Eminent painter and former Rajya Sabha member Jogen Chowdhury (87) passes away in Kolkata

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News

Eminent Indian painter and former Rajya Sabha member Jogen Chowdhury died on the morning of Sunday, 25 Oct 2026, at Ruby General Hospital, Kolkata; he was 87. He had been under treatment for blood cancer for about 14 months and was admitted on 16 Oct with an infection. He was known for satirical paintings of politics and society and for blending Indian tradition with modern art.

Key facts

Born	1939 – Daharpara, Faridpur district (now Bangladesh); moved to Calcutta with his family during Partition
Education	Govt College of Art & Craft, Calcutta (1955–60); Paris – École des Beaux-Arts, Atelier 17 (1965)
Career	Handloom Board designer (Calcutta, later Madras); curator of the Rashtrapati Bhavan art collection (from 1972, 15 years)
Santiniketan	Professor of painting at Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati from 1987; later principal and professor emeritus

Rajya Sabha	Elected from West Bengal on a Trinamool Congress ticket – 3 Apr 2014 to 2 Apr 2020
Awards	Kalidas Samman (2001, Madhya Pradesh), Banga Bibhushan (2012, West Bengal), Zainul Samman (2016, Dhaka University)

Background

- Art bodies: Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Fine Arts) – set up on 5 Aug 1954; HQ Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi; an autonomous body funded by the Union Ministry of Culture. It has held the 'Triennale India' international exhibition since 1968.
- History: Rabindranath Tagore started Kala Bhavana at Santiniketan in 1919 – today the fine-arts faculty of Visva-Bharati (a central university). Nandalal Bose was its famous principal. Jogen Chowdhury served here as professor and principal.
- Polity: Rajya Sabha representatives of a State are elected by the elected MLAs of that State by proportional representation through the single transferable vote (Art 80(4)). Jogen Chowdhury was elected this way – not a nominated member.
- Award: Kalidas Samman – a national-level arts award given by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in music, theatre, dance and plastic arts (painting–sculpture). Jogen Chowdhury received it in 2001.

Tamil Nadu link: From 1968 Jogen Chowdhury worked as a textile designer with the Handloom Board in Madras (Chennai), leaving in 1972 to become curator at Rashtrapati Bhavan. In the same period the 'Madras Art Movement' grew in Chennai – K.C.S. Paniker, former principal of the Madras School of Arts, founded the Cholamandal Artists' Village at Injambakkam, Chennai, in 1966; it brought modernism to South Indian art.

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