

#OBITUARY

"Dishom Guru" Has Left

Shibu Soren, Tribal Leader and Former Jharkhand Chief Minister, also the rare innocent man in politics, passes away at 81



Shibu Soren, a towering figure in Indian politics and a champion of tribal rights, passed away on Monday at the age of 81. Known for his unwavering dedication to the tribal communities of eastern India, Soren was undergoing treatment for a kidney ailment in Delhi. His condition worsened after he suffered a stroke last month, and he had been on life support prior to his death.

Over a political career spanning more than four decades, Shibu Soren played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of Jharkhand, India's tribal-dominated eastern state. As the co-founder of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 1973, Soren was at the forefront of the movement demanding the creation of a separate state for the tribal people who inhabited the southern districts of Bihar, a struggle that culminated in Jharkhand gaining statehood in 2000.

Soren's influence extended well beyond grassroots activism. He served as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand three times, although political instability prevented him from completing any of his terms. Despite this, his leadership remained a defining force in the state's political landscape. His legacy continues through his son, Hemant Soren, who is the current Chief Minister of Jharkhand and announced his father's passing. On social media, Hemant referred to his father by his revered title 'Dishom Guru,' meaning 'great leader' in Santali, the language of the Santal tribe, one of India's largest indigenous communities. "Our respected Dishom Guru has left us. I have nothing left," he wrote.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Soren, describing him as "a grassroots leader who rose through the ranks of public life with unwavering dedication to the

people." Other political leaders across party lines also expressed their condolences and acknowledged his contribution to the tribal cause and Indian politics.

Born in 1944 in a small village, in what was then Bihar (now Jharkhand), Soren's political journey began with a mission to uplift tribal populations and secure their rights. His vision was embodied in the formation of the JMM, which advocated for the cultural and political identity of the tribespeople.

Soren's political career was not without controversy. In 2004, he was appointed as India's federal Coal Minister under the Congress-led government but resigned after a conviction in a murder case. Although he was later granted bail and returned to the cabinet, he stepped down again in 2005 after another conviction related to the 1994 kidnapping and murder of his personal secretary. These charges were eventually dismissed in 2018, clearing his name.

As news of his death spread, tributes poured in. Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh described Soren as "the pivotal figure who led the movement for the creation of Jharkhand" and called him "a legend whose passion for social and economic justice was inspirational." Shiv Sena (UBT) member Sanjay Raut said, "For the people of Jharkhand, he was no less than a god." Former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, who initially opposed Jharkhand's creation but later allied with Soren, expressed 'deep sorrow' at his passing, praising him as a tireless fighter for the rights of tribal and Dalit communities.

Shibu Soren's life and work remain deeply intertwined with the history and identity of Jharkhand. His death marks the end of an era for the state and the tribal movement he so passionately championed.



The Fight Between Thailand and Cambodia Isn't About Territory, It's Much More Serious



Look around the world and there are remarkably few countries without a territorial dispute. Without wanting to trivialize egregious breaches of sovereignty like the invasion of Ukraine, most are undeniably petty.

China's standoff with Japan over the Senkaku (or Diaoyu) Islands, for instance, regularly sparks diplomatic, military, and economic stresses costing billions of dollars over a far-flung islet measuring 2.7 sq mi. Then, there is Canada and Greenland's standoff over the uninhabited Hans Island, a barren spit in the Kennedy Channel. Or even Uganda and Kenya's spat over Lake Victoria's Mgingo Island, which is smaller than a football field.

Clearly, a significant number of territorial squabbles exist simply to provide a political distraction, an excuse to rally around the flag or challenge the patriotism of a political rival. And while they can flare up organically, prolonged skirmishes are typically stoked with a clear purpose. Which is why policy analysts are scratching their heads

about what exactly lies behind the escalating border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia. On Thursday, last week, fighting erupted again near the disputed Ta Moan Thom Temple, located in a border area in northwestern Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey province, resulting in the deaths of at least 13 civilians and a soldier in Thailand, which dispatched an F-16 to bomb Cambodian targets in response.

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Of course, trouble at the 508-mile (817 kms) shared border is nothing new. For over a century, Thailand and Cambodia have contested sovereignty at various undermarked points in the thick jungle punctuated with culturally-significant temples, albeit with scant strategic or economic value.

But what makes the current flare-up most bamboozling is that it pits two of Southeast Asia's most

#WORLD CONFLICT



Ta Moan Thom Temple.

formidable and, until recently, closest aligned families against each other. When border tensions first flared up last month, Thailand's then-Prime Minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, called up Cambodia's 72-year-old former strongman Hun Sen, Hun Manet's father, to soothe tensions.

However, Hun Sen leaked their June 15 phone call, during which Paetongtarn adopted a subservient tone and criticized one of her own generals, leading to her suspension by Thailand's constitutional court pending an ethics investigation, after 10,000 people took to the street demanding her resignation.

"The Thai government and the Shinawatras were shocked when Hun Sen leaked that very damaging phone recording," says Phil Robertson, the Bangkok-based director of the Asia Human Rights and Labour Advocates. "He really threw down the gauntlet."

It was a Shakespearean betrayal, given Hun Sen had for decades been as thick as thieves with Paetongtarn's 75-year-old father, Thai political patriarch Thaksin Shinawatra, whom he had once described as his 'god brother.' After Thaksin was ousted in a 2006 coup, Hun Sen appointed him as an economic advisor to the Cambodian government and they often golfed together. Following the putsch that removed Thaksin's sister Yingluck as Prime Minister in 2014, routed Shinawatra

supporters were granted sanctuary in Cambodia. Thaksin and Yingluck both stayed at Hun Sen's house for his 72nd birthday party in August 2023. When Thaksin returned to Thailand from exile last year, Hun Sen was the first foreign leader to visit him. Before Paetongtarn became Prime Minister, she led a delegation to Phnom Penh in March last year to meet Hun Sen, who still serves as leader of the Cambodian People's Party.

But beginning last month, Hun Sen began posting messages accusing Thaksin of 'betraying' him and threatening to expose his treasonous actions, including undermining Thailand's sacrosanct monarchy. "Since Thaksin became involved in Thai politics, Thailand has been in great turmoil, starting before the 2006 coup," Hun Sen posted on Facebook on July 20. "I also do not want to bring up the severe insults you directed at the Thai monarchy, those words were too vile for me to repeat, as they would only tarnish dignity."

Thailand has some of the world's harshest royal defamation laws, known as lese-majeste, or Article 112, and so accusing Thaksin of insulting the monarch is the local equivalent of Elon Musk tweeting that Donald Trump is in the Epstein files. "It got personal," says Thitinan Pongsudhirak, professor of Political Science at



Digital Storytellers Who Make a Difference

Bloggers Day, celebrated annually on August 5th, honours the creativity, influence, and hard work of bloggers around the world. These digital storytellers share knowledge, opinions, and personal experiences across diverse topics, from fashion and food to technology and travel. Bloggers play a powerful role in shaping public opinion, building communities, and spreading awareness on important issues. As independent voices in the digital space, they bridge the gap between brands and audiences, often turning passions into careers. Bloggers Day is a moment to appreciate their contributions to the online world and recognize the value of authentic content in today's media landscape.



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It has even led to calls for Cambodia to be added to a U.S. visa blacklist. However, since Anwar is also known as being close to Thaksin, whom he previously appointed as an adviser on Myanmar, it's unclear whether Hun Sen will trust his impartiality. And with the U.S. completely checked out from regional diplomacy under Trump, it may fall to China, which holds huge sway in Cambodia and is close to the Thai military, to broker an accord.

But aside from boosting Beijing's regional clout (which has not taken off), the spat will undoubtedly be damaging for both sides. For one, Thailand looks weaker and riven, in spite of being a direct protégé of U.S. Previously war-torn Cambodia, meanwhile, has long served as a poster child for the scourge of landmines and has received over half-a-billion dollars from foreign donors towards purging over 6 million that once littered its emerald landscape, including \$208 million from the U.S. alone since 1993. But revelations that five members of a Thai military patrol were wounded by newly laid Cambodian landmines on Wednesday afternoon has outraged the international community.

"That's very, very damaging for Cambodia," says Robertson. "They want to fight it out, but at the end of the day, both sides are going to end up with a tarnished reputation." Even the petty can have a high price. In the meantime, Paetongtarn's suspension leaves a perilous power vacuum in Thailand. The country only has an acting Prime Minister and acting defence minister, meaning authority over border matters has effectively been handed to an aggrieved and wounded armed forces. "This is a dangerous recipe," says Thitinan. "On one hand, you have the Thai Army in charge. On the other hand, you have Hun Sen, who is going to keep provoking things." It's uncertain what an off-ramp might look like. On Thursday, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim spoke to both sides in his capacity as current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and praised "posi-



Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

#CHARLES BUKOWSKI

"So You Want to Be a Writer"

"If you're doing it for money or fame, don't do it."



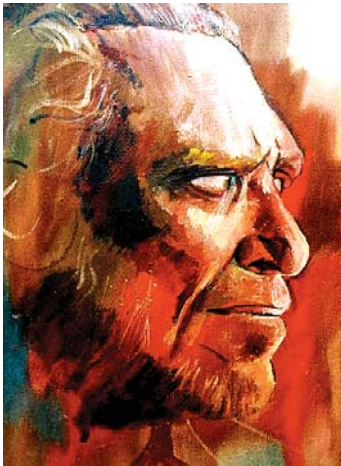
In an era where creative careers are often glamorized, Charles Bukowski's poem "So You Want to Be a Writer" delivers an unflinching message: "If you're doing it for money or fame, don't do it."

Bukowski, the icon of raw, working-class poetry, opens the poem with a line that sets the tone for the entire piece: "If you're doing it for money or fame, don't do it." Unlike many poetic odes to the writer's life, Bukowski's work is devoid of sentimentality. He positions writing not as a noble pursuit but as a biological necessity, something that should erupt from within, involuntarily. To him, writing is not a craft for the curious or the ambitious. It's for those who simply cannot not write.

He offers no encouragement for those waiting for the perfect moment or setting. "If you're doing it for money or fame, don't do it." "If you have to sit for hours staring at your computer screen or hunched over your typewriter searching for words, don't do it."

Bukowski's disdain for forced creativity is palpable. He mocks the idea of inspiration that must be hunted or waited for. In his view, the act of writing should be instinctual, even feral. If you're not driven by something innate and unstoppable, the poem suggests, you're better off doing anything else.

His criteria are harsh, even intimidating: "Unless it comes unasked out of your heart and your mind and



Charles Bukowski.

your mouth and your gut, don't do it." Yet, there's something strangely liberating about his message. By stripping away the illusion that writing is something anyone can do with enough discipline or training, he elevates it to a form of spiritual possession. Bukowski isn't

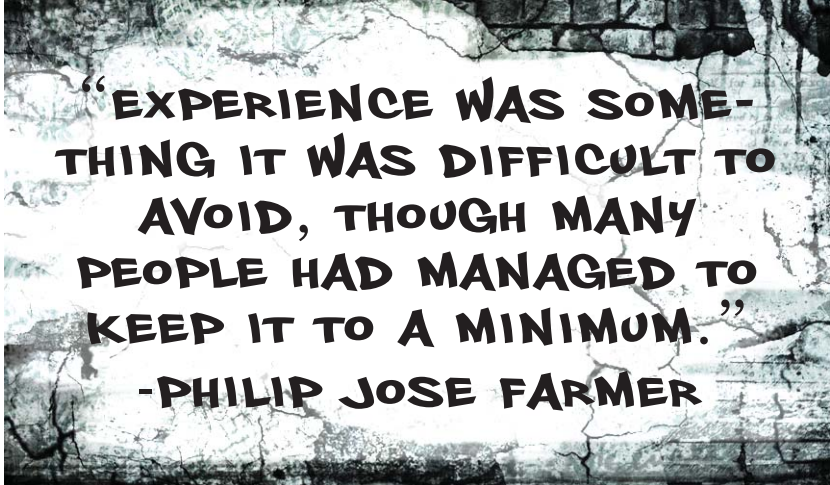
trying to gatekeep, he's trying to protect the purity of the craft.

In the poem's closing, he offers a final stark warning: "If you have to wait for it to roar out of you, then wait patiently. If it never does roar out of you,

do something else." To Bukowski, writing isn't about success or acclaim, it's about survival. His poem reminds readers that real writers write not because they want to, but because they have no other choice.

"When it is truly true, and if you have been chosen, it will do it by itself, and it will keep on doing it until you die or it dies in you." Bukowski's "So You Want to Be a Writer" is more than a poem, it's a manifesto for artistic authenticity. It cuts through the noise of modern hustle culture with a brutal elegance, reminding us that true creative work cannot be faked, forced, or fished. Either it owns you, or it doesn't.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

