Singer Usha Mangeshkar named first recipient of Assam's 'Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika National Award'

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News

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced in Guwahati on 23 Oct 2026 that the Assam Government's newly instituted 'Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika National (Rashtriya) Award' will go first to veteran singer Usha Mangeshkar. It carries ₹10 lakh cash and a citation and will be given once every three years. PM Narendra Modi will present it on 29 Nov at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, at the closing ceremony of Hazarika's year-long birth centenary.

Key facts

Award	Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika National Award – Govt of Assam
First recipient	Usha Mangeshkar (announced 23 Oct 2026)
Prize / cycle	₹10 lakh + citation; once in 3 years
Presentation	29 Nov 2026 – PM Modi, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi
Hazarika	Born 8 Sept 1926, Sadiya (Assam); died 5 Nov 2011, Mumbai
Usha Mangeshkar	Born 15 Dec 1935, Indore; sister of Lata, Asha, Meena

Background

- Bhupen Hazarika: singer, composer and film-maker called 'Sudhakantha' (nectar-voiced) and the 'Bard of the Brahmaputra'. Awards: Padma Shri (1977), Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1987), Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1992), Padma Bhushan (2001), Padma Vibhushan (2012, posthumous), Bharat Ratna (2019, posthumous). Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi 1998–2003. Music for 'Rudaali' (1993); famous song 'Bistirno Parore'.
- Bharat Ratna 2019: former President Pranab Mukherjee, social worker Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous) and Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous). For the Hazarika centenary the PM released a ₹100 commemorative coin and the biography 'Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika'.
- Geography: Hazarika was born at Sadiya in Assam's Tinsukia district. The Dhola–Sadiya bridge over the Lohit river, named 'Bhupen Hazarika Setu' and opened on 26 May 2017, improves road access to Arunachal Pradesh.
- Usha Mangeshkar: has sung in Marathi, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Odia and other languages; known for 'Main To Aarti Utaroon' (Jai Santoshi Maa, 1975) and 'Mungda' (Inkaar, 1977). In 2022 she received the Asam Sahitya Sabha's 'Bhupen Hazarika International Solidarity Award' – a different body's award; the present one is the Assam Government's new national award.

Tamil Nadu link: the first musician to receive the Bharat Ratna was Madurai-born Carnatic vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi (1998). Later musicians honoured were Ravi Shankar (1999), Lata Mangeshkar and Bismillah Khan (2001), Bhimsen Joshi (2008) and Bhupen Hazarika (2019).

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