.4 billion, where Bollywood's gloss often eclipses all, local stars forge empires of the heart in their corners. South India exemplifies this, with its film idols morphing into political titans. N.T. Rama Rao, the Telugu screen god who played Krishna in over 300 movies, founded the Telugu Desam Party in 1982 and swept Andhra Pradesh's assembly elections, ruling as chief minister thrice. His charisma, honed in mythological roles, translated seamlessly into mass mobilization, promising clean governance amid corruption scandals. Tamil Nadu's pantheon is even more storied. M.G. Ramachandran, or MGR, the evergreen hero of social justice dramas, entered politics in 1953 and, by 1977, led the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam to victory, serving two terms as chief minister. His on-screen persona as a protector of the poor blurred into reality, with policies like free school meals bearing his populist stamp. Successors Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi perpetuated this fusion, their film legacies fueling electoral frenzies. Jayalalithaa's 2016 death triggered not just mourning but mayhem: hundreds attempted suicide, some succeeding, while hospitals reported spikes in shock-induced collapses. Crowds stormed her residence, and Chennai's streets filled with wails that rivaled a cinematic climax. These figures thrive because they embody regional pride, speaking in local tongues and addressing parochial pains. Garg mirrored

this on a smaller canvas. Without political ambitions, he wielded influence through culture, his concerts drawing lakhs in Jorhat or Dibrugarh as fervently as MGR's rallies in Madurai. In India's federal sprawl, such icons remind us that stardom need not chase pan-Indian uniformity; it can root deeply, nourishing the soil from which it springs.

This devotion, however, cuts both ways, a blade that comforts and wounds. The hysteria surrounding Garg's passing veered perilously close to the edge. As news broke, grief curdled into accusation. Fans, wifed with sorrow, flooded police stations across Assam, filing over a dozen FIRs against Siddharth Sharma, Garg's manager, and Shyamkanu Mahanta, the North East Festival organizer. They alleged negligence: Why no oversight on the yacht trip? Why allow swimming without mandatory safety gear? Videos surfaced online, grainy clips from the boat showing Garg laughing with friends, jacket in hand, before the plunge. Social media erupted with hashtags like #JusticeForZubeen and #WhosResponsible, blending eulogies with demands for accountability.

Chief Minister Sarma, navigating the storm, ordered the cases consolidated under the Criminal Investigation Department for a thorough probe. He emphasized questioning all 18 companions, including yacht booker Abhimanyu Talukdar and crew, while coordinating with Singapore police and India's Home Ministry. "The people deserve answers," he stated, underscoring the scrutiny on whether "controversy" played a role. Yet, rationality pierced the fog swiftly. Singapore authorities, after preliminary inquiries, found no evidence of foul play or external factors; the death appeared a tragic confluence of health vulnerability and momentary lapse. Garima Garg, in a poignant appeal, urged fans to withdraw the FIRs, saying, "This was fate, not fault. Let us honor him with peace, not blame." Her words, broadcast on local channels, tempered the outrage, reminding a stunned public that vengeance dishonors the departed.

Zubeen's tragedy invites reflection on fame's fragile dance. Icons like him rise not by formula but by syncing with their era's pulse: the yearning for identity in a globalized world, the ache for unity amid division. He leaves a discography that will outlive us, songs that will play at weddings and wakes alike. But his passing also whispers a caution: grief's fire, if unchecked, consumes the living. Mourning, as the old Assamese proverb goes, is like the Brahmaputra's flow, best navigated with quiet reverence rather than raging currents. As Assam heals, let Zubeen's voice guide that journey, a melody of resilience echoing through the hills. In his honor, perhaps we listen closer, love fiercer, and live with the jackets on, whatever form they take.

# Zubeen Garg: The people's melody, the people's soul

By: Dipak Kurmi

There are moments in life when words feel painfully inadequate, when the weight of grief presses down so heavily that even the most eloquent language struggles to capture the depth of loss. Assam finds itself caught in such a moment today. Zubeen Garg—our moromor Zubeen da—has passed, and yet, there is a reluctance, almost a refusal, to accept this truth. News reports, social media posts, reels, and short clips keep pounding us with confirmation after confirmation, and still, in the silence of our own hearts, we keep asking: Can he really be gone? Can Zubeen Garg ever truly not be around?

The truth is, artists of his magnitude never die. Their voices remain, their verses linger, and their very being seeps into the collective consciousness of the people they loved. Zubeen himself once wrote:

Ekedore thake jodi ei jibon  
Thaakim tumare majote...  
Endhar pthoth joli rom moi jui hoi

Tumar moromor preronaa re...  
If life remains in one form or another, he promised, he would remain among us. In that eternal fire of love, in that flame of inspiration, he stays alive still.

**A Man of the Masses**  
Every Assamese has a Zubeen story. For some, he was the voice that made adolescence more bearable, for others, the friend who held their hand through heartbreak, and for many, the guide whose words offered courage when life seemed too daunting. But above all else, Zubeen Garg was a people's man—accessible, approachable, and astonishingly real despite his superstar status.

Unlike the many celebrities

who cocoon themselves in stardom, Zubeen remained unpretentious. He would sit at roadside stalls and sip tea while chatting with strangers. He would walk through crowded public streets, smiling at those who stopped him, never flustered by the melee. He would travel by rickshaw, cycle through familiar alleys, and play cricket or football on open grounds, surrounded not by bodyguards but by ordinary fans who adored him. He broke bread with strangers, lent money to those in need, and often burst into impromptu jam sessions wherever he went.

This intimacy with the people defined him more than even his vast repertoire of music. For while his voice moved mountains, it was his humility, his warmth, and his fearless humanity that made him truly unforgettable.

**The Soundtrack of a Generation**

To speak of Zubeen's music is to speak of an entire cultural era. Over 35,000 songs bear his name—a staggering number that itself tells the story of a life steeped in melody. From the teenage charm of Mayabini to the soul-soothing strains of Aoxir Jun, from the revolutionary appeal of Hiya Diya Niya that stopped theatres in their tracks to the spiritual introspection of Xunere Xojia Poja, Zubeen's voice became the soundtrack of life in Assam.

For millennials who grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s, his music was inseparable from their lived experience. Songs like Maya and Mayabini carried teenage angst and first crushes; Dure Dure and Pakhi Pakhi narrated longings and heartbreaks; Mukti and Jantra spoke to existential dilemmas; Rimal To Mon



Jai mirrored the silent fires of adulthood.

In hostel campuses, in small-town tea stalls, in buses hurtling across the plains of Assam, his voice was everywhere. One recalls the charm of a Tezpur University evening in the early 2000s when power failures would plunge hostels into darkness.

The boys would pull out guitars, singing Zubeen's songs into the night, wooing the girls in the opposite hostel, who would sing back in reply. What lingered in the silence of the night was not just youthful romance but the echo of a melody that belonged to everyone—Zubeen's melody.

And for those who left Assam to chase dreams in alien cities, his voice remained a tether to home. One memory stands out from Mumbai in 2007: rain lashing against the windows of a taxi

on Haji Ali Road, nerves fraying on the way to the first job, and suddenly, from the FM radio, Zubeen's Ya Ali. The jitters dissolved instantly, as if his voice had travelled across states and seas to whisper reassurance: you are not alone.

**Fearless, Restless, Unapologetic**

Yet Zubeen was not only a singer. He was a phenomenon who embodied restlessness, fearlessness, and rebellion. He did not merely sing songs; he spoke his mind, unafraid of criticism, unafraid of backlash. His generosity was legendary, but so too was his unflinching honesty.

If something was wrong in society or in politics, he said so bluntly. At times, his candor bordered on recklessness, but therein lay his charm. The establishment might have bristled at his words, but the people admired his

courage. For them, he was not just a musician—they saw in him a reflection of their own frustrations, their own yearning for truth, their own desire to speak without fear.

He lived life with a fire that often burned brighter than convention allowed. He was not just an artist but an activist, not just a performer but a provocateur, constantly pushing boundaries, constantly reminding Assam of its unity and strength even amid discord.

**The Legacy of a People's Superstar**

What made Zubeen truly unique was the way his art dissolved barriers. He was not a star locked away in ivory towers; he was a companion in the journey of life. He sang in over forty languages, carving a pan-Indian presence, but he always carried Assam in his heart. He carried it

in the way he spoke, the way he sang, the way he dreamed.

For Assam, he was more than an entertainer. He was a symbol of resilience, a reminder that art can resist fragmentation, that music can unify communities torn by discord. His songs were not only entertainment but also political, social, and cultural statements. They were the voice of love, rebellion, loss, and hope.

Even in his most popular Bollywood number, Ya Ali, the rawness of his Assamese soul came through. He did not sing as a performer alone; he sang as a man whose heart beat for something larger than himself.

**Personal Folders of Memory**

The beauty of Zubeen Garg is that his legacy does not lie only in recordings or concerts but in the personal memory folders of millions. Each Assamese household holds stories of his music

shaping birthdays, farewells, weddings, heartbreaks, or simple quiet evenings. Each fan carries a piece of him in their private archives—moments that might never be publicly shared but are deeply personal, deeply precious.

He gave people the courage to feel, the courage to celebrate, and the courage to confront sadness. He taught an entire generation that music is not just sound but emotion, not just rhythm but memory.

**The Eternal Flame**

Today, as we wrestle with grief, it feels impossible to imagine a world without him. But perhaps that is the wrong way to look at it. Zubeen Garg was never just a man of one lifetime. He was an idea, a force, a flame that lit up countless paths. And flames, once lit, do not vanish. They merge with the air, the soil, the memory of those who loved them. He dreamed of a united Assam, a land where divisions would give way to shared smiles, where the innocence of a child's laughter would mark the dawn of a new day. That dream is now ours to carry forward, just as his songs are ours to sing, his words ours to remember, his courage ours to emulate.

Zubeen Garg lived the way one must live: without fear, without apology, without compromise. He dared to sing, speak, and love with abandon. He dared to be human in a world that often demands masks. And in doing so, he etched himself permanently into the heart of Assam.

He may no longer walk down our streets or cycle through our alleys, but in the strains of every melody, in the laughter of every gathering, in the silent courage of every Assamese, he will remain. Forever. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com))

## Zubeen Garg's unfinished symphony: A life of defiant harmony and quiet revolution

By: Satyabrata Borah

In the vibrant mosaic of Indian music, few figures have woven threads as diverse and enduring as Zubeen Garg. Born on November 18, 1972, in the serene hills of Tura, Meghalaya, to an Assamese Brahmin family, Zubeen Borthakur, later adopting the stage name Garg from his godfather, emerged not just as a singer but as a living embodiment of cultural fusion and unbridled creativity. His father, Mohini Mohan Borthakur, a poet and lyricist penning under the pseudonym Kapil Thakur, and his mother, Ily Borthakur, a dancer, actress, and singer, immersed young Zubeen in a world where art was as essential as breath. From the tender age of three, Zubeen sang, his voice a tiny echo of his mother's melodies, while he mastered the tabla under the guidance of Pandit Robin Banerjee for over a decade and delved into Assamese folk traditions with Guru Ramani Rai. This early nurturing in a nomadic household, his father, an Assam Civil Service officer, frequently relocated the family, instilled in him a rootless yet deeply rooted sense of identity, one that would define his extraordinary journey.

Zubeen's childhood was marked by both privilege and profound loss. Growing up amidst the lush landscapes of Assam and Meghalaya, he attended school in Jorhat, where he began composing songs as a boy. Tragedy struck early when his younger sister, Jonki Borthakur, a promising singer and actress, perished in a car accident in 2002 near Tezpur while en route to a performance. The grief was shattering, but Zubeen channeled it into art, releasing the poignant album Xixu in her memory, a collection that blended raw emotion with folk rhythms and became a cornerstone of his discography. Another sister, Palme, pursued Bharatanatyam, carrying forward the family's artistic legacy in Guwahati. These personal upheavals forged Zubeen's resilience, transforming him into a performer whose music often felt like a cathartic bridge between sorrow and celebration. He pursued a Bachelor of Science at B. Borooah College in Guwahati but abandoned it midway, drawn irresistibly to the stage. A gold medal for his Western solo at a 1992 youth festival ignited his professional fire, propelling him toward a career that would shatter conventions.

What set Zubeen apart from the outset was his refusal to be confined by genre or geography. At 19, he unveiled his debut album, Anamika, in 1992, a bold fusion of Assamese folk with rock influences that redefined the Northeast's musical landscape. It exploded in popularity, selling thousands and earning him a devoted following among the youth who saw in him a rebel with a harmonium. Forming the band Boom Boom in the late 1980s, he experimented with electric guitars and traditional dotara, creating sounds that echoed the misty Brahmaputra valleys yet pulsed with global energy. By the mid-1990s, Zubeen had relocated to Mumbai, the glittering epicenter of Bollywood, where he recorded Hindi albums like Chandni Raat and Yuhi Kabhi, and contributed to films such as Fiza and Kaante. Yet, even in the Hindi heartland, his Assamese soul shone through, unpolished, authentic, and unapologetically regional.

The pinnacle of his national breakthrough arrived in 2006 with Ya Ali, the soul stirring Sufi track from the film Gangster. Composed with a haunting melody that married qawwali echoes to contemporary beats, the song catapulted Zubeen into stardom across India, the Middle East, and South Asia. Its remix by DJs Suketu and Aks further amplified its reach, turning it into an anthem of longing and devotion. Ya Ali not only fetched him the Global Indian Film Award for Best Playback Singer but also symbolized his effortless transcendence of linguistic

barriers. He followed it with Dil Tu Hi Bataa from Krish 3, another hit that showcased his velvet timbre in romantic Bollywood veins. Over three decades, Zubeen amassed an astonishing repertoire: more than 32,000 songs in nearly 40 languages, from Assamese and Bengali to Bodo, Nepali, Tiwa, Karbi, Bhojpur, Tamil, and even Kannada. He played a dozen instruments, dhol, mandolin, keyboard, percussion, and directed music for over two dozen Assamese films, infusing them with scores that captured the region's polyphonic spirit.

Yet, Zubeen's true genius lay in his multiplicity. He was no mere playback artist; he was a composer, lyricist, music producer, actor, director, and philanthropist. In Assamese cinema, he helmed films like Tumi Mor Matho Mor, which he wrote, directed, and starred in at age 28, and Mission China, the first Assamese movie to gross over six crore rupees. Kanchanjanga pushed that boundary to seven crore, proving the viability of regional storytelling on a grand scale. His songs like Tomar Kholo Hawa from Bride By Chance earned him the Best Male Playback Singer at the 2021 awards, while Mon Jai clinched a National Film Award for Best Music Direction. Beyond accolades, including an honorary Doctor of Literature from the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya, in 2024, and Guest Artist honors at the Assam Convention in Illinois in 2011, Zubeen's influence rippled through society. He championed AIDS awareness and brain cancer initiatives, often performing benefit concerts that drew thousands. In 2022, a 20 foot statue of him was unveiled at the Nazirating Tamuli Tourism Festival in Digboi, and a bamboo bridge over the Na Dihing River in Tengapani bore his name, symbols of how deeply he was woven into Assam's cultural fabric.

Zubeen was, indeed, the exception to the rule, a cultural icon who defied the silos of Indian entertainment. While many artists chase pan Indian appeal at the cost of roots, he achieved both with disarming ease. His performances were spectacles of versatility: belting folk ballads like O Mur Apunar Desh one moment, then crooning romantic duets the next, all while clad in unusual costumes, vibrant Assamese weaves mixed with urban flair, and sporting mismatched shoes, one blue, one red, as if to mock uniformity. This eccentricity endeared him to a young fan base that saw in him not a distant star but a kindred spirit, someone who sang of the everyday joys and pains of the Northeast. He was the voice that amplified marginalized tongues, recording in indigenous dialects to preserve them amid globalizations. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma captured this essence upon his passing, tweeting, Zubeen's voice had an unmatched ability to energise people and his music spoke directly to our minds and souls. Union Home Minister Amit Shah echoed, calling him an iconic singer, musician, and film personality whose void could never be filled. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi mourned the loss of a voice that resonated across all walks of life.

As a human, Zubeen's exceptionalism ran even deeper, rooted in a profound humanism that transcended stardom. After Ya Ali's triumph, when Mumbai's allure could have ensnared him forever, he chose to return to Assam, not out of defeat, but conviction. I wanted to prove that world class music or movies could be made from here, he once said, embodying a quiet revolution against the capitals monopoly on creativity. He invested in local talent, mentoring young artists and producing albums that spotlighted emerging voices. His philanthropy was selfless; he donated royalties from hits to flood relief in Assam, built community centers in remote villages, and advocated for environmental causes, urging fans to protect the Brahmaputra's fragile ecosystem through songs like in his eco

themed album. Friends recall his off stage humility: the superstar who would stop mid concert to chat with a roadside tea vendor, or spend hours teaching tabla to underprivileged kids in Jorhat. Actor Adil Hussain, a fellow Assamese, described him as a force of nature, yet grounded like the earth he loved. Zubeen's life was a testament to empathy; he spoke openly of mental health struggles post Jonkis death, destigmatizing grief in a culture that often silences it. His relationships, too, reflected this warmth, married to the supportive Kalpana Patowary in artistic circles before personal paths diverged, he remained a devoted son, often crediting his ailing father for instilling poetic depth in his lyrics.

This blend of iconoclasm and compassion made Zubeen not just admired, but beloved. He was the artist who turned stages into sanctuaries, where folk tunes met rock riffs, and where audiences from Guwahati's humid halls to Singapore's festivals found unity. His influence extended to politics and society; as a cultural ambassador, he promoted Northeast tourism, performing at events that showcased Assam's jorog dance and bihu rhythms to global audiences. In 2020, amid the pandemic, he livestreamed virtual concerts, raising funds for migrant workers stranded far from home. Zubeen's music was activism by melody, songs like Mission China's title track rallied against border tensions, while his Bodo compositions fostered ethnic harmony in a region scarred by insurgency.

Tragically, this vibrant life was cut short on September 19, 2025, in Singapore, where Zubeen, at 52, had traveled as a cultural brand ambassador for the North East India Festival. Scheduled to perform on the 20th, he joined an impromptu yacht outing with local Assamese community members, a spontaneous adventure that turned fatal. While scuba diving, he suffered breathing difficulties, possibly a seizure, and was rushed to Singapore General Hospital. Despite immediate CPR and intensive care, he was pronounced dead in the ICU at 2:30 p.m. IST. The news rippled like a shockwave through Assam, where fans gathered tearfully outside his Kahlipara home in Guwahati. The state declared three days of mourning, flags at half mast, and the festival was canceled in grief.

The circumstances sparked immediate questions. Assam's government, led by Chief Minister Sarma, ordered a CID probe into potential negligence, naming Zubeen's manager Siddharth Sharma and festival organizer Shyamkanu Mahanta in complaints. Singapore authorities conducted a post mortem, ruling out foul play but confirming the accident's suddenness. Sarma coordinated with the Indian High Commission to expedite the return of Zubeen's remains, which arrived in Guwahati by September 20 evening, allowing his father a final farewell. Admirers from Jorhat, his adoptive hometown, clamored for rites there, but the family opted for a private cremation in the capital, followed by a public memorial. Tributes poured in globally: Rahul Gandhi called it a terrible tragedy, lauding how Zubeen overcame personal pain to touch millions. Ripu Bora, former Rajya Sabha MP, deemed him Assam's cultural icon, whose selfless humanity bound communities.

In death, as in life, Zubeen proved the exception. While icons often fade into myth, his legacy pulses alive, in the bihu bands of village youths, the Bollywood remixes echoing his Sufi soul, and the mismatched shoes of fans emulating his flair. He taught that true artistry defies rules: sing from the gut, love without reserve, and return home to lift others. Assam, India, and the world are quieter without his voice, but richer for having heard it. Zubeen Garg did not just make music; he made us feel the rhythm of being human. His songs will endure, mismatched and magnificent, reminding us that exceptions like him are what make the ordinary extraordinary.

## Remembering Zubeen Da

By: Ankita Sarmah Bordoloi

The day of September 19, 2025, brought profound sorrow to Assam as news emerged of Zubeen Garg's untimely demise in a tragic accident in Singapore. At the age of 52, the beloved artist departed, leaving behind a legacy that reflected deeply with the state's younger generations. For teenagers and young adults in Assam, Zubeen Da was far more than a celebrated musician; he embodied a mentor, a cultural anchor, and a source of inspiration amid life's complexities. His songs and personality forged an intimate connection, making his loss feel acutely personal.

Zubeen Garg, born Zubeen Borthakur on November 18, 1972, in Jorhat, Assam, started on a remarkable journey from humble beginnings. Experimenting with traditional instruments such as the dhol, dotara, and mandolin during his childhood, he evolved into a multifaceted talent: a singer, composer, lyricist, actor, director, and philanthropist. Rising to prominence in the 1990s, Garg skillfully blended Assamese folk elements with contemporary rhythms, captivating audiences across the region. What distinguished him, particularly for the youth, was his unwavering authenticity. While many artists pursued transient trends or Bollywood allure, Garg remained steadfastly tied to Assam's essence—the Brahmaputra's flow, the verdant tea plantations, the vibrant festivals, and the everyday challenges faced by its people. His national breakthrough with "Ya Ali" from the 2006 film, "Gangster", continued with recordings in over 40 languages and thousands of songs, never overshadowed his commitment to his roots. This genuineness drew young listeners, positioning him as a relatable figure rather than a remote celebrity.

Following the unfortunate death of Bhupen Hazarika in 2011, Assam's cultural sphere faced a significant void. Hazarika, often revered as the bard of the Brahmaputra, had encapsulated the region's pride through his melodies. Garg emerged as a fitting successor, revitalizing traditional forms with modern appeal while preserving their core. For adolescents immersed in digital distractions, his compositions served as a bridge to heritage, blending nostalgia with relevance. In his absence, the outlook appears somber for the younger population.

Garg's profound rapport with Assam's teenagers and youth stemmed from his ability to articulate their innermost experiences. In a landscape marked by academic pressures, economic uncertainties, and cultural transitions, the youth found solace in his music. His music transcended entertainment, offering solace and motivation. "Mayabini," with its deep portrayal of ethereal nights, became a refuge for restless minds. Many young individuals recount turning to this melody during sleepless hours fraught with anxiety or despair, finding renewal in its soothing tones. Garg himself emphasized its significance, noting that it is something that is important for him, for us and for everyone.

Similarly, "Bogakoi Bogoli" evoked cherished memories of childhood innocence, providing an emotional connection for urban youth distanced from rural origins. Adolescents frequently play it

during gatherings or solitary moments, reinforcing their cultural ties and alleviating feelings of disconnection. In an era dominated by technology and routine, "Aami Jen Jontro" captured the alienation many young Assamese encounter. The lyrics mirrored the monotony of daily life and the erosion of human connections, yet infused optimism, urging liberation from mechanical ex-



istence. Teenagers navigating education, social media, and ambitions found their reflections in these verses, appreciating Garg's empathetic insight expressed in their native tongue.

The 2002 album "Xixhu" further deepened this connection, created as a tribute to Garg's sister, Jonkey Borthakur, following her tragic death in a road accident. For youths wrestling with relations or sorrow, these bare tracks pierce deep. They teach that art mends wounds, and picturing Zubeen harmonizing with her beyond offers solace. By sharing his personal anguish, Garg humanized himself, endearing him further to the youth as an approachable icon.

Beyond his musical contributions, Garg served as a guardian figure for Assam's younger population. His directives carried authority; adolescents heeded his calls to engage in the right cause. During crises—such as the perennial floods along the Brahmaputra, communal tensions, or the COVID-19 pandemic—Garg stood resolutely with the community, his dynamic and forthright demeanor cutting through ambiguity. This candor, in a world full of fakes made him a leader they could trust.

Garg's Bihu performances exemplified his vibrant energy, with his signature 'utpaat'—a blend of exuberance and improvisation—transforming events into communal celebrations. He engaged audiences with spontaneous flair, fostering a sense of unity. For teenagers, these gatherings represented liberation and belonging, reinforcing cultural pride against global homogenization. Garg's intuitive grasp of youthful zeal strengthened this enduring link.

To the youth he is not a distant celebrity but a cool elder brother who inspires them.

In the immediate aftermath of his passing, expressions of grief underscored the depth of this bond. On the evening of September 20, students at Cotton University organized a musical tribute. Hundreds assembled on campus, exchanging stories of sorrow and reminiscing about Garg in a manner he would have liked. They collectively sang his songs, especially "Mayabini" as he wished that the entire state would sing "Mayabini" on the day of his death. Half the group remained in stunned silence, grappling with disbelief at his departure, while the others succumbed to tears, overwhelmed by the acute pain. A candlelight march was also organized lighting up the dark light for this legend—a sign of his deep effect on the youth.

Garg's departure has left Assam's youth in a state of acute gloom, yet his influence endures. He was not merely an artist but the catalyst that empowered them, rooted them in tradition, and instilled hope. To honor his memory, society must embrace his principles: keeping our roots intact, speaking the heart out and building unity. Zubeen Garg will always live in the hearts of the people of Assam and his music and stories will continue to inspire the generations to come.

# US lawmakers visiting China seek to improve military cooperation

First visit from the House of Representatives to China since 2019

**BEIJING, Sept 22:** The United States wants to improve military-to-military ties with China, a US lawmaker leading a bipartisan congressional delegation said Monday in a meeting with China's defence minister in Beijing.

The visit is the first from the House of Representatives to China since 2019, and comes as tensions have risen between the two countries over trade, technology and opposing views on global conflicts. A group of US senators visited Beijing in 2023.

The current delegation is led by Rep Adam Smith, a Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. The group met with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun and separately, with Vice Premier He Lifeng, after holding talks with Premier Li Qiang on Sunday.

"We want to open up better the lines of communication between our two countries in general, in particular between our defence (structures)," Smith told Dong



ahead of their meeting.

He added that he believed both China and the US wanted to uphold global peace and security, which made it important for the sides to maintain open communication lines.

"And we have disagreements, without question, but I think it makes it all the more important

that we have open discussions about how to resolve those differences," he added.

Dong said the lawmakers' visit "shows a good phase in strengthening China-US communications," which "is the right thing to do."

US and China military communications were suspended for over a year starting in August 2022, fol-

lowing a visit by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. The visit angered Beijing, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary.

The sides restored military dialogue in November 2023, after a rare meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and then-US President Joe Biden.

President Donald Trump said he would meet with Xi at a regional summit taking place at the end of October in South Korea and will visit China in the "early part of next year," following a lengthy phone call between the two on Friday. The congressional delegation also includes Michael Baumgartner, a Republican member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as Ro Khanna and Chrissy Houlahan, both Democrats on the House Armed Services Committee.

The lawmakers are in China until Thursday. (AP)

## China silent on US H-1B visa hike, but opens doors to global talent

**BEIJING, Sept 22:** China on Monday declined to comment on US President Donald Trump's move to impose a hefty USD one lakh fee for H-1B visas, but at the same time invited global professionals to work in the country as it prepares to roll out a new employment visa next month.

On Friday last week, the Trump administration announced a USD 1,00,000 fee on H-1B visas. The fee is a one-time fee on submission of a new H-1B petition.

"China will not comment on the US visa policy," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here when asked about Trump's decision.

However, at the same time, he said in the era of globalisation, cross-border talents promote technological and economic progress globally, and Beijing welcomes global professional talent to explore opportunities in the country.

China welcomes "talents from various industries and areas across the world to come and stay in China, jointly contribute to the progress of the human society and achieve success in their careers", Guo said.

Indians account for nearly 71 per cent (over 2.8 lakh) of all H-1B visas, followed by Chinese professionals with around 11.7 per cent or over 46,600.

While the US tightens its visa regime, China last month announced a new work permit called K-Visa under which qualified professionals from across the world can come to the country and explore work opportunities.

The K-Visa, set to take effect from Oct 1, is aimed at attracting young science and technology talent and

does not require a domestic employer or entity to issue an invitation.

According to the state-run Xinhua news agency, the new visa category was approved by the State Council and signed into law by Premier Li Qiang last month as part of amendments to the country's entry and exit regulations.

China's silence on the H-1B issue comes against the backdrop of trade negotiations with the US, where student and work visas are also under discussion.

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping last week spoke over the phone, during which they reportedly agreed to the US takeover of the popular Chinese app TikTok.

The US and Chinese trade negotiators concluded their fourth round of talks in Spain last week to reach a trade deal on tariffs.

As per the decision, China will add the K-Visa category to its existing 12 ordinary visa types, available to eligible science and technology professionals.

Compared to the existing visa types, K visas will offer more convenience to holders in terms of the number of permitted entries, validity period, and duration of stay. K-Visa holders can also engage in education and cultural exchanges, science and technology activities, and entrepreneurship and business. "China's development requires the participation of talent from around the world, and China's development also provides opportunities for them," Xinhua quoted an official as saying. Separately, China has also announced visa-free entry for tourists from over 40 countries for short-term stays to boost travel. (PTI)

## Jaishankar meets Philippine counterpart Tess Lazaro on UNGA sidelines

**NEW YORK, Sept 22:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met with his Philippine counterpart Tess Lazaro here and discussed bilateral cooperation in the UN and the Indo-Pacific region.

Jaishankar, who arrived in New York on Sunday for the high-level UN General Assembly meeting, said he was pleased to meet Lazaro on the sidelines of the UNGA.

"We followed up on the recent State Visit of President @bongbongmarcos to India. Also discussed our cooperation in the UN and the Indo-Pacific region," Jaishankar said on social media. Lazaro said her discussion with Jaishankar "reaffirms our 2 countries' commitment as Strategic Partners to actively develop cooperation in political, defence and security, the maritime domain, etc." Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos last month visited India for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top officials to boost cooperation in defence, trade and investment, agriculture, tourism, and the pharmaceutical industry. (PTI)

## Russia, Ukraine trade deadly drone strikes as Zelenskyy anticipates intense diplomacy at UN

**KYIV, Sept 22:** Russia and Ukraine swapped accusations of deadly drone strikes on civilian areas of their countries Monday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy anticipated "a very intense week" of diplomacy at the UN General Assembly in New York, where the Security Council was expected to discuss the more than three-year war.

Zelenskyy has tried to give momentum to a US-led peace effort, offering a ceasefire and a summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Moscow has taken issue with some of the proposals, however, and an end to the bloodshed appears no closer.

Additionally, international concerns have mounted recently that the fighting could spread beyond Ukraine's borders as European countries rebuked Russia for what

they said were provocations. The incidents have included Russian drones landing on Polish soil and Russian fighter aircraft entering Estonian airspace.

Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics said on social media that Russia was testing NATO's political and military response and aiming to reduce Western support for Ukraine by compelling countries to redirect resources toward the defence of alliance countries.

Calibrating how to respond to Russia was not easy, Rinkevics said Sunday. Russia was doing just enough not to cross a red line, but things could still spiral, he added.

Russia's Defence Ministry denied any Estonian airspace violation by its planes, and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday dismissed Estonia and NATO's claims as "void, un-

grounded and continuing an unbridled policy of inciting tensions and provoking confrontation."

Zelenskyy was due to attend the annual high-level gathering at the UN General Assembly, where he planned to recruit support for efforts to stop Russia's invasion.

"The schedule already includes nearly two dozen meetings with leaders from different countries, from all parts of the world," Zelenskyy said on Telegram last Sunday.

Zelenskyy said he also planned to meet with US President Donald Trump, whose drive for a peace deal after taking office in January has yielded no progress.

"It is vital that this week we strengthen the world's resolve for robust action — for without strength, peace will not prevail," Zelenskyy said.

He said that over the past week,

Russia fired more than 1,500 strike drones, 1,280 glide bombs and 50 missiles of various types at Ukraine. More than 132,000 foreign components were found in those weapons from dozens of countries, he said.

Ukraine has campaigned for tighter sanctions on Russia.

Meanwhile, at least seven Russian aircraft bombarded the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia overnight, killing three people and wounding two others, according to regional administration head Ivan Fedorov. The attack started around 4:20 am and lasted about 40 minutes, Fedorov said. Residential buildings, shopping malls, a parking lot and "critical infrastructure" were targeted, he said.

"None of the sites had anything to do with military infrastructure," Fedorov said. (AP)

## UN human rights expert says Russia steps up repression to silence opposition to war in Ukraine

**GENEVA, Sept 22:** A UN expert monitoring human rights in Russia said on Monday that "repression is escalating," targeting civilians, journalists and even Ukrainian prisoners of war in an attempt to silence dissent and opposition to the war in Ukraine.

Mariana Katarzova, the UN special rapporteur focusing on human rights in Russia, presented her latest report that said Russian authorities have stepped up their use of "criminal prosecution, long-term imprisonment, torture and ill-treatment" to quell opposition to the war ordered by President Vladimir Putin.

"The repression is escalating ... and becoming massive," Katarzova told journalists before presenting the report to the Human Rights Council, which created her post after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"The masterminds of this repression are employing new elaborate tools against total impunity for their actions: Torture is also part of this equation, as a tool," she said.

Her report said that over the one year covered, starting in mid-2024, the number of prosecutions increased, "with at least 3,905 individuals convicted on administrative or criminal charges for peaceful dissent."

Most recently, Katarzova noted that through July, more than 150 children aged 14 to 17 were added to the federal list of "extremists" and "terrorists," she reported,

## 24 killed in explosion at TTP compound in northwest Pakistan



**PESHAWAR, Sept 22:** At least 24 people, including women and children, were killed and several others injured on Monday when explosive materials stored at a compound owned by the Pakistani Taliban exploded in northwest Pakistan, police said.

The incident took place in Tirah Valley's Matur Dara area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan.

The local administration denied the rumours about aerial strikes by the Pakistani fighter jets on the compound, saying the explosives used in bomb making exploded, causing the death of 24 people, including 14 militants.

At least 10 civilians, including women and children, were killed, along with 14 militants in the explosion, Station House Officer, Tirah police Station, Zafar Khan said.

The residents, however, claimed that the compound was hit by air strikes. The compound had been home to a large number of local militant leaders and operatives, including dozens of Afghan fighters. It was regarded as a hub for the production of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and sniper training. (PTI)



adding that some were accused of treason and subjected to torture to extract confessions.

By mid-July, a total of 1,040 individuals and organisations - nearly one-quarter of them journalists - had been designated as "foreign agents," including 133 added since January.

"Torture and ill-treatment in the Russian Federation remain widespread and systematic, affecting not only Russian citizens but also Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees," the report said. "At least 258 cases of torture by law enforcement, prison staff, and inmates acting under orders of prison authorities were documented in 2024/25."

Katarzova recounted how one Ukrainian man captured by Russian troops was interrogated and subjected to electric shocks.

Then, a Moscow doctor had to operate on him to save his life.

"The surgery was perfect, but when the guy woke up, he saw that there were extra bandages on his stomach. And this Russian doctor has burned, with the medical tool: Victory! Glory to Russia" on his stomach," said Katarzova, a Bulgarian who formerly headed investigations on human rights in Russia for Amnesty International.

The Russian diplomatic mission in Geneva declined to comment, referring to a Russian Foreign Ministry statement earlier this month that stated Moscow "does not recognise the mandate of this illegitimate special procedure" - the post held by Katarzova - "and any form of interaction with it is unacceptable for the Russian Federation." (AP)

## China's third aircraft carrier completes first electromagnetic catapult trials for fighter jets

**BEIJING, Sept 22:** China's navy on Monday announced that three carrier-based aircraft have for the first time successfully carried out electromagnetic catapult-assisted take-off and landing from the country's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian.

Fujian, which is gearing up for its official induction, is the first among the three Chinese aircraft carriers equipped with the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS), a technology so far used only by US carriers.

Carrier-based aircraft J-15T, J-35 and KongJing-600 have successfully completed their inaugural electromagnetic catapult-assisted take-off and arrested landing training on the Fujian, the navy announced.

The success showed that China's first domestically built catapult-equipped aircraft carrier has obtained electromagnetic catapult launch and recovery capabilities, marking another breakthrough in the development of China's aircraft carriers, the state-run Xinhua news agency said, quoting the naval announcement.

Fujian, stated to be the most advanced aircraft carrier possessing EMALS used by the American aircraft carrier USS Gerald R Ford, was launched last year and since then completed multiple sea trials, accumulating more than 100 days of sea trials. The over 80,000-tonne Fujian, capable of carrying a wide range of aircraft, including fighter jets, early warning aircraft, anti-submarine aircraft and drones, will enable China to enter a new era of three aircraft carriers, ac-

ording to official media reports. China plans to commission the Fujian this year as it has completed nearly three years of sea trials, setting the stage for the Chinese navy for the first time to operate three carrier groups.

Recent trial deployments of the Fujian in the Taiwan Strait and the disputed South China Sea have raised concerns about Beijing flexing its muscle to enforce its territorial claims.

China claims Taiwan as part of its mainland and also claims most of the South China Sea, contested by The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

After the operationalisation of the Fujian, China may also extend the deployment of aircraft carriers in India's backyard -- the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, where its naval fleet is active with bases in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, Pakistan's Gwadar port, and Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, which China acquired as a debt swap.

According to a recent BBC report, China now operates 234 warships, the largest in the world, overtaking the US Navy's 219. The Indian Navy currently operates two carriers - INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya - and is commissioning new ships to maintain its influence in the Indian Ocean.

According to official Chinese media, Beijing is planning to develop four to five aircraft carriers, including a nuclear-powered carrier, as it seeks to expand its global naval influence with deployments in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and the Indian Ocean in future. (PTI)

## To protect soldiers, Ukraine uses remote-controlled vehicles for dangerous missions

**DONETSK REGION (UKRAINE), Sept 22:** On a battlefield swarming with deadly Russian drones, Ukrainian soldiers are increasingly turning to nimble, remote-controlled armored vehicles that can perform an array of tasks and spare troops from potentially life-threatening missions.

The Ukrainian army is especially eager to deploy what soldiers refer to as "robots on wheels" as it faces a shortage of soldiers in a war that has dragged on for more than 3 1/2 years. The vehicles look like miniature tanks and can ferry supplies, clear mines and evacuate the wounded or dead.

"It cannot fully replace people," said the commander of a platoon of the 20th Lyubart Brigade who goes by the call sign Miami and spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military rules. "I would put it this way: A person can go in there, but for a human it's (sometimes) far too dangerous."

The robotic vehicles are mostly made by Ukrainian companies and range in cost from about \$1,000 to as much as \$64,000, depending on their size and capabilities.

While they have become vital to Ukrainian troops along the 1,000 km front line, such vehicles are not new to warfare.

The German army used a remote-controlled miniature tank - tethered by a wire - called the Goliath in World War II. In recent decades, the US, Israel, Britain and China have developed modern versions used for combat engineering and other battlefield roles, according to Ben Barry, a fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. But Ukraine's extensive deployment of these vehicles is noteworthy and could lead to advances, Barry said.

**The Russian army also uses remote-controlled vehicles.**

From drones to autonomous vehicles Miami joined the army on the first day of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. He served as an infantryman and later a drone operator before his latest assignment. His path reflects how the war itself has evolved. (AP)

## Google faces antitrust deja vu as US seeks to break up its digital advertising business

Google and Justice Department will spend two weeks in court presenting evidence

**WASHINGTON, Sept 22:** After deflecting the US Justice Department's attack on its illegal monopoly in online search, Google is facing another attempt to dismantle its internet empire in a trial focused on its abusive tactics in digital advertising.

The trial scheduled to begin Monday in an Alexandria, Virginia, federal court will revolve around the harmful conduct that resulted in US District Judge Leonie Brinkema declaring parts of Google's digital advertising technology to be an illegal monopoly. The judge found that Google has been engaging in behaviour that stifles competition to the detriment of online publishers that depend on the system for revenue.

Google and the Justice Department will spend the next two weeks in court presenting evidence in a "remedy" trial that will culminate in Brinkema issuing a ruling on how to restore fair market conditions.

Although the judge hasn't set a timetable for making that decision, it's unlikely to come down before the end of this year because additional legal briefs and courtroom



arguments are expected to extend into November before Brinkema takes the matter under submission.

No matter how the judge rules, Google says it will appeal the earlier decision, labelling the ad network as a monopoly. Appeals can't be filed until the remedy is determined.

The case, filed in 2023 under President Joe Biden's administration, threatens the complex network that Google has spent the past 17 years building to power its dominant digital advertising business. Besides accounting for most

a monopoly that has been stifling competition and innovation for years.

Google believes it has already made enough changes to its "Ad Manager" system, including providing more options and pricing options, to resolve the issues the Brinkema flagged in her monopoly ruling.

The legal battle over Google's advertising technology mirrors another showdown that the company recently navigated after another federal judge condemned its dominant search engine as an illegal monopoly and then held remedy hearings earlier this year to consider how to stop the misconduct.

In that case, the Justice Department also proposed a severe crackdown that would have required Google to sell its popular Chrome browser, but US District Judge Amit Mehta decided a less dramatic shake-up was needed amid a search market being reshaped by artificial intelligence technology in a decision issued earlier this month. Even though Google didn't agree with all aspects of Mehta's decision, the ruling was widely seen as a slap on the wrist - a sen-

timent that has helped propel Alphabet's stock price to new highs. The 20 per cent gain since Mehta's decision helped make Alphabet only the fourth publicly traded company to reach a market value of USD 3 trillion - an increase of more than USD 1 trillion since Brinkema branded Google's ad technology as a monopoly in April.

In an indication that the outcome of the search monopoly case might sway things in the advertising technology proceedings, Brinkema asked both Google and the Justice Department to address Mehta's decision during the upcoming trial.

As they did in the search case, Google's lawyers have already been asserting in court papers that AI technology being used by ad network rivals like Meta Platforms is reshaping the way the market works and overriding the need for the Justice Department's "radical" proposals. The Justice Department is "fighting for a remedy that would vanquish a past that has been overturned by technological and market transformations in the way digital ads are consumed," Google's lawyers argued leading up to the trial. (AP)

## Tribute paid to Zubeen Garg in Bokajan with candlelight procession

**DIPHU, Sept 22:** Bokajan Karbi Club and Bokajan Karbi Lammet Anei jointly organised a kachekimo (shradhanjali) in memory of late singer and Assam's heartthrob Zubeen Garg at the Bokajan Karbi Club in Monday evening.

The programme was attended by several dignitaries, including president of Bokajan Karbi Club, Kensing Phangcho; AJYCP executive member, Jitu Phukon; chairman of Bokajan Municipal Board, Sardili Bey; Chairman of the Pollution Control Board, Jivon Ch Pathak; and president of Assam Sahitya Sabha Karbi Anglong, Barim Engti, among others.

Fans of the singer from Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong, along with community leaders and people of all ages, paid tribute by singing Zubeen Garg's popular song Mayabini during a candlelight procession.

Attendees lit lamps and incense sticks in front of the late singer's portrait and offered prayers for his eternal peace.

## Border villages pay tribute to Zubeen Garg

**BOKAJAN, Sept 22:** Villages along the Assam-Nagaland border, including Borlengri Block-1 and 2, Vopong Taro, Longki Bosti, Lama Basti, Rengma Gaon, United Adivasi, Manipuri Basti, and neighbouring areas, organised a Shradhanjali Sabha in memory of Assam's beloved singer and composer Zubeen Garg.

The tribute programme was held at Vopong Taro village in Borlengri Block-2 and witnessed heartfelt participation from both Assamese and Naga communities. Music lovers from all walks of life—regardless of caste, creed, religion, or age—came together in the evening to honour the legendary artist.

As a mark of respect, shops, markets, and bazaars across the Assam-Nagaland border area remained closed. The entire Karbi Anglong district experienced a noticeable slowdown, with reduced traffic and fewer people in marketplaces throughout Monday.

## Cough syrup meant for abuse seized at Khatkhathi checkpoint

**BOKAJAN, Sept 22:** In a routine checking drive at Khatkhathi along NH-39 on the evening of September 21, police in Karbi Anglong seized a consignment of cough syrup bottles commonly misused by drug addicts.

During the operation, police intercepted a scooter bearing registration number AS 09L 7901. Upon searching the vehicle, officers recovered 46 bottles of Bescodex cough syrup and 4 bottles of Zudio cough syrup. The scooter was reportedly traveling from Dimapur to Amrajn.

The rider, identified as Biswajit Singh (45), a resident of Amrajn in Karbi Anglong, was apprehended on the spot. Both the scooter and the cough syrup were seized by the authorities.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of Officer-in-Charge Nitul Saikia, along with SI Jitumon Saikia, SI Biman Chetia, ASI Jiten Chandra Kro, and SDPO Rustom Raj Brahma.

## Kokrajhar district bags Best MRMA District Award at Central Silk Board's 76<sup>th</sup> foundation day BTC Assam honoured as best performing State in Sericulture

**KOKRAJHAR, Sept 22:** At the 76th Foundation Day celebration of the Central Silk Board held at the Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad International Convention Centre, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Assam was awarded the Best Performing State Award under the "Mera Resham Mera Abhimaan" (MRMA) campaign.

The award was received by Anjan Chakrabarty, Director, Department of Sericulture, BTC Assam, in recognition of the state's exceptional performance in promoting and developing sericulture.

Adding to the accolades, Kokrajhar district was honoured as the Best Performing MRMA District. Dr Suraksha Chanotra, Scientist-B of CSB's P3 Unit Kowabil, received the award for her significant contributions to the campaign. The district-level initiative was effectively coordinated by Ranjit Bhattacharjee, ADS Kokrajhar, who served as the State Coordinator.

The awards were presented by Padmini Singla, IAS, Joint Secretary (Silk), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India and

## Peaceful voting in newly inducted BTR areas

Voters from Sonitpur, Biswanath, and Gohpur cast ballots for the first time in BTR Council election



**HT Correspondent TEZPUR, Sept 22:** The elections took place in the districts of Sonitpur, Biswanath, and Gohpur — areas that were recently brought under the jurisdiction of the BTR as per Clause 3.1 of the BTR Peace

Act. Under this clause, a total of 61 villages from these districts have been incorporated into the BTR framework, marking a significant step in fulfilling the provisions of the historic accord.

In this landmark election, a total of 43,682 voters exercised their franchise — 12,682 from Sonitpur,

14,000 from Biswanath, and 17,000 from Gohpur. The polling was conducted across 66 polling stations, registering an impressive voter turnout of approximately 75 percent.

Officials confirmed that the election process was conducted

smoothly and without any untoward incidents, with tight security arrangements in place to ensure peaceful voting.

Voters from Sonitpur cast their ballots for the 36-No Harising Member of Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA) seat. Meanwhile, those in Biswanath voted under the Rowta MCLA seat, and voters in Gohpur participated in the election for the Dhanisri MCLA seat.

This peaceful and successful election is being seen as a positive indication of growing trust and co-operation between the local communities and the BTR administration. It also marks a critical step in the integration and representation of these newly inducted areas under the political framework of the BTR, as envisioned in the peace accord signed in January 2020.

The final results of the election are expected to be announced later this week.

## Luxmi Tea promotes health and nutrition awareness in tea estates



**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** As part of its ongoing commitment to community well-being, Luxmi Tea Company Private Limited conducted two significant health and nutrition awareness programmes at its Monmohinipur and Narayanpur Tea Estates, benefitting a large number of tea workers.

At the Monmohinipur Tea Estate Hospital, an awareness session on the importance of a balanced and

nutritious diet was organised. Led by Dr Priyanka Pankaj and the estate's medical team, the programme saw the participation of 46 individuals. The session focused on the role of good food habits in preventing malnutrition and lifestyle-related diseases, while also offering practical advice on preparing balanced meals using locally available ingredients.

"The programme aimed to raise awareness about good food habits

and their role in preventing malnutrition and lifestyle diseases," said Samsheer Singh Redhu, General Manager, Narayanpur Tea Estate. "The participants received practical guidance on creating balanced meals using locally available resources, reinforcing the link between nutrition and overall health."

Meanwhile, at Narayanpur Tea Estate, the "Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar" campaign was conducted, placing a comprehensive focus on women's health, family planning, and disease prevention.

A wide range of medical services and educational sessions were offered, including non-communicable disease screening, tuberculosis screening and enrollment, sickle cell testing, antenatal check-ups, routine immunizations, haemoglobin testing, and blood sugar collection.

## TB patients receive nutritional support under Nikshay Mitra in KA

**DIPHU, Sept 22:** As part of the ongoing Seva Saptha initiative, food baskets were distributed to tuberculosis (TB) patients across Karbi Anglong district under the Nikshay Mitra scheme. The distribution covered Manja, Howraghat, Chowkihol, and Bokajan blocks.

Before the main programme began, a tribute was paid to the late Zubeen Garg in recognition of his outstanding contributions to music and culture.

At Manja, the event was held at Chingri Club with Rajeshan Terang, ACS and Secretary of KAAC, as the chief guest. In Bokajan CHC and Chowkihol, Dr Numal Momin, Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, attended the event, while in Howraghat, MLA Darsing Ronghang took part in the drive.

Speakers highlighted the importance of the Nikshay Mitra initiative in providing nutritional aid and moral support to TB patients. They emphasised that TB is curable with early diagnosis, proper treatment, and a healthy diet. Health officials stated that the programme reflects the government's dedication to eliminating TB in line with national goals.

Beneficiaries expressed gratitude for the support, noting that it encourages them to stay committed to their treatment. The programme concluded with a call to promote awareness, early testing, and community support in the fight against TB.

## Upper Assam bandh continues for third day in mourning for Zubeen Garg

**HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, Sept 22:** Upper Assam remained completely shut for the third consecutive day as people across the region continued to mourn the untimely demise of Assam's cultural icon, Zubeen Garg.

Shops and business establishments in Dibrugarh and surrounding areas remained closed as a mark of respect. The spontaneous bandh, driven entirely by public sentiment, reflects the deep love and admiration people held for the beloved artist.

## Anti-Rabies drive launched in Tezpur

**HT Correspondent TEZPUR, Sept 22:** A mass anti-rabies vaccination campaign for community dogs was launched in Tezpur on Sunday, jointly organised by the District Administration, District Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, and Tezpur Municipality Board, in collaboration with Mission Rabies, Just Be Friendly, and UCO Bank.

The drive was formally inaugurated at Ganesh Mandir Gate in the presence of Additional Deputy Commissioner Jintu Borah, Lead District Bank Manager Acharya Sonowal, District Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer Dr Prasanta Kumar Roy, District Nodal Officer for Rabies Control Dr Abhilasha Sharma, and other veterinary officials. As part of the campaign, a professional team will vaccinate and mark around 1,000 dogs in Tezpur and surrounding areas to develop herd immunity. The initiative is part of the World Rabies Day 2025 observance by the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department under the theme "Act Now: You, Me, Community," with the goal of making Tezpur rabies-free.

## African swine fever outbreak declared in KA



**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, Sept 22:** The Assam government has declared Eradigholpani village under the Howraghat Development Block in Karbi Anglong district as the epicentre of an African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak. In response, District Magistrate of Karbi Anglong, Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, has issued prohibitory orders with immediate effect to prevent, control, and eradicate the disease.

As per the order, an area within a one-kilometre radius of Eradigholpani has been marked as the Infected Zone, while villages falling within a ten-kilometre radius have been placed under the Surveillance Zone. To prevent the spread of the highly contagious disease, a complete ban has been imposed on the movement of live pigs, pork, and pork products in and out of the Infected Zone.

Animal markets, fairs, and exhibitions involving pigs have also been suspended until further notice. The disposal of pig carcasses in public places or water bodies has been strictly prohibited to avoid environmental contamination.

Veterinary officers have been authorised to euthanise infected or suspected pigs as per standard protocol. Municipal and rural bodies, along with officials from the Veterinary, Agriculture, and allied departments, have been instructed to ensure the strict implementation of all containment measures.

In the Surveillance Zone, authorities will conduct intensive monitoring of pig populations through clinical, virological, and serological surveillance. Special focus will be given to domestic pigs in proximity to forest areas, with the Forest Department assisting in monitoring and control efforts.

The District Magistrate has cautioned that violations of these orders will invite strict legal action under relevant laws. The administration has appealed to all residents and stakeholders to extend full cooperation in the collective effort to contain the outbreak and safeguard the region's livestock.

## NFR to run 46 festival special trains for Puja, Diwali and Chhath

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** To manage the anticipated surge in passenger traffic during the upcoming Puja, Diwali, and Chhath festivals, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced the operation of several Festival Special trains across various routes. These trains are aimed at offering additional travel options during the peak festive period.

The Festival Special trains will connect key destinations including Katihar, Sonpur, Dauram Madhepura, Manihari, Agartala, Dharmaganj, New Tinsukia, SMVT Bengaluru, Amritsar, New Jalpaiguri, Gomti Nagar, Kis-



hanganj, Narkatiaganj, Patna, Dibrugarh, Gorakhpur, Silchar, Naharlagun, Kolkata, and Guwahati. Services will operate on daily, weekly, and tri-weekly frequencies between September and December 2025.

In addition to its own services, NFR will also facilitate passenger movement through special trains operated by other Zonal Railways.

These include services on routes such as Mumbai-Katihar, Bengaluru-Narang, Charlapalli-Naharlagun, Shalimar-Rangapara North, Agra Cantt-Jogbani, Kolkata-New Jalpaiguri, Howrah-Lumding, and Anand Vihar-Jogbani.

In total, 23 pairs of trains—amounting to 46 services—will be run during the festive season. This initiative is intended to ensure comfortable travel and smooth transportation during the high-demand period.

Passengers are advised to consult official sources for detailed information regarding train timings, halts, and coach composition before planning their journey.

## CID probes Zubeen Garg's death, visits Nagaon police station

**HT Correspondent NAGAON, Sept 22:** A team from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) visited Nagaon Sadar Police Station on Monday as part of the ongoing probe into the mysterious death of Assam's beloved singer Zubeen Garg. The team questioned several individuals who had filed complaints seeking an investigation into the circumstances of the singer's sudden demise.

One of the complainants, Bibhuti Borthakur, made strong statements to the media following his questioning, demanding the confiscation of property belonging to Zubeen Garg's manager, Siddharth Sharma.

Borthakur had earlier lodged a formal complaint at Kamrup Police Outpost on September 19, calling for a thorough inquiry.

The CID's visit has generated widespread public interest, with fans and well-wishers eagerly awaiting answers regarding the circumstances of the singer's death.

Notably, a total of four FIRs have been filed across three police stations in the district concerning the incident. Two of these FIRs were registered at Nagaon Sadar Police Station, including one by retired academic Nava Kumar Mahanta, while another was filed at Raha Police Station.

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION, ASSAM  
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Website: [dme.assam.gov.in](http://dme.assam.gov.in), E-mail: [dmeassam@gmail.com](mailto:dmeassam@gmail.com)**

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**ADMISSION NOTICE**

**Admission into 1<sup>st</sup> year MBBS/BDS courses in the Government Medical & Dental Colleges of Assam after completion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Online Counselling, session 2025**

This is for information of all concerned that the provisional select list of candidates after the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of online counselling for admission into the vacant MBBS/BDS seats in the Government Medical & Dental Colleges of Assam under Assam State quota seats, session 2025 has been published which is now available in the official website of this Directorate [www.dme.assam.gov.in](http://www.dme.assam.gov.in)

- Candidates provisionally selected under PwD category (DIVYANG), whose PwD status were not assessed earlier by the Medical Board, are directed to report with all their relevant certificates in original to the office of the Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Gauhati Medical College & Hospital, Bhangagarh, Guwahati (Hospital premises), for benchmark verification of their disability status by the Medical Board constituted by the DME, Assam vide letter No. e. DME/JG/2025/689238/12, dated 22/09/2025, on 24/09/2025 (10:00 AM), failing which, his/her allotment shall be cancelled.

All provisionally selected candidates are hereby directed to report to the office of the Principals of the respective Colleges with following terms and conditions on **26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2025** for admission and necessary document verification, failing which his/her allotment shall be cancelled.

1. All the admission shall be provisional and it will be subject to fulfilment of all the requisite eligibility criteria as per the MBBS/BDS Admission Rule, 2017 (amended upto 2025).
2. Candidates who were admitted into the MBBS/BDS courses session 2025 during 1<sup>st</sup> counselling and re-allotted MBBS/BDS seats in the 2<sup>nd</sup> counselling of state quota seats, their earlier seats and institution shall automatically cancelled.
3. Candidates who were admitted in 1<sup>st</sup> round of counselling and subsequently allotted another Medical /Dental College, shall have to report to the newly allotted Medical/Dental College with the acknowledgement receipts/documentary proof of submitting the certificates/testimonials etc. issued by the previous Medical /Dental College.
4. Candidates who are newly provisionally selected shall have to report to the allotted college and deposit the original Admit Cards, Marks Sheets, Pass Certificates of HSLC and HSSLC or Equivalent examination, caste certificate and documents as specified in the MBBS/BDS Admission Rule, 2017 (amendment upto 2025), to the Principal of the respective Colleges at the time of admission on receipt of acknowledgement from the college authority.
5. Candidates must bring all necessary Original documents and Annexures along with Admission and Counselling fees (amounting approx. Rs. 25,000/-) at the time of admission.
6. Admission of the candidates are subject to the satisfactory Medical fitness of the candidate at the time of admission.
7. If any candidate furnishes false information/ declaration at the time of online selection or admission, his/her admission is liable to be cancelled at any point of time. Criminal proceedings shall be taken against such candidates for submission of false, fabricated documents/information under appropriate law.
8. All the candidates shall have to enter into an agreement as per the admission rule in prescribed format which is available in this Directorate's website [www.dme.assam.gov.in](http://www.dme.assam.gov.in). Candidates will have to submit the agreement within 15 days from the date of their admission to the office of the Principal of the respective college.
9. College uniform is compulsory for all the student in all the Medical & Dental Colleges. College authorities shall prescribe necessary dress code.

Candidates are directed to visit the official website of this Directorate, [www.dme.assam.gov.in](http://www.dme.assam.gov.in) regularly for further information & notices.

Sd/-  
Director of Medical Education, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/175/23-Sep-25

## Feb 2020 Delhi riots

## SC notices Delhi police on bail pleas of Umar, Sharjeel, others

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** The Supreme Court on Monday sought Delhi Police's response on the bail pleas of activists Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima and Meeran Haider in the UAPA case related to the alleged conspiracy behind the February 2020 riots in Delhi.

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria issued notice and posted the matter for October 7.

The activists have challenged a September 2 Delhi High Court order which denied bail to nine people, including Khalid and Imam, saying "conspiratorial" violence under the garb of demonstrations or protests by citizens could not be allowed.

Besides Khalid and Imam, those who faced bail rejection are Fatima, Haider, Mohd Saleem Khan, Shifa Ur Rehman, Athar Khan, Abdul Khalid Saifi and Shadab Ahmed.

The bail plea of another accused, Tasleem Ahmed, was rejected by a different high court bench on September 2.

The high court said the Constitution affords citizens the right to protest and carry out demonstrations or agitations, provided they are orderly, peaceful and without arms, and such actions must be within the bounds of law.

While the high court said the right to participate in peaceful protests and to make speeches in public meetings was said to have



been protected under Article 19(1)(a), and couldn't be blatantly curtailed, it observed the right was "not absolute" and "subject to rea-

sonable restrictions". "If the exercise of an unfettered right to protest were permitted, it would damage the constitutional frame-

work and impinge upon the law and order situation in the country," the bail rejection order said.

Khalid, Imam and the rest of the accused persons were booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured. The violence erupted during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The accused, who have denied all the allegations against them, have been in jail since 2020 and had moved the high court after a trial court rejected their bail pleas. (PTI)

## PM Modi makes impossible possible: VP Radhakrishnan



**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi can make the impossible possible, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said on Monday, highlighting his relations with world leaders, including US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who have described the PM as their good friend.

Addressing an event to release two sets of speeches delivered by the prime minister, the vice president said, despite the United States imposing a 50 per cent tariff on India, Trump has always hailed Modi as his great friend.

Similarly, Chinese President Xi shares good relations with PM Modi "in spite of differences of international politics", the vice president said.

Addressing his first public event here after assuming the office of the vice president, Radhakrishnan, said, "Though 50 per cent duty has been put on India by America, Trump is always saying Modi ji is my great friend. Even in that situation, he has not said that I am against Modi. He is always telling I am for Modi."

Radhakrishnan stated that the prime minister is also a close friend of Russian President Putin.

"...at the same time, Xi also, in spite of the differences in international politics, is a good friend of Modi ji. That we have seen today," Radhakrishnan said and asserted "that is why he makes the impossible possible."

Referring to Modi's approach, he said the prime minister does things for the masses with a pure heart and does not expect anything in return.

Addressing the event, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chair Hariwansh said the prime minister speaks the language of the people and speaks for them.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said in the past, when government schemes were launched, they used to work as "band aid". But after Modi came to power, he turned around the mindset on a bigger scale of outreach of the schemes. The Union Minister said Modi uses politics for public service, and every decision taken by him is based on the greater good of society. (PTI)

## SC seeks response of Centre, DGCA on PIL seeking independent probe into June 12 AI crash

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** The Supreme Court on Monday said certain aspects of the AAI preliminary report on the June 12 Air India crash indicating lapses on the part of pilots were "irresponsible", and issued notices to the Centre and the Director General of Civil Aviation on a plea seeking an independent, fair and expeditious probe.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh took note of certain aspects of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) preliminary report issued on July 12.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the NGO 'Safety Matters Foundation', alleged that in the probe panel constituted after the crash, three members were from the aviation regulator and there may be an issue of conflict of interest involved.

He sought release of the information from the flight data recorder of the airplane that would clear the air over the cause of the accident.

The bench, which batted for the final report on the crash, said there is an issue of confidentiality and aspects of privacy and dignity involved in the matter.

While cautioning that the release of particular kinds of information may be exploited by rival airlines, the bench said that it is only issuing notice on the limited aspect of free, fair, independent and expeditious investigation of the crash.

The plea has been filed by an aviation safety NGO led by Captain Amit Singh (FRAES), alleging that the official probe violates citizens' fundamental rights to life, equality and access to truthful information. (PTI)

## RSS centenary events to begin on Vijayadashami

Bhagwat to address workers, Kovind to be chief guest

**NAGPUR, Sept 22:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh will mark its centenary year with events beginning from Vijayadashami on October 2, which will include an address by its chief Mohan Bhagwat in the presence of former president Ramnath Kovind who will be the chief guest.

Events to commemorate 100 years of the outfit will take place till Vijayadashami in 2026. RSS Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh Sunil Ambekar said at a press conference in Reshimbagh here on Monday.

"On October 2, former President of India Ramnath Kovind will be the chief guest at the Vijayadashami programme and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will address swamyasevaks across the world. Bajaj Finserv chairperson Sanjiv Bajaj, Deccan Industries' KV Kar-

Pratap Kalita are the special invitees at the programme," Ambekar said.

Guests from Ghana, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, UK and USA will also take part in the October 2 programme, which will be covered by foreign media, he said, adding there is tremendous enthusiasm among RSS workers for the centenary year celebrations that will be held nationwide.

"Sarsanghchalak" Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale will be visiting all RSS prants in the country through the centenary year, he said. On the lines of RSS chief Bhagwat's three-day "Sanvad" programme held in Delhi in August, events will be held in Bengaluru, Kolkata and Mumbai, Ambekar added.

A two-day programme will be held in Bengaluru on November 7-8 this year, in Kolkata on Decem-

ber 21 and in Mumbai on February 6 and 7, the outfit's Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh informed.

Renowned singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan will perform 'Sangh geet' in a programme in Nagpur on September 28, Ambekar said.

Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded the RSS in 1925 from Nagpur with the objective of "vyakti nirman" considering it essential for society and nation building, Ambekar said.

"The RSS has more than 83,000 daily shakhs along with 32,000 weekly shakhs. During the centenary year, the RSS will reach out to citizens across the country to inform them about our ideology and work through the 'gruh sampark' campaign. Similarly, 'Hindu sam-mellans' will also be held in more than one lakh places nationwide," he said. (PTI)

## Cricketer Robin Uthappa appears before ED in online betting app case



**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** Former Indian cricketer Robin Uthappa appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday for questioning in a money laundering case linked to an online betting app, officials said.

Uthappa (39) reached the agency's office here around 11 am.

The ED will question him and record his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a case linked to a platform named 1xBet, the officials said.

The federal probe agency has questioned former cricketers Suresh Raina and Shikhar Dhawan apart from former TMC MP and actor Mimi Chakraborty and Bengali actor Anshu Hazra over the last few weeks as part of this investigation.

Former cricketer Yuvraj Singh and actor Sonu Sood have been summoned for Tuesday and Wednesday respectively by the ED

in the same case.

The probe pertains to the operations of the 1xBet betting app as part of the ED's wider probe against such platforms on allegations of duping numerous people and investors worth crores of rupees and reportedly evading a huge amount of direct and indirect taxes.

According to the Curacao registered company, 1xBet is a globally recognised bookmaker with 18 years in the betting industry. The brand's customers can place bets on thousands of sporting events, with the company's website and app available in 70 languages.

Some other sportspersons, movie actors, online influencers and celebrities are expected to be questioned by the agency in the coming days as part of this probe.

The ED's line of investigation, according to the sources, is to know from the celebrities as to how they were contacted by the said betting company seeking

their endorsement, the nodal person(s) for contact in India, the mode of payment (cash through hawala or banking channel) and place of the payment (in India or abroad) etc.

The agency, while recording the statements of the cricketers and actors, is understood to be asking them if they knew that online betting and gaming was illegal in India. It has also asked them to furnish a copy of their contracts and all relevant email and paper documentation made by them with 1xBet.

The agency is also looking at the end use of the money taken by the celebrities to check if any of them can be categorised as the "proceeds of crime" under the PMLA, as per the sources.

The Union government recently banned real money online gaming in India by bringing a legislation.

The ED, during a recent national meeting of its senior officers in Jammu and Kashmir, has also decided to initiate "focused strategies" to investigate financial crimes arising from this sector linked to alleged illegal betting and gaming.

According to estimates by market analysis firms and probe agencies undertaken before the government ban, there were about 22 crore Indian users in various such online betting apps out of which half (about 11 crore) were regular users.

The online betting app market in India was estimated to be worth over USD 100 billion which was stated to be growing at the rate of 30 per cent, according to experts.

The government has told Parliament that it has issued 1,524 orders from 2022 till June 2025 to block online betting and gambling platforms. (PTI)

## DNA, CCTV evidence corroborate key accused's role in South Calcutta Law College rape case

**KOLKATA, Sept 22:** Investigating officers of Kolkata Police have claimed in their chargesheet that DNA reports corroborated the role of key accused Monojit 'Mango' Mishra in the alleged rape of a student inside South Calcutta Law College.

Police sources on Monday claimed the DNA test results of samples found on the clothes of the 24-year-old survivor matched those of the accused. Blood samples were taken from both the survivor and the accused to conduct the DNA test.

The chargesheet was submitted to the Court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Alipore, naming Mishra, the prime accused and an alumnus of the college, along with three others.

"DNA tests also corroborated the presence of both the survivor and the accused at the crime spot (inside the guard room of the educational institution). The DNA report appears to be one of the important pieces of evidence in this case," the police officer told PTI.

Police have also claimed in the chargesheet that the CCTV camera footage collected from the college premises and that from two nearby shops outside also corroborated the crime.

"The footage also showed that the crime spot was inside the guard's room. The role of the other two accused, Pramit Mukherjee and Zaib Ahmed, who stood outside the room, and also that of the security guard, could be seen," the officer said.

He added that investigators were awaiting reports of voice sample examinations collected from the accused persons' mobile phones.

"Once the results are delivered, a supplementary chargesheet will be filed in court," he said.

A first-year student of South Calcutta Law College had lodged a complaint alleging she was gang-raped inside the institution by an alumnus and two senior students on June 25.

Police have arrested the three accused for their alleged involvement in the crime and the security guard for lapses in carrying out his duty. (PTI)

## Andhra Pradesh to usher in new heritage tourism policy: State Tourism Minister



**BENGALURU, Sept 22:** A new heritage tourism policy that envisions preserving and promoting historic public buildings of Andhra Pradesh to tap their tourism potential is under active consideration, state's tourism minister Kandula Durgesh has said.

In an interview to PTI on the sidelines of a national conference on tourism here, he also said the government is working on a policy under which "tent cities" will be built for 'Pushkarams', which are once-in-12-year festivals held on the banks of rivers in the region like 'Kumbh Mela' of the north.

Durgesh said the N Chandrababu Naidu government announced the new tourism policy 2024-29 last year, under which tourism activities have been accorded an industry status.

"The important and salient feature of that policy is that all the incentives being given to industry will be extended to tourism also. And, we are taking up a homestay policy. We have already taken up the land allotment policy," he said.

The land allotment policy, which seeks to foster public-

private-partnership and under which land parcels could be given on lease, was announced in August this year and will be implemented now, the tourism minister said.

So, "first time in India", government of Andhra Pradesh has taken up this land allotment policy, he added.

Durgesh, who also holds the portfolio of culture, addressed a gathering on the concluding day of the 55th annual convention of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) held from September 18-20 in Bengaluru.

He encouraged people and companies to invest in Andhra Pradesh, with hotels, resorts, and other tourism activities, saying the state government is offering "big incentives".

"A very conducive environment is there in Andhra Pradesh, to come and invest in hospitality industry as well as other tourism activities. So, it is the best time for any investor to come to Andhra Pradesh and invest," Durgesh told PTI on the sidelines of the conference.

Asked what new plans are in the pipeline, he said, a "new heritage tourism policy" is under "active consideration

which we are going to bring later this year".

"Andhra Pradesh has rich cultural heritage, and we need to conserve these built heritage structures. And, we wish to use them as heritage centres," the minister said.

He referred to the large number of government and other public buildings in his state built during the British period, or before it such as old buildings housing district collectorates, civil courts, town halls, libraries, or other such structures.

"What we strongly believe is that without disturbing the original structure of a particular building, we need to conserve and preserve them as a heritage building, by strengthening it with modern technology and new amenities. That is the policy to adopt," he added.

Durgesh cited the example of an old Town Hall in Rajahmundry district that was built by noted social reformer Veeresalingam Pantulu in the late 19th century.

This is said to be the "first town hall of Andhra Pradesh". There were reports in the past 10 years that the building had suffered neglect.

"We are going to make it a heritage place, we are not disturbing that one, the original structure is intact, and we are strengthening it with modern technology. It will be used as a town hall, and there is a theatre inside, his library is there, and other beautiful things inside it," the minister said.

He also referred to Erra Matti Dibbalu, red soil reserves near Visakhapatnam, which were recently added to India's Tentative List of UNESCO heritage sites. (PTI)

## Rahul, Kharge to attend CWC meeting in Patna tomorrow

**PATNA, Sept 22:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior party leader Rahul Gandhi will be present at its working committee meeting here on September 24, AICC Bihar in-charge Krishna Allavaru said on Monday.

During a press conference here, Allavaru asserted that Congress was fighting "the second war of Independence" in Bihar, a reason why the meeting has been scheduled in the state.

"At the CWC meeting, we will be having AICC president Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi. All other CWC members have also been invited. Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled states are also expected," he said. The Congress leader alleged that the ruling BJP at the Centre was involved in "vote theft", and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "like a student who does not study hard, but takes recourse to unfair means for doing well in examinations". Asserting that Bihar, where Gandhi recently took out an over 1,300-km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra', had become "the centre of national politics", Allavaru said, "We are fighting the second war of Independence in the state, a reason why the CWC meeting is being held here." In reply to another query, he said, "Talks on seat-sharing are being held on a positive note in the INDIA bloc, and we will soon come out with a viable formula. On the other hand, we find the BJP-led NDA in disarray." (PTI)

## 'Garba celebrations to continue throughout the festival' Rajasthan kicks off Navratri celebrations with grand rituals

**JAIPUR, Sept 22:** The first day of Navratri was marked by grand celebrations and religious fervour across Rajasthan on Monday.

Devotees thronged temples across the state to celebrate the arrival of the nine-day festival dedicated to Goddess Durga. From Banswara to Jaipur, Karauli, and Jodhpur, devotees gathered at temples to engage in prayers and rituals.

A 5-kilometre-long chunari (sacred cloth) was offered to Goddess Tripura Sundari at the Tripura Sundari Temple in Banswara.

The Vishwakarma Vanshi Sena, which has been conducting this ritual annually, led a grand procession with several vehicles from various parts of Madhya Pradesh, including Indore, Ujjain, and Rat-



lam. Devotees walked barefoot from the surrounding areas to the temple. The temple was beautifully adorned in white attire to mark the auspicious occasion, with several

special rituals, including Ghata Shhapana, taking place in the morning.

Garba celebrations will continue throughout the festival, temple manager Jagesh Panchal said.

A massive turnout of pilgrims was witnessed at Kaila Devi temples in Karauli and at the Karauli-Bayana road in Jheel ka Bada, Karauli district.

Special arrangements have been made for the convenience of pilgrims. Divers have been deployed at Kalasil Ghat near the temple for safety, an official said.

Elaborate security arrangements have also been made.

In Jaipur, the Shila Mata Temple at Amber Fort saw devotees arriving since morning. A large number attended the morning Ghata Shhapana ceremony. The temple, known for its historical significance, was filled with the sounds of devotional chants and the sight of devotees offering prayers. Special religious events such as

the Durga Saptashati recitation and havan were organised, along with prayers dedicated to the 10 Mahavidyas.

Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur was another major destination for devotees, who arrived early to pay homage to Goddess Chamunda in the Chamunda Temple.

Member of the erstwhile royal family, Gaj Singh, performed the inaugural puja and prayed for the prosperity of the Marwar region.

Similar rituals were followed in other famous temples in the state, including Kaiway Mata Temple in Jalore, Chamunda Mata Temple in Ajmer, Jamway Mata Temple in Jaipur, Shakambhari Mata Temple, and Jeen Mata Temple in Sikar, among others. (PTI)

### Governor participates in PM's foundation stone laying ceremony

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 22: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), participated in the foundation stone laying ceremony led by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, in Itanagar on Monday.

The event, which drew wide public attention, marked the launch of several transformative projects aimed at accelerating the state's economic growth and infrastructural development.

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the Tato-I Hydroelectric Project (186 MW) and the Heo Hydroelectric Project (240 MW) in Shi-Yomi District, along with the Integrated State-of-the-Art Convention Centre in Tawang.

In addition, ten other key projects worth ₹1,291 crore were also launched as part of the occasion.

Governor Parnaik, who received the Prime Minister at the Raj Bhavan Helipad earlier in the day, expressed his optimism that the projects would bring a new wave of progress for Arunachal Pradesh.

He emphasised that the hydroelectric ventures would not only harness the state's immense natural resources but also create job opportunities and livelihood avenues for the educated youth.

The Governor underlined that the benefits of the projects would extend beyond power generation.

He pointed out their potential to strengthen tourism, support the service industry, and provide a wider market for Arunachal Pradesh's unique textiles and handicrafts.

"These initiatives reflect the Prime Minister's vision of unlocking Arunachal Pradesh's true potential and ensuring that development reaches every corner of the state," the Governor said, while hailing the multi-dimensional impact of the projects.

### PM interacts with entrepreneurs of Arunachal on GST reforms

ITANAGAR, Sept 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with local entrepreneurs and members of self-help groups in Arunachal Pradesh's capital Itanagar on Monday.

He visited an exhibition that was organised at the venue of his public meeting in Indira Gandhi Park, and held the interaction, officials said.

The PM asked traders how the latest GST reforms were helping them. He also enquired in detail about the locally made items exhibited, and underlined the importance of promoting indigenous products as part of the government's 'Vocal for Local' campaign.

"The interaction served both as an encouragement for the local business community, and a reminder of the government's commitment to strengthen grassroots entrepreneurship in the frontier state," an official said.

The local traders of Arunachal Pradesh recalled that earlier they had to deal with multiple taxes, but it was the Modi government which brought in the reform of 'One Nation, One Tax' through GST. (PTI)

### Rijiju hails Modi's visit to Arunachal, calls GST reforms historic gift to nation

ITANAGAR, Sept 22: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh as a "sacred and historic day" for the frontier state and the country. Addressing a public meeting at Indira Gandhi Park here, Rijiju said the state was proud to host the PM on the auspicious occasion of Navratri, and to be the state from where the next-generation GST reforms were launched.

"Today is a holy day for Arunachal Pradesh and for the nation. The PM has chosen our state, the land where the first rays of the sun touch the country, to roll out the historic GST reforms that will benefit crores of poor people across the

## 'Modi worships those whom no one has ever asked about' 'Inherent habit' of Congress to abandon any development work that's difficult: Modi

ITANAGAR, Sept 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday alleged that the Congress has an "inherent habit" of abandoning any development work that is difficult, and this caused significant harm to the Northeast.

Addressing a rally at Indira Gandhi Park in Itanagar after unveiling development projects worth over ₹ 5,100 crore, Modi hailed the GST reforms, stating that people would receive a "double bonanza" this festive season with the lower rates coming into effect on the first day of Navratri.

The PM said he knew that the Northeast couldn't be developed from Delhi, and so, he sent ministers and officers more frequently to the region, and himself came here more than 70 times.

"One inherent habit of Congress is that they never take up development work which is difficult to do; they abandon it. This habit of Congress caused significant harm to Arunachal Pradesh and the entire Northeast. In the hilly and forested areas, where development work was challenging, Congress would declare the regions backward and simply forget them," he claimed.

Modi said areas once considered impossible for building roads now have modern highways.

"The Sela tunnel, which was once unthinkable, is now a proud identity of Arunachal. The Hollongi airport has a new terminal and has flights connecting directly to Delhi. This has eased travel for students and tourists and also helps farmers to send their produce to big markets," he said.

The PM claimed that the Congress overlooked Arunachal Pradesh, as it has only two Lok Sabha seats.

"When I was given the opportunity to serve the nation in 2014, I resolved to free the country from the mindset of Congress. Our guiding principle is not the number of votes or seats in any state, but

'nation first'. Our only mantra is 'nagrik devo bhava' (the citizen is God)," he said.

"Modi worships those whom no one has ever asked about. That is why Arunachal Pradesh, which was neglected during Congress rule, has since 2014 become a centre of developmental priority," he added.

The PM said the projects he unveiled were an example of "double benefits" of the "double-engine" government.

"Arunachal is moving forward. The new power projects announced today will make the state a major power producer, create thousands of jobs, and provide affordable electricity," he said.

"Be it ease of education, ease of business, ease of travel, or ease of treatment, our double-engine government is working to make life easier for every citizen," he said.

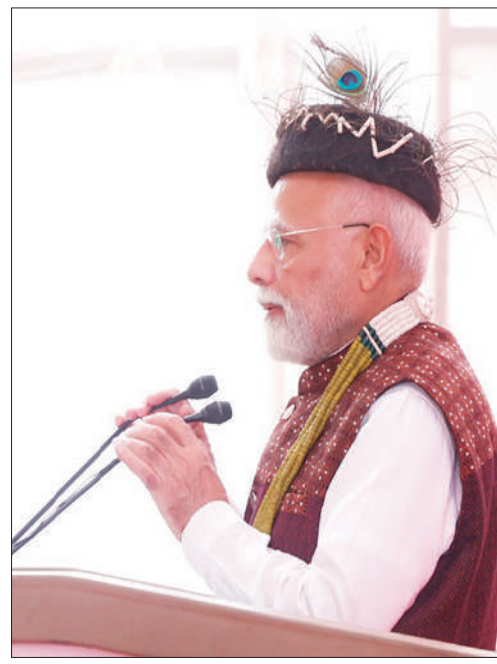
The PM laid the foundation stones for two major hydropower projects over the Jarjap river in the Shi Yomi district, and a convention centre in Tawang.

The Tato-I project, with a capacity of 186 mw, will be developed jointly by the Arunachal Pradesh government and the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) at ₹ 1,750 crore. It is expected to generate around 802 million units of electricity annually.

The 240-mw Heo project will also be developed by the state government and NEEPCO at ₹ 1,939 crore. It is expected to produce 1,000 million units of electricity each year.

The PM said India has set a target to build 500 gw of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The convention centre in Tawang, for which he laid the foundation stone, will be built under the PM-DevINE scheme at ₹ 145.37 crore. It will have a capacity to host over 1,500 people, and boost the



tourism and cultural potential of the region.

Modi also launched several other infrastructure projects worth over ₹ 1,290 crore, catering to various sectors, including connectivity, healthcare and fire safety.

He said the Northeast is no longer distant for the government in Delhi, and central ministers have visited the region over 800 times in the last decade, often staying overnight in remote areas.

"As the prime minister, I have come to the Northeast more than 70 times. Just last week, I was in Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. The Northeast is

no longer distant, neither by road nor by heart. Delhi is no longer far from you. We have brought Delhi to your doorstep," he said.

He said the state, which witnesses the country's first sunrise, is now also receiving the "first rays of development" after decades of neglect.

Asserting that every person in the state is a symbol of bravery and unity, Modi said, "Just like the first colour of the Tricolour is saffron, the first colour of Arunachal too is saffron as it sees the first sunrise."

Modi alleged the border villages were neglected by successive Congress governments, leading to the migration of people from these areas.

"Through the Vibrant Village Programme, over 450 border villages in Arunachal now have roads, electricity, internet and tourism facilities. They are turning into new centres of tourism," he said.

The PM also announced that heliports will be developed in remote areas of the state under the UDAAN scheme.

He said that his visit coincided with three important occasions -- the beginning of Navratri, the roll-out of GST reforms, and the unveiling of the development projects.

"Today, next-generation GST reforms have been implemented across the country, and the GST 'Bachat Utsav' has begun. During the season of festivals, the people have received a double bonanza," he said.

"The GST reforms will reduce kitchen budget, helping women," he said.

The PM said the previous Congress government kept on increasing taxes even as everything got expensive and corruption was happening everywhere.

"Congress imposed a heavy tax burden on the people, but our government has gradually reduced taxes, giving relief," he said. (PTI)

## Cong accuses PM of turning official event into poll campaign, ignoring Arunachal's issues



ITANAGAR, Sept 22: The Arunachal Pradesh unit of the Congress on Monday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allegedly using his rally here to attack the opposition party and praise himself, instead of addressing the pressing concerns of the state such as unemployment and poor health infrastructure, and turning an official programme into a "BJP election campaign event".

The party also highlighted the developments made during the Congress regime in the northeastern state, which is now ruled by the BJP.

Addressing a rally at the Indira Gandhi Park in Itanagar earlier in the day, Modi alleged that the Congress has an "inherent habit" of abandoning any development work that is difficult, and this caused significant harm to the Northeast.

After unveiling development projects worth over Rs 5,100 crore in the state, the PM also said he knows that the region could not be developed from Delhi, and so, he sends ministers and of-

ficers frequently to the region, and he himself came here more than 70 times.

In a statement, the Congress alleged that the Prime Minister "completely ignored" unemployment, poor health and education facilities, flood control, disaster management and repeated Chinese incursions, while turning an official programme into what it called a "BJP election campaign event".

The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee claimed that crores of public money were spent on the rally, state employees were compelled to attend, and thousands of daily-wage workers were hired to fill the grounds.

"Arunachal Pradesh is not a podium for Assam elections," the party said, accusing the BJP of misusing government machinery and public funds.

Recounting Arunachal's political and developmental history, the opposition party asserted that the state's identity, infrastructure and democratic institutions were all built under successive Congress governments, beginning from

the NEFA days. Till 1972, Arunachal Pradesh was known as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)

The Congress highlighted that Jawaharlal Nehru established NEFA and laid the foundations of tribal welfare and frontier infrastructure; Indira Gandhi granted Union Territory status in 1972, created the Legislative Assembly and Public Service Commission, and expanded health, education and connectivity.

It added that Rajiv Gandhi fulfilled the aspirations of the people by granting statehood in 1987 and promoting youth-oriented and decentralised governance; and Dr Manmohan Singh, during his tenure, announced a historic ₹ 24,000 crore development package in 2008 that funded the Trans-Arunachal Highway, Donyi Polo Airport, railway lines, district secretariats, sports stadiums, and higher education and health institutions.

The party argued that every major milestone in Arunachal's journey, statehood, Article 371H protection, universities, roads, airports, hospitals, and hydro-power projects, bore the imprint of Congress leadership.

The BJP, it alleged, has merely claimed credit by laying foundation stones or inaugurating projects initiated by the Congress, while failing to deliver on promises during a decade of "double engine government".

"Congress built Arunachal Pradesh, while the BJP believes in speeches and propaganda," the statement said, reaffirming the party's stand to continue to raise the voice of the people, protect indigenous rights and ensure genuine development for the state. (PTI)

## APLA holds golden jubilee outreach

HT Correspondent

BASAR, Sept 22: The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly (APLA) marked another milestone in its Golden Jubilee celebrations by successfully hosting the APLA@50 Outreach Connect Programme at the Government Model College, Basar.

The event, organised in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), brought together legislators, academicians and students in a day-long exchange aimed at deepening civic awareness and strengthening youth participation in democratic life.

More than 200 students of Government Model College, Basar, attended the programme, which combined debate competitions, keynote lectures and interactive sessions.

The atmosphere reflected both the solemnity of the occasion and the enthusiasm of the young participants eager to engage with the principles of democracy.

The proceedings began with the National Anthem, setting a tone of unity and patriotism.

Dr Jommi Loyi, Principal of Government Model College, delivered the Welcome Address.

He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to host the

event and underlined the crucial role of higher education institutions in preparing students to become responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the state's progress.

Explaining the broader objectives of the outreach series, Dr Nyajum Lollen, assistant professor at RGU's Centre for Distance Education, highlighted that the initiative seeks to bridge the gap between the legislature and the student community.

According to him, the programme is designed to instil democratic values among the youth, equipping them to take on active roles in governance and public life.

A highlight of the programme was the Keynote Address delivered by senior advocate Kenbom Bagra.

In his detailed exposition, Bagra traced the historical evolution of the Fundamental Rights and Duties enshrined in the Constitution. He observed that while rights empower individuals to assert their freedoms, duties remain essential for maintaining the moral and social order of society.

He urged the young audience to move beyond a textbook understanding of these duties and internalise them as guiding principles in their daily lives.

SCBC-ESST/16/2023-GEN-DWSCBC-Directorate of Welfare of SC and BC

### APPLICATION INVITED FOR INTERCASTE MARRIAGE FOR THE YEAR 2024

Applications are invited from eligible Inter-caste Marriage couples under the scheme "Financial Incentive for Inter-Caste marriages under PCR Act 1955 and SC/ST (POA) Act 1989 in Assam" for the calendar year 2024 (Jan 24 to Dec 24). Eligible couples will be granted a one-time Financial Assistance of Rs 2.50 Lakhs, in the fixed deposit, jointly in the name of the couple (the first name being of the woman), in a Government/Nationalized bank, for a lock-in period of three years, without facility for its pre-mature encashment. The number of couples to be provided financial incentive is subjected to availability of Budget provision and sanction of funds from Government.

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- One of the Spouse of Inter-Caste marriage should belong to Scheduled Caste (SC) and the other should belong to General Caste Hindu.
- Marriage Certificate issued by the Sub-Register office.
- The marriage should be performed within 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31 December 2024.
- There will be no incentive on second or subsequent marriage. In this regard marriage certificate from a Gazetted Officer is necessary to confirm that it is the couple's first marriage.
- The combined annual income of the couple from all sources of income should be Rs 5 Lakhs and below. The following self attested documents are needed to be enclosed along with the application and should reach the office of the undersigned on or before 30th Nov, 2024. Fully filled application after the last date will not be accepted and incomplete application will be rejected. Further the financial incentives will be subject to budget provision.

#### MANDATORY DOCUMENTS FOR RELEASE OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVE :-

- Digital Caste Certificate of Husband/wife issued by the Competent Authority. (Deputy Commissioner)
- Proof of General Caste of Husband/Wife in the form of affidavit from a Notary (The same will be cross verified)
- Marriage Certificate issued by the office of Sub-Register.
- (1) Digital Income Certificate of the couple from concerned Circle-Officer (in case the person/persons are unemployed.)  
(ii) Salary statement signed by the Employer (in case of Private Sector) and  
(iii) In Case of Government Employees salary statement generated in Fin Assam is to be enclosed.  
(iv) If wife is a homemaker without any income source, affidavit from the Notary stating the same should be submitted. Further, the same will be subject to cross-verification.
- ID proof-Aadhaar & Pan of the couple.
- Voter card/Driving licence/Ration Card as residence proof of the couple
- Joint photograph of the couple.

(NOTE:- Opening of Joint Accounts of the Eligible Intercaste Marriage Couple will be initiated from this end)

Sd/-  
Director  
Welfare of SC & BC, Assam

### APPLICATION FORM FOR FINANCIAL INCENTIVE TO INTER CASTE MARRIAGE DURING THE YEAR-2024

- Date of Marriage:-
- Place where marriage was performed:-
- Details of Bridegroom
 

i) Name	->	
ii) Age	->	
iii) Nationality	->	
iv) Profession	->	
v) Caste	->	
vi) Sub-Caste	->	
vii) Father's Name	->	
viii) Mother's Name	->	
ix) Address Village/Town	->	
x) P.O	->	P.S
xi) Dist	->	State
xii) Pin	->	Phone No

PHOTO

- Details of Bride
 

i) Name	->	
ii) Age	->	
iii) Nationality	->	
iv) Profession	->	
v) Caste	->	
vi) Sub-Caste	->	
vii) Father's Name	->	
viii) Mother's Name	->	
ix) Address Village/ Town	->	
x) P.O	->	P.S
xi) Dist	->	State
xii) Pin	->	
xiii) Phone No:-	->	

We, ..... Sri ..... (Bridegroom) ..... and Smt. .... (Bride) do hereby declared that the above particulars furnished by us are correct to the best of our knowledge.

Signature of

(1) Bridegroom:-

(2) Bride:-

DIPR /D/HLT/177/23-Sep-25

भारत सरकार  
Government of India  
विदेश मंत्रालय  
Ministry of External Affairs  
क्षेत्रीय पासपोर्ट कार्यालय, गुवाहाटी  
Regional Passport Office, Guwahati

अनुबंध के आधार पर "यंग प्रोफेशनल" की नियुक्ति /Engagement of "Young Professional" on contract basis

क्षेत्रीय पासपोर्ट कार्यालय, गुवाहाटी में अनुबंध के आधार पर एक वर्ष की अवधि के लिए "यंग प्रोफेशनल" (Young Professional) के एक पद पर नियुक्ति हेतु योग्य और इच्छुक उम्मीदवारों से आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं। इस पद के लिए न्यूनतम योग्यता किसी मान्यता प्राप्त विश्वविद्यालय से स्नातक (Graduate) या उसके समकक्ष डिग्री होना आवश्यक है। अधिक जानकारी के लिए, कृपया वेबसाइट <http://www.passportindia.gov.in/psp/rpo/guwahatiRPO> पर दिया गया परिपत्र देखें।

Applications are invited from eligible and interested candidates for appointment to one post of "Young Professional" for a period of 1 year on contract basis in Regional Passport Office, Guwahati. The minimum qualification for this post is graduation or its equivalent degree from a recognized university. For more details, please see the Circular given on the website: <http://www.passportindia.gov.in/psp/rpo/guwahatiRPO>.

Sd/-  
उप पासपोर्ट अधिकारी एवं कार्यालय प्रमुख  
Deputy Passport Officer & H.O.  
क्षेत्रीय पासपोर्ट कार्यालय, गुवाहाटी  
Regional Passport Office, Guwahati

DIPR /D/HLT/176/23-Sep-25

**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** After getting inspired by one of the contestants on a reality game show "Kaun Banega Crorepati", megastar Amitabh Bachchan distributed helmets to fans that gathered outside his residence on Sunday to catch a glimpse of the actor.

Bachchan is known for meeting his fans every Sunday at his Mumbai residence, Jalsa. Every Sunday, a huge crowd gathers, and Bachchan comes to greet them. He has been following this since 1982.

During the latest interaction, the 82-year-old actor decided to distribute dandiya sticks, ahead of Navaratri festivities. He also handed helmets to some after getting inspired by one of the contestants, Raghvendra Kumar, popularly known as the "Helmet Man of India".

Kumar is popular for distributing helmets to bike riders to ensure their safety on the roads. He has been working towards raising public awareness about road safety and has already donated thousands of helmets to the riders, who don't have them across cities.

Bachchan shared a video on his X handle on Monday. "Honoured to have met the 'HELMET MAN' at KBC ... who voluntarily gives out helmets to bike riders for safety ... A learning for me ... so I followed and gave out at the Sunday Fan meet ... dandiya sticks for dandiya and helmets to as many as I could ... Each day is a learning," he wrote in the caption.

Kumar replied to the post and called the actor's gesture the "greatest award" of his life.

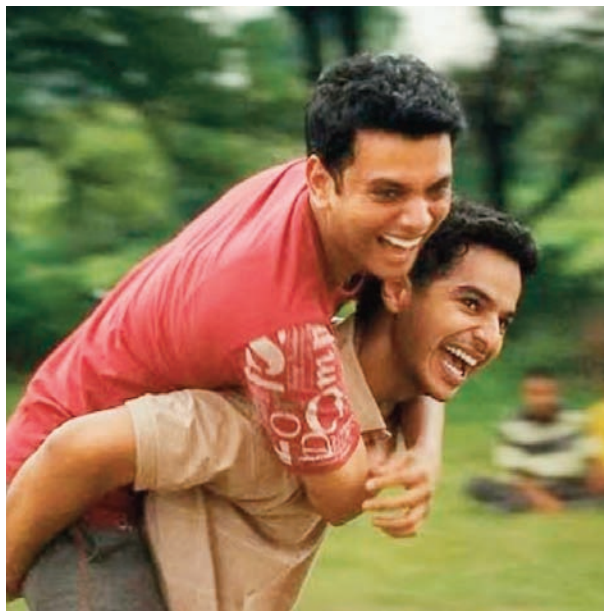
"Respected @SrBachchan Sir. Your words and blessings are the greatest award of my life. I had never imagined that in our very first meeting, I would be able to plant a seed of safety in your heart," Kumar wrote in the comment section.

## AMITABH BACHCHAN GIVES AWAY FREE HELMETS TO FANS, SAYS 'EACH DAY IS A LEARNING'



"But in just two days, you nurtured that small seed into a big tree, and by giving this message to the whole world, you have made this bond eternal. The dream I have seen of a road accident-free India is now ready to grow into a massive movement with your guidance and inspiration. With deepest respect," he added. Bachchan is currently hosting the 17th season of "Kaun Banega Crorepati". (PTI)

## 'Homebound' a call for inculcating empathy, humanity in people: Ghaywan



**MUMBAI, Sept 22:** Filmmaker Neeraj Ghaywan on Monday said through his film "Homebound", which is India's entry to the Oscars, he wants to have conversation with the audiences on the importance of empathy and dialogue at a time when there is too much hate around the world.

On Friday, "Homebound" was announced as India's official entry for the 2026 Academy Awards in the Best International Feature category. Ghaywan said the team is still in disbelief but is happy that the film is now releasing in theatres in India. "Our entire goal in making this film is that people that don't look like you, talk like you, have different worldviews and value systems and maybe ideologically different, I'm saying that we should have empathy even for those. There's so much hate and there's so much of disdain for each other. It's about time across the world that we just stop and maybe have a dignified conversation, and engage in dialogue and not engage in aspersions and squabbles. So that's my intent," he said at a press conference.

He said the movie, starring Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa and Janhavi Kapoor in lead roles, is a deeply humane story of Indian "heartland and people".

"We are very thrilled, honoured and humbled (Oscar entry)... It's (the film) a call for inculcating empathy, humanity in people and not see the difference in each other, so that's the message that we're going with," he added.

The film, which had its world premiere in the Un Certain Regard category at Cannes and most recently screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, is set to release in India on September 26. Ghaywan, known for his acclaimed debut "Masaan" in 2015, said he is hoping audiences in the country "appreciate" his film as it is made for the people of India. (PTI)

## The independent music scene has gotten so much bigger and better: 'Sajri' star Lauren Gottlieb



**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** American actor-dancer Lauren Gottlieb, who recently starred in the music video of Gurdeep Mehndi's song "Sajri", says the Indian music space has evolved a lot since she first came to India for the 2013 film "ABCD: Any Body Can Dance".

Gottlieb shot to fame as a contestant on American dance reality show "So You Think You Can Dance" and also featured in the Remo D'Souza-directed "ABCD" sequel. Her other movie credits include "Welcome 2 Karachi" and Punjabi film "AmbarSariya".

The actor said when she first started coming to India to perform, it was mostly film songs. "The independent music scene has gotten so much bigger and better through the years.

Now we see massive stage productions and global tours from Indian artists and it's incredible. I am able to not just be that dancer that comes in and does her steps and shoots, I'm now able to put my technicality, my experience and my art into the choreography, the direction, the editing, the whole marketing plan and stuff," the 37-year-old told PTI.

Gottlieb said she immediately agreed for a collaboration when she heard the music of Mehdi's "Sajri". "It was just one of those songs that I started listening to after waking up and I was like this is something different. I was like 'Who is singing it? Oh Gurdeep Mehndi, Daler Mehndi's son, Mika Singh's nephew?' I was like it's a musically-genius family and I loved Gurdeep's other songs, so it was kind of one of those quick things... Once I said yes, I think I was on a plane like two or three days later," she said.

Gottlieb, who now lives in London with her family, was also part of the official OST of Netflix's "The Royals" where she grooves to the song "Who Rules the World", a song created by Anish Mathew, Sukriti Bhardwaj and Harsh Upadhyay. "When I heard 'Who Rules the World' I was like, this is international and very cool... I could tell by the sound, the singers were maybe new, and not like old time people that we've heard a lot before," she said. Gottlieb said she is in talks to star in both Hindi and Punjabi movies but her goal is to keep working in music video space. "I just love this space so I just want to keep doing bigger and better music video shoots, because it's like my favourite thing. But I still want that solo female song as I feel like I usually am dancing with a gentleman. And now I want to stand in front of the camera and fully own being there," she said. (PTI)

## Vinod Kapri's 'Pyre' wins award at Chicago South Asian Film Festival

**LOS ANGELES, Sept 22:** Vinod Kapri's "Pyre" won the best film audience award at the 16th Chicago South Asian Film Festival. The film, which has been travelling to international film festivals since its world premiere in November 2024 at the prestigious 28th Tallinn Black Nights International Film Festival, revolves around an elderly couple, Padam and Tulsi.

The couple live in a remote Himalayan village abandoned by younger generations seeking urban futures. Alone and uncertain about who will perform their last rites, their lives are suddenly filled with hope when a letter arrives from their estranged son — three decades later.

The award, which Kapri received from actor Shabana Azmi, is the fourth win for the director in the US. The movie first won the Best Feature Film Award at the prestigious 14th DC South Asian Film Festival. The film bagged both the Best Feature Film Award and Best Director Award at the 8th India International Film Festival of Boston. The winning streak continued in Chicago, according to a press release. In July 2025, the film received the Grand Jury Best Feature Film Award ("German Star of India Award") at the Indian Film Festival of Stuttgart. In just one month, "Pyre" went on to win five international awards, including three Audience Choice Awards, across Germany, Spain, and the UK. (PTI)

## From Vada pav to 'Chaiya Chaiya': Mamehara Issei and Ohira Shosei of Japanese band JO1 share their love for India

**MUMBAI, Sept 22:** Their introduction to Shah Rukh Khan is the popular "Dil Se..." track "Chaiya Chaiya" and they also loved grooving to "Naatu Naatu" from "RRR". Mamehara Issei and Ohira Shosei, the members of popular Japanese band JO1, hope to make beautiful memories by gorging on food and soaking in the culture during their maiden trip to India.

The band, which features 11 members and also includes Takumi Kawanishi, Ren Kawashiri, Syoya Kimata, Sukai Kinjo, Junki Kono, Keigo Sato, Ruki Shiroiwa, Shion Tsurubo and Sho Yonashiro, debuted in 2020. They were named one of the best five new artists at the Japan Gold Disc Awards and have seen their popularity grow since their debut. Issei and Shosei hope to share their travel experience to India with the rest of the band members and hope that they are back soon for a concert here.

"Before coming to India, we knew that India is very famous for its movies, music and dance. We also dance while singing. So, we always thought that India has a lot of experience there already," Issei told PTI in an interview.

Shosei expressed his love for dance and grooved to the signature

title track "Hud Hud Dabangg" from Salman Khan-starrer film, "Dabangg".

"We've watched the 'Chaiya Chaiya' music video, and 'Naatu Naatu' dance. I like the 'Naatu Naatu' dance from 'RRR' a lot. We know Shah Rukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan. (They're) Very famous actors," the band member said.

The musicians said Shah Rukh Khan has a huge fan following in Japan. But they both seemed unsure if they could meet the actor, who is currently basking in the glory of his son Aryan Khan's directorial debut OTT show, "Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood". "We can't meet, but we want to," Issei said.

"Do you think we can meet him? He is a very big star, so we can't meet him," Shosei added.

The band members, who arrived in Mumbai on Friday, indulged in local delicacies.

"I was told to take a lot of pictures. We ate a lot of Indian food and it was delicious. We had extremely spicy and sweet food as well. We had vada pav, rasgulla, chai biscuit with Parle G, and maggi. I want to try curry rice," Shosei said, adding that they even learnt Hindi words like 'Dhaniyawa', 'Namaste', 'Acha hai', and 'Badhiya hai'.

Since its formation under Lapone Entertainment, the band has garnered a massive global following. Some of their chart-topping hits are "Tiger", "Venus", "Shine A Light", "Love Seeker", "Where Do We Go", and "Move the Soul".

Shosei said music transcends borders, allowing them to connect with fans globally, and added that they are looking forward to collaborating with artists from all over the world, including India.

"I love the fact that with music, we can connect with anyone, if there is anything that we want to convey, we can always convert that into words and connect with them anytime, anyone, no matter what kind of feelings it is. But I hope to collaborate with BTS, Jungkook," Issei added.

"We are in the process of getting there (to the top), and for that we also want to widen our viewership and listeners in India," he said.

The duo were "surprised" to learn that one of their songs, "Eyes On Me" (2024), enjoys popularity among Indian listeners.

"India has Bollywood and a huge fan base in general, so we think we will find a lot of people who will listen to the music over here and definitely want to try it out. We also

talked to a lot of companies who suggested that we should come to India and hence we are here now. We wanted to see how it is," Shosei said.

Issei and Shosei are eager to test their musical mettle in India, where international artists like Chris Martin, Ed Sheeran, Maroon5 and many others have successfully performed sold out concerts.

"Within this global environment, we've taken techniques from J-POP as well as K-POP and inculcated it in the band, and we want everyone to listen to that. We are a fresh band full of energy who can try a variety of genres, music videos and everything, so we feel like it will be great to spread over here," Issei said.

Although the duo does not have a fixed date for their performance in India, they want to return to the country soon.

"India is a big country, but this time I've only been able to come to Mumbai. I would like to go to many places in the north of India and learn more. We would like to visit again with everyone and conduct a huge concert over here. We want to shoot a music video in India," he added.

As of now, they're going to document their experiences to share with their band members who couldn't be here. (PTI)



## Prannoy, Ayush to spearhead Indian challenge at Korea Open

SUWON (KOREA), Sept 22: Still searching for consistency this season, HS Prannoy will headline India's challenge alongside rising star Ayush Shetty at the USD 475,000 Korea Open Super 500 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

With two successive finals at the Hong Kong and China Masters, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have revived India's season but will skip this week's event, leaving the focus on Prannoy and Ayush to carry the tricolour.

Prannoy, a 2023 World Championships bronze medallist, has endured a string of early exits this season but has stretched top opponents, with most matches going the distance.

Wins over China's Lu Guang Zu and narrow defeats to Lakshya Sen and Anders Antonsen underline his ability to still push the best in the business.

The 33-year-old opens against a qualifier and is likely to run into veteran Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the second round.

Ayush, meanwhile, remains the only Indian to win a BWF title this season, clinching the US Open crown. The 22-year-old from Mangalore has since grown in stature with wins over Japan's Kodai Naraoka, Chou Tien Chen, Canada's Brian Yang, India's Kidambi Srikanth, former world champion Loh Kean Yew and Denmark's Rasmus Gemke.

He will begin against Su Li Yang of Chinese Taipei.

Kiran George also features in the men's singles draw and faces a stiff opener against Singapore's fifth seed Loh Kean Yew.

In women's singles, Anupama Upadhyaya takes on fourth seed Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia.

In doubles, the mixed pair of Mohit Jaglan and Lakshita Jaglan will open against Japan's Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara. (PTI)

## It wasn't easy to bat after first 10 overs, Pak skipper Salman reflects on what went wrong



DUBAI, Sept 22: Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha conceded that his side was found wanting in every aspect of the game in its Asia Cup Super 4 clash against India here with batting being particularly difficult after the first 10 overs. Pakistan, after scoring 91 runs in the first 10 overs, could only manage 80 in the next 10 after Shivam Dube bowled a fantastic three-over spell in which he got two wickets and gave away only 16 runs.

"The batting was a lot better today, and that's a positive. The way our start was, we could have scored 15 more (overall). But when the ball goes soft after 10 overs, it's not as easy to bat," Salman said after the six-wicket loss here on Sunday night.

"...we didn't bowl as well in the powerplay and got punished. But our start should have ensured that we scored 180," he added.

Salman also admitted that his bowlers could not handle the flying start that the Indians were off to in a tricky chase of 172. Openers Abhishek Sharma (74) and Shubman Gill (47) hammered the rival attack to give India the perfect start. "Bowling or batting, we look to play the perfect game. To win, you have to excel in all three facets of the game. We didn't field well or start well with the ball," he said. However, the skipper urged his team to forget the India game and look forward to the match against Sri Lanka on Tuesday. "We have to forget this game because we have one day after

## SKY'S TAKE ON INDO-PAK DUELS 'THERE'S NO CONTEST, STOP CALLING IT RIVALRY'



DUBAI, Sept 22: Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav has urged everyone to stop calling the contests against Pakistan a meaningful "rivalry" given how his team has dominated the arch-foes, the most recent demolition act being the six-wicket triumph in a Super 4 match of the ongoing Asia Cup here.

India and Pakistan have faced each other 15 times in T20 internationals, with the reigning world champions winning 12 of those encounters.

After the comprehensive win on Sunday night here, the proverbial question on the gulf between the two teams was thrown at Suryakumar by a senior Pakistani journalist.

"Sir, my request is that we should now stop calling India vs Pakistan matches a rivalry," Suryakumar responded with a

smile. When the scribe clarified that he was referring to "standards, and not the rivalry", the Indian skipper said it hardly makes things any different.

"Sir, rivalry and standard are all the same. Now what is a rivalry? If two teams have played 15 matches and it's 8-7, that's a rivalry. Here it's 13-1 (12-3) or something. There is no contest," he said before winding up the media conference with a grin.

Opener Abhishek Sharma, who slammed a blazing 39-ball 74 to be the star of India's facile chase of 172, said he did not like the needless belligerence of Pakistan players, which led to verbal altercations. Abhishek shared a 105-run opening wicket stand with Shubman Gill (47). "Today it was very simple, the way they (Pakistan players) were coming at us for no rea-

son, I didn't like it at all and this is the only way (his aggressive batting) I could give medicine to them," said Abhishek in the post-match presentation.

Both Abhishek and Gill had run-ins with Pakistan pacers Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi during the match.

Besides that, Abhishek was delighted to have shared a wonderful partnership with Gill, someone he shares a close bond from age-group cricket.

"We have been playing since school days, we enjoy each other's company, we thought we would do it and today was the day. The way he was giving it back, I really enjoyed it.

"It's (the way he bats) because the team supports me. That's the intent I show and I'm practicing really hard and if it's my day, I'm gonna win it for my team,"

he added.

Ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah had an off-day, conceding over 10 runs an over during his four-over spell. But skipper Suryakumar did not read too much into it.

"That's fine, he's not a robot, he will have a bad day someday. But (Shivam) Dube bailed us out of the situation," he said.

Suryakumar was happy to see the way the team fought back after a rather listless first 10 overs where Pakistan made runs in excess of nine runs an over.

"The way the boys are stepping up in every game, it's making my job very easy. The boys showed a lot of character.

"They were calm after the first 10 overs (of India's bowling innings). After drinks, I told them the game starts now," he noted. (PTI)

## Lewis Hamilton's wait for a Ferrari podium drags on after Sainz's GP success for Williams

BAKU (AZERBAIJAN), Sept 22: The list of Grand Prix podium finishers in 2025 now includes Carlos Sainz, Jr. It still doesn't include the driver who replaced him at Ferrari, Lewis Hamilton.

While Sainz was celebrating a third place for Williams that he called "even better" than his first in Formula 1, Hamilton was saying he "couldn't really care less" about finishing eighth as his wait for a first top-three finish at Ferrari goes on. "Definitely disappointed to come away with nothing," Hamilton told Sky Sports after the Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

Hamilton could point to some progress after starting 12th on the grid but the overall

mood was disappointment after Ferrari had led the way in Friday's second practice session, only to fall back into the middle of the pack. Teammate Charles Leclerc started 10th after a crash in qualifying and ended up ninth.

"Honestly, I felt so good in the car and ultimately we went in the wrong direction with the car. But our ultimate pace in the race was just not on par with the guys up ahead of us," Hamilton said. "It was so hard to overtake here today."

Hamilton's time at Ferrari started with promise after a win in the sprint race at the Chinese Grand Prix in March but a double disqualification for him and Leclerc the fol-



lowing day pointed to setup issues which Ferrari has struggled to solve.

For Sainz, who left Ferrari

for uncertainty at a Williams team which hadn't been on the podium since 2021, his third place was a vindication of his

new team's long-term plan to compete at the front of the pack again.

Sainz said it also showed he was standing out among the drivers who had to adapt to new teams for 2025, a category which also includes Hamilton.

"I think out of everyone that's changed teams, which is not an easy task nowadays, I've been very competitive from the first race, very quick, but I didn't have results with me," he said.

"I didn't have results to prove to myself, the team, and everyone that some good things were about to come. But, in the end, they did." (AP)

## 'Friends' New Season: Shubman and Abhishek are like fire and ice, feels Suryakumar Yadav

DUBAI, Sept 22: The contrasting batting styles of inseparable best buddies Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill makes them a riveting "fire-and-ice" combination in India's T20 cricket set-up, feels skipper Suryakumar Yadav.

On Sunday, what looked like a tricky chase of 172 in the Asia Cup clash against arch foes Pakistan, became a cakewalk because the two best friends since the age of 10, conjured an eye-catching 105-run opening stand.

Abhishek went on to score a scintillating 74 off 39 balls, his first fifty in the tournament while Gill shrugged off disappointment of an underwhelming league stage with a facile 47 off 28 balls.

"It's like a fire-and-ice combination. They complement each other really well. And that's what I want to see. If someone is batting brilliantly, the other can take the back-seat and rotate the strike. It was required today to have a very good start. And they did (provide that)," Suryakumar told mediapersons after India's six-wicket win in the Super 4 game here on Sunday.

Having played together since Punjab U-12 days, they know each other's game well and switch gears and swap roles long before the opposition can figure what is unfolding.



friend bowled an extensive spell of left-arm spin to him prior to the Pakistan game.

Friendship off the field, Suryakumar feels always helps in growing good on-field understanding.

"It's really important to be very good friends off the field. When you open together, that bond matters. Sometimes you don't have to say anything in the middle," he said.

"Just a look (glance) is enough - to take a cheeky single, to complement each other if one's flying or if

one's struggling. That friendship comes into the picture when they bat together," the skipper couldn't have summed it up more accurately.

If there is anything called net session obsession, these two who can match each other.

Abhishek and Gill are sure to be present even on optional days when no one else bothers. Even if that meant playing a full 40-over game against Oman in the sapping Abu Dhabi heat, taking a two-hour bus journey one way from Dubai and returning to the ICC Academy for a session the next day to help each other.

During the COVID phase, both stayed at Yuvraj Singh's house in Chandigarh, would do nets together and train with the white ball legend in his home gymnasium.

Suryakumar, a pioneer of innovative T20 hitting also decoded the two batters, especially Abhishek, who has grown by leaps and bounds in past six to eight months.

So what has changed for Abhishek?

"It's just the way he is. Abhishek

is very selfless when it comes to his batting style. In the Powerplay, he goes hard, but even after that he knows what is required. He analyses situations, he's learning from every game.

"Most importantly, he never misses practice. Even if he doesn't want to bat, he'll be at the ground, doing something. If you keep working that hard, God always has plans for you," the skipper put forth his take.

In case of Gill, Suryakumar thinks that what makes his deputy special is his innate sense of how to score runs with low risk high-reward cricket shots.

"With Shubman, everyone knows what kind of player he is," Suryakumar said, adding, "The only thing I'll say is he knows how to score runs. Today he backed his shots, took fewer risks, trusted his strokes."

"And that reverse sweep - I was really happy. He's been working on it a lot," the skipper informed.

What he didn't say was how Abhishek bowled those extra deliveries in nets to help him perfect that. (PTI)

## Olmo and Torres lead Barcelona to 3-0 win over Getafe in Spanish league

MADRID, Sept 22: Dani Olmo scored and set up one of Ferran Torres' two goals with a neat backheel flick as Barcelona beat Getafe 3-0 in the Spanish league on Sunday.

It was the second straight game for Barcelona at its training facility as the newly renovated Camp Nou Stadium lacks the required permits.

Olmo's clever flick inside the area led to Torres scoring for Barcelona in the 15th minute, and Raphinha's assist to Torres in the 34th allowed the Catalan club to increase its first-half advantage.

Olmo then closed the scoring with a shot from near the penalty spot in the 62nd after a setup by substitute Marcus Rashford. A man carrying a Palestinian flag entered the field just before Olmo scored but did not affect the goal. The man was taken away by security.

"We had to focus on our own performance," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. "We controlled the match. It's never easy to score three against Getafe."

The victory moved defending champion Barcelona within two points of leader Real Madrid, which defeated Espanyol 2-0 on Saturday.

"It was important to come away with the three points," Torres said.

The match was played at the Estadi Johan Cruyff, which typically hosts the Barcelona women's team and men's reserve and youth squads. The club had already played there in its home opener — a 6-0 rout of Valencia on Sept. 14.

Getafe, which had won three of its first four matches, dropped to eighth place.

Atletico Madrid's early-season struggles continued with a 1-1 draw at Mallorca, giving the club its worst league start under coach Diego Simeone after five

matches. Julián Alvarez missed a first-half penalty kick and Atletico conceded a late equalizer as it failed to win for the fourth time in five league matches.

Atletico's only win so far was 2-0 against Villarreal last weekend. It has six points, its lowest points total after five matches since 2009-10 (three points), just before Simeone took over as coach.

"We are trying to build a new team," Simeone said. "Several players arrived and we knew that something like this could happen. We knew we would have to go through this process."

Atletico had also drawn 1-1 against both Elche and Alaves after opening with a 2-1 loss at Espanyol. It was coming off a 3-2 loss at Liverpool in its Champions League opener on Wednesday.

Forward Alvarez had his 14th-minute penalty kick saved by Mallorca goalkeeper Leo Román, and striker Alexander Sorloth was sent off for a hard foul in the 72nd after video review.

Sorloth had replaced Alvarez about 10 minutes before being sent off. Alvarez did not hide his frustration at being substituted but Simeone later downplayed the player's reaction.

Atletico, which has conceded eight goals in six matches across all competitions so far, went ahead with a shot from inside the area by Conor Gallagher in the 79th, but Vedat Muriqi equalized for the hosts with a header in the 85th.

Mallorca remains winless with only two points.

Earlier Sunday, Celta Vigo drew 1-1 at Rayo Vallecano, while Elche beat Oviedo 1-0 at home with a ninth-minute goal by André Silva in a match between promoted clubs. (AP)

# Asia Cup: Sri Lanka and Pakistan desperate to bounce back in Super 4s



**ABU DHABI, Sept 22:** Reeling from early setbacks in the Super 4s, both Sri Lanka and Pakistan will be desperate to register their first win in this critical stage of the Asia Cup when they lock horns here on Tuesday.

Defending champions Sri Lanka, who breezed through the group stage unbeaten, were jolted by a four-wicket loss to Bangladesh in their Super 4 opener. The defeat not only disrupted their rhythm but also snapped an impressive eight-match winning streak in the T20 Asia Cup.

On the other hand, off-field issues have dominated headlines around the Pakistan team, overshadowing their middling per-

formances on the field. They are in disarray after suffering yet another humbling defeat at the hands of arch-rivals India on Sunday, their second loss to the 'Men in Blue' in this tournament.

India and Bangladesh have two points each with Suryakumar Yadav's men leading the standings owing to a superior net run rate. Sri Lanka and Pakistan occupy the third and fourth spots respectively.

With little time for recovery, Pakistan skipper Salman Agha and his side now face a must-win situation under mounting pressure.

The absence of former skipper Babar

Azam and senior batter Mohammad Rizwan has only deepened the batting crisis, exposing a lineup short on technique and temperament.

Against India, top order batters Sahibzada Farhan, Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub offered a glimmer of hope, stitching together 90/1 to hand a promising start.

Ayub, in particular, showed signs of resurgence after three consecutive ducks. However, the innings fizzled out in the latter half, once again highlighting Pakistan's inability to sustain pressure.

The bowling unit, too, has struggled. Leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, who found success

against lower-ranked teams like Oman and the UAE, failed to find the right lengths against a dominant Indian batting line-up and was taken to the cleaners.

Sri Lanka, despite their strong run, have their own set of issues to iron out.

A fragile middle order remains a concern, though Dasun Shanaka's counterattacking knock at No. 5 against Bangladesh offered some respite. Pathum Nissanka, the standout performer with back-to-back fifties in the group stage, has hit a rough patch.

However, Kusal Mendis and Kamil Mishara appear to be in good touch and could provide much-needed stability.

In the bowling department, pacer Nuwan Thushara has impressed, currently standing as the fourth-highest wicket-taker in the tournament with six scalps.

Spin wizard Wanindu Hasaranga, along with Dushantha Chameera, Charith Asalanka, and Shanaka, have also contributed effectively across matches.

Promising all-rounder Dunith Wellalage has rejoined the squad after a brief absence following the death of his father last week, a return that could bolster both morale and depth.

#### Teams:

**Sri Lanka:** Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis (wk), Kusal Perera, Nuwanidu Fernando, Kamindu Mendis, Kamil Mishara, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Chamika Karunaratne, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushantha Chameera, Binura Fernando, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana.

**Pakistan:** Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Husain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wassem Jr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Afridi, Sufyan Moqim.

Match starts at 8pm IST. (PTI)

## De Kock returns from ODI retirement, Bavuma ruled out of Test series in Pakistan

**JOHANNESBURG, Sept 22:** South Africa wicketkeeper batter Quinton de Kock on Monday reversed his decision to retire from ODIs and was named in the national white-ball squads for the upcoming Pakistan tour but skipper Temba Bavuma was ruled out of the Test series due to a calf strain.

The Proteas will begin their defence of the ICC World Test Championship Mace with a two-match series from October 12-24 in Lahore and Rawalpindi.

De Kock, who last played white-ball cricket in 2024 T20 World Cup against South Africa in Barbados, has also been included in the squad for the one-off T20I in Namibia. The left-handed opener quit ODI cricket after the 2023 World Cup. The then coach Rob Walter did not include him in the T20 squad since he was not sure about his long-term plans.

But South Africa's present head coach Shukri Conrad has included him in both the limited overs squads after holding a discussion with the player.

"Quinton's return to the white-ball space is a major boost for us. When we spoke last month about his future, it was clear that he still has a strong ambition to represent his country. Everyone knows the quality he brings to the side, and having him back can only benefit the team," Conrad said.

De Kock has represented South Africa in 155 ODIs so far, scoring 6770 runs at an average of 45.74 and a strike rate of 96.64. He has also scored 2584 runs from 92 T20I matches at a strike rate of 138.32.

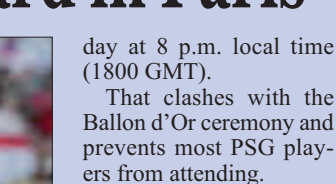
Meanwhile, Test skipper Temba Bavuma will miss the series as he is yet to recover from a grade two calf strain, sustained during the recent tour of England. In Bavuma's absence, Aiden Markram will lead South Africa.

"Very concerned about Temba," Conrad said. "Every series has been an injury and it is not for want of him of trying. He is doing everything in his powers to make sure he remains injury free. His form is definitely good enough and he is definitely worth managing. Age is not on his side so it is a concern but I am confident in the medical staff and Temba's desire to get him fit."

**Test squad:** Aiden Markram (C), David Bedingham, Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Tony de Zorzi, Zubayr Hamza, Simon Harmer, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj (second Test only), Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, Prenelan Subrayen, Kyle Verreynne.

**T20Is squad:** David Miller (C), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka, Lungi Ngidi, Nqaba Peter, Luan-dre Pretorius, Andile Simelane, Lizaad Williams.

**ODIs squad:** Matthew Breetzke (capt), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Tony de Zorzi, Donovan Ferreira, Bjorn Fortuin, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka, Lungi Ngidi, Nqaba Peter, Luan-dre Pretorius, Sinethemba Qeshile. (PTI)



## KL Rahul becomes co-owner of Goa Guardians in PVL

**PANAJI, Sept 22:** Indian cricketer KL Rahul has become the co-owner of the Goa Guardians franchise ahead of the fourth season of the Prime Volleyball League to be held from October 2 to 26 in Hyderabad.

As the co-owner, Rahul wants to give volleyball the recognition it deserves.

"This feels like a full circle moment for me. PVL is a turning point for the sport in India. The bigger picture is to give volleyball the spotlight and screen time so that more people can watch it and love this sport."

"Volleyball has always been a sport I enjoyed, and I'm excited to lend my voice and play my part in growing the sport in our country" Rahul said in a statement.

The Goa Guardians, set to make its debut in season 4, will compete alongside top franchises in a high-energy format designed for television and digital audiences.

Raju Chekuri, principal owner of Goa Guardians and founder, Neterich, said: "We are delighted to have KL Rahul join our ownership group. His passion for volleyball and belief in its potential will help us build a franchise that inspires fans and empowers athletes." (PTI)

## Rohit to lead India colts in Sultan of Johor Cup hockey



**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** Defender Rohit will lead India in the Sultan of Johor Cup in Malaysia from October 11, aiming to better the junior team's bronze-winning show in the previous edition of the event.

The tournament, which will conclude on October 18, will be an opportunity for India to prepare for the Junior World Cup to be held in Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10.

India will begin their campaign against Great Britain on October 11, followed by a clash against New Zealand on October 12. They will take on arch-rivals Pakistan on October 14 followed by match against Australia on October 15.

India will conclude their round-robin campaign against hosts Malaysia on October 17. The top two teams from the round-robin stage will progress to the final, scheduled for October 18.

"The team has been preparing well for the Sultan of Johor Cup. We have a good team, and with the Junior World Cup coming up, this tournament will be a good platform and rehearsal for the players to test themselves against strong opponents and gain valuable international experience," India coach PR Sreejesh said.

#### Squad:

**Goalkeepers:** Bikramjit Singh, Princedeep Singh.

**Defenders:** Rohit (C), Talem Priyobarta, Anmol Ekka, Amir Ali, Sunil P B, Ravneet Singh.

**Midfielders:** Ankit Pal, Thouanojam Ingalemba Luwang, Adrohit Ekka, Arajieet Singh Hundal, Rosan Kujur, Manmeet Singh.

**Forwards:** Arshdeep Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Ajeet Yadav, Gurjot Singh.

**Standby:** Vivek Lakra, Shardanand Tiwari, Thockchom Kingson Singh, Rohit Kullu, Dilraj Singh. (PTI)

## Dembélé and Kelly among the favorites to win men's and women's Ballon d'Or award in Paris

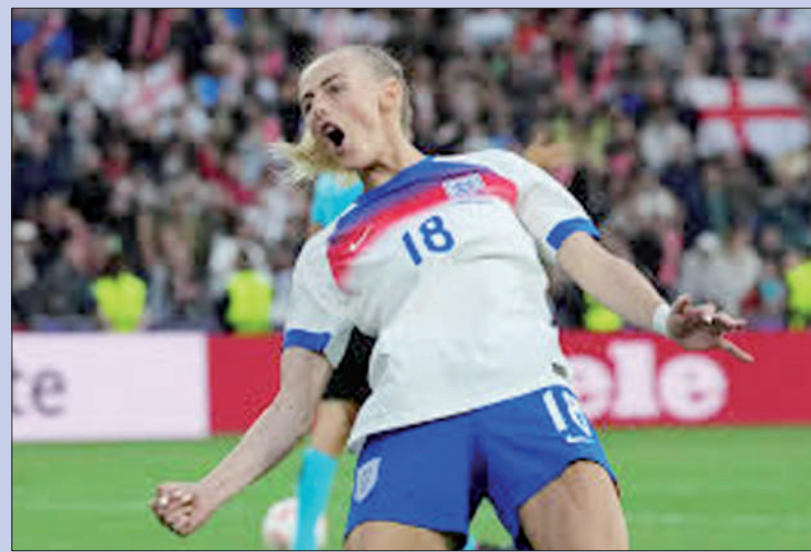
**PARIS, Sept 22:** Paris Saint-Germain forward Ousmane Dembélé and England forward Chloe Kelly are among the leading contenders to win the men's and women's Ballon d'Or award on Monday.

They are frontrunners among the 30 men's and 30 women's nominees revealed last month by France Football magazine, with the winners announced at a ceremony in central Paris.

The 28-year-old Dembélé was inspirational in leading PSG to its first Champions League title and is among a remarkable nine PSG players vying for the men's award.

Goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma has since joined Manchester City but was nominated as a PSG player.

Teenage Barcelona star Lamine Yamal and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah are among the other men's



candidates.

When England won the women's European Championship in July, the 27-year-old Kelly blasted home the decisive penalty in the final against World Cup winner Spain. She also won the women's Champions League with surprise winner Arsenal.

Barcelona players have

won the past four women's awards.

PSG players absent because the French soccer league postponed Sunday night's match between host Marseille and PSG by 24 hours due to a severe weather forecast, the match at Stade Velodrome is scheduled to start Mon-

day at 8 p.m. local time (1800 GMT).

That clashes with the Ballon d'Or ceremony and prevents most PSG players from attending.

However, Dembélé, and his fellow nominees Désiré Doué and João Neves are injured and not in the matchday squad, leaving them free to attend the ceremony.

PSG's Luis Enrique was nominated for best coach.

The voting system The Ballon d'Or was created by France Football magazine and has been awarded since 1956 for men, and since 2018 for women. It is voted for by journalists from the top 100 countries in the FIFA rankings for the men's award and the top 50 FIFA-ranked countries for the women's award.

Each journalist, one per country, selects players in ranked order with points attributed to each position. (AP)

## Rani bags triple crown

#### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Sept 22:** Rani Kaur Marwa (IND) of Guwahati bagged triple crowns in the 1st India Club International Tennis Federation Masters Tour 100 Tournament, organised by India Club, Guwahati from September 15 to 20. Rani won the Women Singles (above 35 years) defeating Naina Mittal (IND) 6-0, 6-1 in the final. In the Women Doubles (above 35 years) partnering Paramita Guha Roy (IND) beat Naina Mittal and Ruprekha Bora Amchi (IND) 6-0, 6-0 while in the Mixed Doubles (above 35 years) partnering Prasurjya Kamal Bora (IND) beat Mitali Bora and Shiv Kumar Prajapati (IND) 6-3, 6-1 in the final.

## Bolt to visit India for exhibition football game on October 1

**MUMBAI, Sept 22:** Sprint legend Usain Bolt will trade his running spikes for football boots as he is set to visit India for a unique exhibition match here on October 1.

Bolt, one of the greatest athletes of all time with eight Olympic gold medals to his credit, will light up the pitch in an exclusive football showcase alongside footballers, Bollywood personalities and other prominent figures. Bolt will represent both Bengaluru FC and Mumbai City FC, playing one half each bringing fans from both camps together in PUMA's two-day celebration, starting September 30.

This exhibition match will be a ticketed event.

"We believe sport has the power to inspire and unite communities. Football is one of the most popular sports among the youth of India, and bringing Usain Bolt to play here is our way of celebrating that momentum," PUMA India MD Karthik Balagopal said. Beyond the track, Bolt has always carried a deep passion for football.

Growing up, he often played the sport and dreamt of showcasing his speed and skills on the pitch. After retiring from athletics, he actively pursued this love, training, playing trial matches, and even scoring goals along the way. (PTI)

## World Cup will be challenging but we aim to add trophy to India's cabinet: Sneha Rana



**MUMBAI, Sept 22:** Competing in the women's ODI World Cup at home will be challenging but the Indian team is determined to clinch the coveted trophy, spin bowling all-rounder Sneha Rana said on Monday.

The tournament co-hosts India and Sri Lanka will face off in the opening game of the competition in Guwahati on September 30. India have never won the World Cup.

"It's going to be interesting and challenging, especially since we are going to play at home. It's a special feeling. And it's even more special for Harman didi (Harmanpreet Kaur), as she's been playing cricket for so many years now. Our aim is to fill the trophy cabinet with a World Cup," Rana told JioHotstar.

The senior all-rounder Deepti

Sharma remarked it will also be an "important" tournament for head coach Amol Muzumdar.

"Whenever we play a bilateral series, the World Cup trophy keeps coming to our mind and this is Amol Muzumdar sir's first World Cup, so it's important and special," Deepti said.

"We are going to play in front of a huge crowd in India, and it's going to be a memorable campaign and we are ready for it," she added. Both Rana and wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh credited the Women's Premier League (WPL) for providing exposure to Indian players.

"It gives us the stage to play alongside and against top-class players from around the world. You also get to learn from elite foreign coaches, their strategies, how they think, and how they react in key moments," Rana said.

Ghosh said, "Playing with overseas players also helps a lot. Their plans and strategies are very different, and knowing that gives me an advantage. It allows me to understand what strategy they will use if I play alongside or against them." (PTI)



**NEW DELHI, Sept 22:** Abhishek Sharma's scintillating

knock against Pakistan has left former players Ravichandran Ashwin and Kevin Pietersen awestruck, with the off-spinner declaring that the youngster would become "the best white-ball batter in limited-overs cricket for India."

The 23-year-old blended elegance with power in his dazzling 39-ball 74 in the Asia Cup Super 4s clash on Sunday to give India a six-wicket win.

"I want to tell you that this is not the arrival of Abhishek Sharma, this is just the beginning. He has just started, and he has a long future ahead. He is going to blow the cricketing world apart," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

He tipped the left-hander to carry forward his mentor Yuvraj Singh's legacy.

"Take that in writing. He has so much ability, just like how Yuvraj

Singh became India's marquee white-ball cricketer. The best white-ball batter in limited-overs cricket for India. He can reach that level easily. I think he is going to carry Yuvraj's legacy forward. He is a phenomenal talent."

Abhishek's innings was studded with six fours and five sixes, but for Ashwin, it was the pure finesse in his strokes that stood out. In the eighth over, Abhishek shuffled across, opened up his front leg, and whipped Saim Ayub through extra cover for a glorious boundary, reminiscent to MS Dhoni's trademark helicopter shot.

"Abhishek Sharma hit an inside-out MS Dhoni-style helicopter cover drive. Everybody will talk about the five sixes that he hit, but I want to talk about this cover drive, because there was finesse in this shot.

"Despite only having one bat

swing, he can adjust his down-swing. If a batter can make the game look that simple, then why would you not want to watch him day in and day out?" Ashwin said.

Abhishek's 105-run stand with childhood friend Shubman Gill formed the backbone of India's victory. He is the leading run getter in the tournament with 173 runs from four innings.

Former England captain Pietersen, too, was effusive in his praise for Abhishek.

"Abhishek Sharma is NEXT LEVEL. He's the type of player that will fail and look so stupid doing it, BUT he'll bring smiles and joy to MILLIONS of people throughout his career as he bangs bowlers all over the world. His eye is something else! Keep the AURA, buddy!" Pietersen posted on X. (PTI)