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## Hope new govt will reclaim 'Shonar Bangla': Himanta

Outgoing Assam CM attends Suwendu swearing-in



**GUWAHATI, May 9:** Outgoing Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday on being sworn in as the first BJP CM of West Bengal, and said that 'Anga, Banga, Kalinga and Pragjyotish' are now governed by a party that is 'deeply rooted in preserving Sanatani values'.

Anga, Banga, Kalinga and Pragjyotish refer to the historical eastern Indian geographical arc comprising modern-day Bihar, Bengal, Odisha and Assam.

Tagore strengthened Bharat's spirit: Himanta

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** Outgoing Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma paid tributes to Rabindranath Tagore on his birth anniversary on Saturday, saying the Nobel laureate strengthened the country's spirit, which now resonates globally.

He said Tagore's contributions continue to inspire generations and pave the way for an enlightened society.

Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated on 'Pochishe Boishakh' or the 25th of the Bengali month of Boishakh, known as Rabindra Jayanti.

"Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore not only enriched our literature and culture, but also strengthened Bharat's spirit, which later resonated across the world," Sarma said in a post on X.

"Remembering the great icon on his jayanti, whose timeless thoughts (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

All these states are now ruled by the BJP. Sarma maintained that the Suwendu Adhikari government will work to reclaim the true essence of 'Shonar Bangla' (golden Bengal).

"History is scripted in Bengal! I extend my warm congratulations and best wishes to Suwendu Adhikari on taking oath as the first-ever BJP chief minister of West Bengal," Sarma said on X, after attending the oath-taking ceremony in Kolkata.

The Assam BJP leader, who campaigned for the party in West Bengal also, extended his compliments to Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Ashok Kirtania, Kshudiram Tudu and Nisith Pramanik, who were sworn-in as ministers, 'for being an integral part of the history in making'.

"Under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, I am sure your administration will be on the job right from day one to secure our borders, safeguard the rich identity of the state and bring development and investments back to Bengal to reclaim the true essence of 'Shonar Bangla'," Sarma said. "For the last many years, we have witnessed, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Bengal's maiden saffron party govt since Independence assumes charge

### Suwendu takes oath as CM in historic power shift

**KOLKATA, May 9:** Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday took oath as West Bengal's first BJP chief minister, ushering in the state's maiden saffron party government since Independence and marking a tectonic political shift in a region long regarded as the party's toughest ideological frontier.

The swearing-in at the iconic Brigade Parade Grounds -- once the citadel of the Left and later a theatre of TMC dominance-- symbolically sealed the BJP's stunning ascent in Bengal politics, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, chief ministers of NDA-ruled states and the party's top leadership sharing the stage before a sea of saffron flags and chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'.

Governor RN Ravi administered the oath of office and secrecy to



Adhikari amid drumbeats, loud cheers and fluttering saffron flags across the sprawling ground in the heart of Kolkata.

As Modi walked onto the stage, he bent low, touched his forehead to the dais with folded hands and

acknowledged the crowd, triggering thunderous applause from lakhs of BJP supporters packed into Brigade.

Dressed in a saffron kurta, white dhoti with a thin red border and a prominent tilak on his forehead,

Adhikari took the oath first before greeting the gathering with folded hands. The BJP leader won both Nandigram and Bhabanipur and spearheaded the party's aggressive campaign against the TMC.

Senior BJP leader and former state president Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Ashok Kirtania, Kshudiram Tudu and Nisith Pramanik were also sworn in as ministers in the six-member cabinet that reflected a social-and-regional balance.

While Adhikari is a Brahmin face, Ghosh represents the OBC community, Kirtania the politically crucial Matua belt, Tudu the tribal Janglemahal region and Pramanik the Rajbanshi population of north Bengal. Two ministers are from north Bengal and three from the south, underlining the BJP's effort to consolidate (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## AAP hits out at Centre

### ED arrests Punjab minister in fresh PMLA case

**NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, May 9:** The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday arrested Punjab industries minister Sanjeev Arora following raids in connection with an alleged ₹ 100 crore GST fraud-related money laundering case involving certain entities linked to him, officials said.

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann condemned the ED action, accusing the Centre of using agencies like the ED and the CBI as "weapons" to scare opposition leaders into joining the BJP. But the BJP hit back, saying AAP supremo and his party are rattled as they know that "their days are numbered in Punjab".

According to officials, Arora (62) was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following early morning raids at his official resi-



dence in Chandigarh. They claimed that the minister was "non-cooperative" during the investigation.

He will be brought to Delhi, where the case is registered, and the agency will seek his remand for custodial interrogation, the officials said.

In less than a year after being

sworn in as a minister, Arora has emerged as a key member of the AAP government in Punjab, holding several important portfolios -- industries and commerce, investment promotion, power and local government.

Before the arrest, the ED conducted searches at five locations across (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 17 convicts released on fake court orders from Mizoram jail

Two arrested for allegedly running fake release racket from inside prison

**AIZAWL, May 9:** Seventeen prisoners convicted in POCSO, NDPS and theft cases were allegedly fraudulently released from Mizoram's Lunglei district jail using forged court documents and fake release orders, police said in a statement on Saturday.

Two persons - one of them an inmate and the other a part-time jail ambulance driver - have been arrested for orchestrating the forgery racket, the statement said.

The racket came to light on April 27, when R Lalduhawmi, District and Sessions Judge of Lunglei, filed a First Information Report (FIR) at the Lunglei police station.

The discrepancy was noticed during a court session on April 24, when two under trial prisoners

(UTPs), Malsawmtluanga and Dokaphanga, appeared before Lalduhawmi.

The duo presented purported release orders from the Lunglei District Court and the Gauhati High Court, claiming they were to be discharged on a ₹ 50,000 bond.

Suspicious were raised when the judge noted that she had presided over their hearing just the day before (April 23), and their next hearing had been scheduled for May 8.

Sensing foul play, Lalduhawmi immediately visited the district jail to verify the matter, during which it was discovered that several prisoners had already secured release using forged court orders, the police statement said.

Police launched an immediate

investigation and began tracing 15 persons named in the complaint.

Eleven of them were rearrested and sent back to jail by Lunglei police, while one was arrested by Khawzawl police, and one was found to have passed away after being released from the district jail, it said.

Further investigation revealed that a total of 17 convicts, ranging from those serving sentences for POCSO violations, drug trafficking (ND&PS) and theft, had successfully walked out of prison using forged papers between January 30 and March 18, it said.

Police have identified and arrested two main accused in the case -- Jeremiah Lalhangtura (25), a resident (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CJI urges stakeholders to work in tandem to strengthen access to justice

Justice Surya Kant attends mega camp-cum-awareness programme on NALSA schemes in M'laya

**NONGPOH (MEGHALAYA), May 9:** Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant on Saturday stressed the need for convergence of legal aid and welfare schemes to ensure last-mile delivery of justice.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating an awareness camp in Meghalaya's Ri Bhoi district, Justice Surya Kant, who is also the Patron-in-Chief of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), said healthcare access, educational support, livelihood opportunities and rehabilitation assistance were being brought together through such camps to ensure that benefits reached the grassroots.

The mega camp-cum-awareness programme on NALSA schemes and government welfare schemes was organised at Margar in Ri Bhoi district under the theme "Bridging the Gap" by the High Court of Meghalaya and the Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA) in partnership with the state government.

"It is very essential that under one roof all these welfare schemes implemented by government departments, organisations and legal institutions are made

available to all," he said, urging all stakeholders to work in tandem to strengthen access to justice.

The CJI also acknowledged the role of para-legal volunteers in delivering legal services at the grassroots level and called for strengthening their recruitment.

Speaking on the occasion, Supreme Court judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan highlighted the importance of aligning traditional justice systems with the constitutional framework while appreciating Meghalaya's unique customary practices.

He also referred to Ri Bhoi's famed pineapple cultivation, remarking in a lighter vein that the people of Meghalaya were "as sweet as the pineapples grown there".

Meghalaya Law Minister Lakhmen Rymbui said the MSLSA had devised a comprehensive state action plan tailored to local conditions to effectively address issues faced by the people while remaining in consonance with national laws and policies.

Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya Justice Revati Mohite Dere said the mega camp was aimed at ensuring legal help (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## TN uncertainty ends: VCK, IUML come to support TVK

### Vijay gets majority to form govt

**CHENNAI, May 9:** The uncertainty over government formation in Tamil Nadu finally ended on Saturday after days of drama, with DMK allies VCK and IUML extending "unconditional support," to Vijay-led TVK and enabling it to cross the requisite numbers to form government. Yet, the party only got a thin majority in the 234-member Assembly.

The suspense ended when the Thol.Thirumavalavan-led Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi, which has two seats, finally extended support after keeping the TVK on tenterhooks and the political circles abuzz over its stand. VCK, a long-time ally of the Left parties who had extended their support to Vijay on Friday, had earlier announced its decision would be in sync with their stand.

Shortly after VCK's decision to back Vijay, another DMK ally, the IUML also extended support to TVK. IUML has two MLAs.

With the two small parties' sup-



port, the numbers in favour of TVK rose to 120, just two more than the simple majority mark of 118 in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly.

Armed with the support of 120 MLAs, Vijay on Saturday evening set off to the Lok Bhavan to meet Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arelkar, but had to turn back as he reportedly did not get an appointment. CPI state secretary M Veer-

apandian slammed the governor for "harassing" Vijay.

The Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam faced serious allegations when NDA constituent AMMK accused it of alleged bid aimed at horse-trading. MLAs belonging to Congress, which has extended support to the TVK, have shifted to Hyderabad. After the Left parties declared unconditional support (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Critically endangered gharial spotted in KNP after years

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** The critically endangered gharial has been spotted in Kaziranga National Park after the reptile was long believed to have disappeared from Assam's river systems, officials said on Saturday.

They said the sighting was a testimony to the conservation efforts undertaken in the state.

"Once believed to have disappeared from Assam's river systems, the critically endangered gharial has now been spotted at Kaziranga, a truly remarkable moment for wildlife conservation," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a post on X.

The CMO also shared an 18-second video clip showing the reptile in a watery body, filmed from a motor-powered boat.

The gharial is a critically endangered South Asian crocodilian species known for its exceptionally long and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 1st shipment exported to US

### Baksa honey goes global

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** The first-ever consignment of honey from Assam's Baksa district to the United States was flagged off from Guwahati on Saturday, an official statement said.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) facilitated the export from the aspirational district under the Centre's One District One Product (ODOP) initiative.

The consignment was undertaken by APEDA-registered exporter Salt Range Foods Pvt Ltd.

Commissioner and secretary of the agriculture department and agriculture production commissioner Aruna Rajoria flagged off the consignment.

"The landmark consignment, comprising around 20 metric tonnes of honey, was flagged off



from Guwahati. The honey has been processed and packed at the facility of Salt Range Foods Private Limited in Guwahati," the statement said.

Sourced from an eco-friendly and pesticide-free environment, the honey from Baksa district is

known for its high quality and near-organic characteristics, reflecting the region's rich biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practices, it said.

Honey from Baksa has also been identified under the ODOP initiative, recognising its potential for

livelihood generation, value addition and export growth.

Assam has immense potential for honey production owing to its rich biodiversity, abundant forest resources and long-standing tradition of beekeeping, the statement said.

The state produced approximately 1,650 metric tonnes of honey during 2023-24, according to the National Horticulture Board's latest data.

Major honey-producing districts in the state include Baksa, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri and Tamulpur in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The APEDA, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, facilitated the export by supporting infrastructure development including the provision of testing and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 22nd Rongjali Baisagu festival begins at Garjaga village

**HT Correspondent HOWRAGHAT, May 9:** The 22nd Rongjali Baisagu festival began on Saturday with a two-day colourful programme at Garjaga village under the Howraghat Legislative Assembly Constituency in Karbi Anglong.

The festival is being organised jointly by several regional Bodo organisations, including All Bodo Students Union, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, ABWWF, Kachari Samaj, the Gaonburha Association, Dularai Bodo Harim Afad, Ex-BLT Welfare Council and Ex-NDFB.

The programme began with the inauguration of the main entrance gate by former Howraghat Tiniiali Regional ABSU secretary Golap Baglari.

This was followed by the hoisting of the festival flag by reception committee president Dinesh



Narzary.

Floral tributes to martyrs were offered under the leadership of Maheswar Basumatary.

The celebration witnessed participation from hundreds of residents of nearby villages including Gorkhia Pukhuri, Dakshin Dighalipar, Kachu Pukhuri, Mirdupathar,

Chunpora, Majgaon, Kunjok Pathar and Garjaga.

Various traditional sports and competitions were organised during the day, including kabaddi, volleyball, tug-of-war and athletics events.

The evening session featured cultural (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## itel launches A100C New smartphone with military-grade durability

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** itel has launched the A100C New smartphone in India, featuring military-grade durability certification and entry-level specifications aimed at budget-conscious consumers.

Priced at ₹7,999, the smartphone is available in Silk Green, Titanium Gold and Pure Black colour variants through retail stores across the country.

The company said the A100C New comes with MIL-STD-810H military-grade certification, offering enhanced durability and reliability.

The device is available with 2GB RAM, expandable virtually up to 6GB, along with 64GB internal storage.

Commenting on the launch, Arijet Talapatra said the company remains focused on delivering affordable technology without compromising on quality and durability.

The smartphone features a 6.6-inch HD+ display with a 90Hz refresh rate and DTS-powered audio technology.

It also includes a Dynamic Bar interface for notifications and system alerts.

Powered by an octa-core Unisoc T7100 processor and Android 15 Go edition, the device supports multitasking, gaming and video calling functions.

For photography, the A100C New offers an 8MP rear camera with image enhancement features. Security options include face unlock and a side-mounted fingerprint sensor.

The smartphone is backed by a 5,000mAh battery with 10W charging support.

According to the company, itel currently has a consumer base of more than 15 crore users, supported by over 1.3 lakh retail outlets and more than 1,000 service centres across India.

## Aluwind Infratech targets ₹200 cr turnover

**MUMBAI, May 9:** SME engineering and infrastructure solutions provider Aluwind Infratech expects a turnover of ₹200 crore in the current fiscal year, logging around 42 per cent growth on the back of a strong order book, according to a top official.

Aluwind has secured major new orders in both the facade and windows segments and has made good progress on several projects like Godrej Reserve Mumbai, L&T Innovation Campus Chennai, and ATIMS Madurai, according to Aluwind Infratech Managing Director M M Kabra.

The company continues to maintain a robust order book of ₹300 crore, providing strong revenue visibility for the coming quarters.

Going forward, the contribution of facades will increase gradually, leading to better execution and margin profiles for the company, he added.

The company, which offers aluminium windows and glass facade solutions, registered a 26.76 per cent rise in total revenues for FY2025-26 to ₹140.10 crore from ₹110.52 crore in FY 25 despite facing operational headwinds due to volatile commodity prices and geopolitical tensions, he said.

Profit after tax increased by 29.53 per cent to ₹10.52 crore in FY26 from ₹8.12 crore in FY25. (PTI)

## Labour reforms: Govt fully operationalises four new codes by publishing rules



**NEW DELHI, May 9:** After a long wait of over five years, the central government has fully operationalised the four labour codes by publishing rules, ensuring minimum wage and universal social security for all workers.

The four codes, namely the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, came into effect from November 21, 2025.

The four codes were introduced to modernise and consolidate 29 labour laws into a simplified and contemporary framework.

An official told PTI that the rules under the four codes are now notified in the official gazette of the government, and with this, the

process of full implementation of the labour codes is complete.

He explained that though the labour codes became law of the land on November 21, 2025, certain explanations were not provided due to the absence of rules.

The draft rules were published on December 30, 2025, to seek feedback from stakeholders and were notified after legal vetting.

The publishing of rules under the four codes was necessary to make the new laws fully operational.

The codification of 29 existing labour laws into the four labour codes was undertaken to address long-standing challenges and make the system more efficient and contemporary.

The codification aims to enhance ease of doing business, promote employment generation, ensure

safety, health, and social & wage security for every worker.

Since labour is a concurrent subject, the appropriate governments, the Centre and states, are required to notify the rules under the four codes to enforce them fully across the country.

The enforcement of the codes will mark the next transformative step -- broadening worker protection, easing business operations and promoting a pro-worker labour ecosystem.

The provisions of the labour codes include a mandatory appointment letter, free health check-ups for workers aged 40 years and above, and equal work, pay and opportunity for women working in different shifts.

The new legal framework also mandates the establishment of a National Reskilling Fund, which will be utilised for reskilling workers who lose their jobs.

The rules also capped the weekly working hours at 48 hours.

"The number of hours of work which shall constitute a normal working day for an employee whose wage period is other than on a daily basis shall be so fixed that the total number of weekly working hours shall not exceed forty-eight hours," according to the rules.

The rules also provide for at least one weekend off or rest day to workers and payment of overtime for working beyond working hours. (PTI)

## RFBL Flexi Pack fixes price band at ₹47-50 for IPO

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** Flexible packaging materials manufacturer RFBL Flexi Pack Ltd on Saturday announced a price band of ₹47-50 per equity share for its initial public offering, which opens for subscription on May 12.

The ₹35.32-crore IPO of the Gujarat-based manufacturer and trader of printed multilayer flexible packaging materials comprises a fresh issue of up to 70,65,000 equity shares of face value ₹10 each, the company said in a statement.

The issue will open for subscription on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, and will close on Thursday, May 14, 2026, on the NSE SME platform. The anchor investor bidding will open on Monday, May 11, 2026.

RFBL Flexi Pack Ltd intends to utilise ₹35 crore of the IPO proceeds for repayment/prepayment, in full or part, of all or a portion of certain borrowings availed by the company, while the remaining funds will be used for general corporate purposes and issue expenses, according to the offer document.

The company is engaged in the manufacturing and trading of printed multilayer flexible packaging materials such as plastic film rolls and pouches used across diverse industries including food, pharmaceuticals, home care, and consumer products.

Grow House Wealth Management Pvt.Ltd. is the Book Running Lead Manager (BRLM) to the Issue, while Kfin Technologies Ltd is the Registrar to the Issue. (PTI)

## China says April exports jump 14.1% from a year ago ahead of Trump-Xi summit

**HONG KONG, May 9:** China's exports rose 14.1% in April from a year earlier, the government said Saturday, despite the Iran war and lingering impacts from higher U.S. tariffs.

The data were released just days ahead of a planned meeting next week between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing.

That beat analysts' estimates and was a significant improvement from March's 2.5% year-on-year expansion. Exports to the U.S. rose 11.3% from the year before, up from a 26.5% drop in March.

Imports climbed 25.3%, slower than the 27.8% growth in March but still robust.

The Trump-Xi summit comes at a time when relations are beset by multiple issues, with efforts to end the war in Iran eclipsing the usual sources of friction.

"We're expecting that overall external demand will remain a solid driver of growth this year," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at Dutch bank ING, likely led by China's exports of semiconductors and autos.

In March, Chinese leaders set an annual economic growth target of

4.5% to 5%, slightly lower than last year's 5% expansion and the lowest target since 1991. Export growth is expected to continue to power its wider economy, especially as shipments increased from China to Europe, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa over the past months.

China's exports to the U.S. have fallen for most of the months since Trump imposed steeper tariffs and harsher controls on sharing of technology after he took office last year. But trade with the U.S. is likely improving this year, said Song, particularly because of the base effects of sharp declines caused by Trump's tariff hikes in 2025.

Apart from efforts to broker a peace agreement to end the Iran war, trade and export controls, including rare earths and U.S. tech restrictions on China, will likely be on the agenda during the Trump-Xi summit, following a yearlong U.S.-China trade truce reached late last year when the two leaders met in South Korea.

Major breakthroughs on export controls are unlikely, but the leaders' upcoming meeting may bring "incremental" steps to troubleshoot trade friction, HSBC economists

said in a recent research note.

"On balance, China looks to have more leverage," wrote Leah Fahy, senior China economist of Capital Economics, in a note. "But higher tariffs haven't stopped China's exports from continuing to surge over the past year, and Beijing has shown that it is prepared to wait out U.S. pressure."

For China, oil and fuel price hikes caused by the war in Iran are also feeding higher manufacturing and logistics costs across its many factories, said Wei Li, head of multi-asset investments at BNP Paribas Securities (China), while higher global inflation could dampen consumer purchasing power in China's overseas markets.

Still, China's overall economy has remained resilient compared with other countries, owing to its large oil reserves and more diversified energy sources.

ING's Song said China's trade surplus, which reached an all-time high of almost \$1.2 trillion last year, could narrow for the whole of this year. Imports so far have been stronger in 2026, though China is still recovering from a prolonged property slump that has dragged on consumption and investment. (AP)

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## Suwendu takes oath

its support across regions and communities. Notably, there was no representative from Kolkata in the first list of ministers, despite the city historically producing some of Bengal's tallest political leaders and chief ministers. Sources said more ministers are likely to be sworn in at Raj Bhavan on Monday, when the first cabinet meeting may also take place. For the BJP, the optics of the venue carried deep political meaning.

Once considered the ideological citadel of the Left and later appropriated by the TMC as a symbol of mass-mobilisation, Brigade Parade Grounds on Saturday became the site of the saffron party's biggest breakthrough in Bengal, one that the BJP projected as the beginning of a 'Sonar Bangla' under a 'double-engine government'. Thousands of BJP workers started arriving at the venue from early morning, carrying lotus-flags, while giant LED screens played campaign speeches of Modi and Adhikari. Chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' echoed across the Maidan as the prime minister arrived for the ceremony.

A makeshift memorial carrying the names of slain party workers was erected near the venue, where many supporters paused silently before entering the main congregation area.

In a post on X, Modi said the sacrifices of BJP workers would remain 'a source of strength' for the party, while Shah said the memorial reflected the long struggle of taking the BJP in Bengal 'from zero to the pinnacle'. The BJP secured 207 seats in the 294-member assembly, ending the TMC's 15-year rule and scripting its biggest electoral success in eastern India.

The party's rise in Bengal gathered momentum over the past few years through organisational expansion, sharp political polarisation, and aggressive campaigning and high-profile defections from rival parties.

Brigade, which once reverberated with Left slogans during Jyoti Basu's era and later became Mamata Banerjee's preferred arena for shows of strength, witnessed an oath-taking ceremony for the first time in the state's post-Independence history. Unlike traditional swearing-in ceremonies held at Raj Bhavan, the BJP chose the sprawling Maidan venue to underline the mass character of its victory and to visually frame the transition as a popular mandate rather than a routine constitutional exercise.

For Adhikari personally, the ceremony marked a remarkable political journey from being one of the key architects of the TMC organisation to becoming the man who dethroned the party in Bengal. His switch to the BJP ahead of the 2021 assembly polls altered the political grammar of the state and accelerated the saffron party's penetration into rural Bengal.

Saturday's swearing-in marked more than a transfer of power for the BJP. It represented the culmination of a long political project to breach Bengal's last major resistance to saffron politics from the very heart of Brigade itself. Soon after taking the oath, Adhikari drove to Jorasanko Thakurbari, the ancestral home of Rabindranath Tagore, and paid floral tributes to the Nobel laureate before formally beginning work as chief minister.

"My official work begins after paying tribute to Kaviguru," he said.

Invoking Swami Vivekananda, Adhikari said Bengal needed rebuilding after years of decline in education and culture. "This is not the time for criticism... I am everyone's chief minister," he said.

Later, he also visited the ancestral residence of Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee and paid floral tributes. Referring to Modi, Adhikari said the Prime Minister had long wished to see a BJP government in Bengal and described Saturday as the beginning of a new chapter in the state's politics.

For the BJP, Saturday was not merely the formal assumption of power, but the rewriting of Bengal's political folklore from the very ground where its opponents once drew their greatest strength. (PTI)

## Hope new govt

heard and learnt about the indomitable sacrifices of our workers in Bengal. Today is indeed a fitting tribute to each one of them," he added. Sarma maintained that the new government taking over 'marks a new chapter in our civilisational journey as 'Anga, Banga, Kalinga and Pragiyotish' are now governed by an administration deeply rooted in preserving Santani values'. "These sacred lands carry the spiritual legacy of our Nari Shakti (women empowerment). It is in this Purva Bharat (East India) where Maa Kamakhya, Maa Tripura Sundari, Maa Tara Tarini, Maa Kali and Maa Janaki reside. With Maa's (the mother goddess's) blessings may a new chapter begin for our region," Sarma said and ended the post with the Vande Mataram salutation.

Sarma had led the NDA to a massive third successive victory in Assam. The BJP legislature party in the state is set to elect its leader on Sunday. (PTI)

## Tagore strengthened Bharat's

and contributions continue to inspire generations and pave the way for a more enlightened society," he added. Tagore was born on 25th Boishakh 1268 of the Bengali calendar (May 7, 1861, by the Gregorian calendar). (PTI)

## ED arrests Punjab

northern India earlier in the day as part of the operation. These included two premises in Delhi and a company named Hampton Sky Realty Ltd in Udyog Vihar, Gurugram. The raids came after the central agency registered a new case under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), according to officials. The inputs for the latest case emerged from a FEMA search that the ED had undertaken against Arora and some others on April 17. The agency had raided Arora and his linked entities under the civil provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), and on April 19 it provisionally attached movable and immovable assets of Hampton Sky Realty Ltd, its director Arora, and entities linked to him for alleged FEMA violation through bogus sales and exports to the tune of ₹157.12 crore.

Arora was in June 2025 elected as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA from the Ludhiana West assembly seat. He was serving as a Rajya Sabha MP when the party leadership selected him to contest the assembly by-election following the death of the sitting MLA. The latest probe (under the PMLA) pertains to "fake" GST purchases of mobile phones worth more than ₹100 crore and subsequent exports to "round trip" alleged illegitimate funds from Dubai to India, according to the ED. (PTI)

## 17 convicts released

of Aizawl's Zemabawk locality, who himself was an undertrial prisoner in Lunglei district jail, and C Laltlanhlu (31) of Republic Venghlang in Aizawl, who was working as a non-regular ambulance driver attached to the jail, it said. The duo was arrested on May 1 and remanded to judicial custody on May 7.

According to police findings, Jeremia operated the scam from within the prison walls.

He allegedly duped prisoners by promising to secure their release or file appeals through a lawyer known to him in exchange for cash. The suspects collected between ₹4,000 and ₹50,000 per inmate. The money was shared between the two accused, police said.

The investigation further revealed that forged documents were allegedly prepared by Jeremia using computers at a xerox and printing shop in Lunglei's Rahsi Veng locality, as well as an office computer inside the district jail. Police said that Laltlanhlu would secure the office keys and act as a lookout while Jeremia drafted the fraudulent orders. These documents were then handed over to jail authorities by Laltlanhlu.

Police said that jail officials released the convicts after receiving the forged court orders, believing them to be genuine, police said. The investigation into the racket is still going on, they said. (PTI)

## CJI urges stakeholders

reached the people at their doorstep. "In our democracy, justice has no distance," she said, adding that 14 such mega camps had been organised across nine districts in the past five years, benefiting thousands of people. During the programme, dignitaries distributed assistive devices to persons with disabilities, financial assistance and work orders to self-help groups and village organisations, and certificates to legal aid lawyers and para-legal volunteers for their performance during 2025. Later, High Court judges Justice H S Thangkhiew and Justice W Diengdoh flagged off multi-utility vehicles under the NALSA Grant-in-Aid Scheme. (PTI)

## Vijay gets majority

to TVK to form the government asserting it was to prevent BJP's backdoor entry through Governor and to respect the people's mandate, VCK founder Thirumavalavan immediately went into a huddle with his party office-bearers through video-conferencing on Friday.

While it was expected that the VCK would announce its stand on Saturday morning, the party revealed its decision later in the day. There were unverified reports of some hard-bargaining between TVK and VCK, possibly over ministerial allocations, but there was no official confirmation from either side.

Vijay, however, has been open to accommodate allies in his cabinet, in sync with VCK's stated position of power-sharing.

In a return of "resort politics" --last seen in Tamil Nadu after the demise of AIADMK matriarch and Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa in 2016, the five Congress MLAs were now in Hyderabad and TVK legislators were in a resort/hotel in Mamallapuram near here. While the AIADMK MLAs have returned to Chennai from Pudukcherry, its chief Edappadi K Palaniswami has greeted the "party that is set to form the government."

At a time when claims were doing the rounds that VCK is eyeing plum posts, including Deputy CM in the Cabinet to be helmed by Vijay, party leader SS Balaji said the VCK has the liberty to take a decision at its will and convenience. "Why is so much fuss made and pressure exerted on us," he asked.

VCK leader Vanniarasu, a close aide of the party founder, had already given a clear indication that Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi was keen on getting a share in power.

Meanwhile, the AMMK has lodged a complaint with the Guindy police here against the TVK, alleging the use of a "forged" support letter to stake claim for government formation. According to Guindy police, a petition has been received from AMMK General Secretary T TV Dhinakaran. (PTI)

## Critically endangered gharial

slender snout and fish-based diet. "For tourists and forest officials alike, this was more than just a rare sighting. It was a powerful reminder of Assam's extraordinary biodiversity and the silent success of sustained conservation efforts across our forests, wetlands and rivers," the CMO said. (PTI)

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Rongjali Baisagu

performances and competitions such as Baisagu dance, Demchi dance and modern Bodo dance performances, drawing enthusiastic participation from local artists and youth groups. Organisers said the celebrations would continue on Sunday with more cultural and community programmes as part of the two-day festival.

## Baksa honey goes

laboratory equipment at the processing facility to ensure adherence to international quality standards and food safety requirements. T

he initiative is expected to significantly benefit local beekeepers and farmers, with farmers receiving around 43 per cent higher price realisation compared to prevailing local farm gate prices, thereby enhancing income opportunities and strengthening rural livelihoods in the region, the statement said. (PTI)

## Catch expands sprinkler range with new-age and regional flavours

DS Group introduces seasonings including oregano, chilli flakes and regional spice blends

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** Catch, owned by Dharampal Satyapal Group, has expanded its sprinkler portfolio with the launch of new-age seasonings and regionally inspired flavours aimed at evolving consumer preferences.

The expanded range includes variants such as pizza pasta seasoning, chilli flakes, oregano, mixed herbs and magic masala, along with regional flavours including Jeeravan (Poha Masala) and Podi Masala.

Company officials said the move marks an expansion of the brand's traditional salt and pepper sprinkler category into a broader seasoning platform designed for consumers seeking convenience and diverse flavour options.

The new products are available across general trade, modern retail outlets and e-commerce and quick commerce platforms nationwide.



The sprinklers are packaged in moisture-resistant HIPS containers designed for easy dispensing and tabletop use. Speaking on the expansion, Sandeep Ghosh said the company is

focusing on evolving consumer tastes by offering products that combine convenience, quality and flavour innovation.

He said the expanded range reflects the growing demand for global cuisines and regional flavours across metro cities as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets.

According to the company, the Catch brand was launched in 1987 with its tabletop salt sprinkler and has since expanded into multiple spice and seasoning categories with over 140 variants and 330 SKUs.

The products are currently available through more than seven lakh retail outlets across the country.

The company said it continues to strengthen its presence through modern retail, e-commerce and digital marketing initiatives while focusing on premium and value-added food products.

# Dibrugarh Town station may reopen by July-end

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 9:** After remaining closed for several years due to extensive upgradation and electrification works, the historic Dibrugarh Town Railway Station is likely to resume operations by the end of July, railway officials said on Saturday.

Tinsukia Division Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM) Ajay Pradhan visited the station along with senior railway officials to review the ongoing infrastructure and electrification works.

During the inspection, officials assessed the progress of railway electrification, signalling systems and passenger facility development at the station.

Speaking to reporters, Pradhan said the electrification work from Chaulkhowa to Dibrugarh Town Railway Station is progressing steadily and is expected to be completed soon.

He added that the railway administration is making all efforts to restart train services from the station by the end of July.

"The station remained closed for a prolonged period because of major infrastructure works, including the reconstruction of the Thana Chariali-Mankata Road Over



Bridge (ROB), whose height was inadequate for railway electrification," Pradhan said.

He clarified that the ROB was demolished and rebuilt according to required specifications and that electrification work beneath the bridge has already been completed.

Rejecting reports circulating on social media about fresh technical hurdles, the ADRM stated that there are currently no major obsta-

cles in the electrification process.

Pradhan further informed that several old signalling and safety installations had deteriorated during the long closure period and are now being replaced and upgraded.

He also announced that work on a new station building equipped with modern signalling systems, improved waiting halls and enhanced passenger amenities will

begin shortly.

However, he clarified that the construction of the new station building and the resumption of train operations are independent projects and will continue simultaneously. Railway officials expressed confidence that train services from Dibrugarh Town Railway Station will resume by the end of July, bringing relief to commuters and residents of the town.

# Dr Surajit Giri named to national snakebite panel

Demow hospital specialist included in Centre's advisory committee

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, May 9:** The Government of India has included Dr Surajit Giri, an anaesthesia specialist and snakebite expert at Demow Model Hospital-cum-CHC in the National Technical Advisory Committee for the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NPSE). The development has been hailed as good news for Demow, Sivasagar district and Assam.

According to an office order issued by the Government of India on May 8, 2026, it has been decided to constitute a National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) under the NPSE programme under the chairpersonship of Dr Sunita Sharma, DGHS, MoHFW, Government of India, to deliberate on key technical issues under the programme.

Dr Surajit Giri, Consultant Anaesthesiologist at Demow Model Hospital, Sivasagar has been included as a member of the committee.

After learning about the appointment, Dr Giri thanked the people of Demow and Assam, the staff of Demow Hospital, the Government of Assam, doctors and health workers across the state, as well as snake rescuers and well-wishers from Assam.



People from different sections congratulated Dr Giri and the Demow Model Hospital-cum-CHC team for the achievement.

The State Nodal Officer, NPSE, Assam has also been included as a member of the National Technical Advisory Committee for the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming.

Under the leadership of Dr Surajit Giri, the team of Demow Model Hospital-cum-CHC has achieved a significant public health milestone by recording zero snakebite-related deaths for the fifth consecutive year from 2021 to 2025.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has also sanctioned a four-year multi-state re-

search project worth ₹ 13.5 crore to tackle the public health challenge of snakebite envenoming in India. The study, titled 'Zero Snakebite Death Initiative: Community Empowerment and Engagement for Mitigation of Snakebite Envenoming', aims to develop a unified, replicable, and effective national model for prevention and management.

The research will be conducted under the banner of SARPA (Snakebite Awareness, Response, Prevention and Action).

In Assam, the study will focus on the Demow and Geleley blocks of Sivasagar district. Dr Surajit Giri of Demow Model Hospital has been appointed as the investigator for Assam in the project.

## NFR records 8.6% rise in freight loading



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), continuing its commitment to efficient freight operations and timely transportation of essential commodities, achieved a significant milestone in freight loading during April 2026. NFR recorded a total freight loading of 0.972 million tonnes (MT) during the month, registering an impressive 8.6 per cent growth compared to the corresponding period last year.

Several key commodities registered remarkable growth during April 2026. Cement loading witnessed an exceptional rise of 329 per cent, while coal loading increased by 141.7 per cent over the same period last year. Dolomite loading also showed healthy growth of 20.7 per cent.

Additionally, loading under the "Others" category, comprising miscellaneous commodities, recorded a substantial increase of 190 per cent, reflecting enhanced movement of construction-related and allied materials across the region.

The steady increase in freight loading highlights the growing economic and industrial activities across the Northeast and adjoining areas. This sustained growth has not only strengthened the regional supply chain network but has also contributed significantly to the revenue earnings of Northeast Frontier Railway.

NFR continues to focus on technological advancements, operational efficiency and customer-centric freight services to ensure reliable transportation and sustained growth in freight movement in the coming months.

## SMCH observes Fire Safety Week with mock drills and training

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** In a significant initiative aimed at strengthening emergency preparedness and promoting a culture of safety within the healthcare system, Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) observed Fire Safety Week 2026 from May 4 to May 10 through a series of awareness programmes, training sessions and mock drills involving doctors, staff members and emergency service personnel.

The week-long observance began with the administration of a Fire Safety Pledge led by Principal-cum-Chief Superintendent Dr Bhaskar Gupta in the presence of the superintendent, deputy superintendents, faculty members and employees from different categories of the institution.

As part of the observance, fire safety awareness programmes were conducted across various departments of the medical college and hospital. The sessions focused on preventive measures, emergency response protocols, evacuation procedures and the importance of timely coordination during crisis situations. Staff members were sensitised on preparedness in a busy healthcare institution where patient safety remains of utmost importance.

A fire mock drill training session was also organised on Friday for faculty members, paramedical staff, office employees and security personnel. The training included practical fire response techniques, proper handling of firefighting equipment and methods of coordinated emergency management during unforeseen situations.

Participants actively engaged in the exercise, gaining hands-on exposure to essential safety practices. Further intensifying the preparedness initiative, a large-scale fire mock drill was conducted on Saturday in collaboration with the Fire and Emergency Services Department, Cachar.

Different departments of SMCH also participated in the exercise and demonstrated inter-departmental coordination during simulated emergency conditions. The drill highlighted the institution's preparedness mechanism and the importance of rapid response in protecting lives and hospital infrastructure.

Addressing the programme, Principal Dr Bhaskar Gupta underscored the importance of fire safety in a major healthcare institution and urged staff members to remain vigilant and prepared to respond to emergencies.

He said safety awareness should be an integral part of institutional culture, adding that every member of the hospital fraternity has a shared responsibility in ensuring the protection of patients, healthcare workers and public property.

## Books on Bisa Raja reach Japan archives

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, May 9:** The historical legacy of Bisa Raja in Margherita district of Tinsukia has reached Japan, with two books documenting the history of Bisa Raja and the Singpho community finding a place in preservation archives there. A six-member research team from Japan visited Assam two days ago and toured various areas under the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly constituency. The team conducted a special study on the traditional tea, known as Falap of the Singpho community, with particular focus on Assam tea.

During the visit, the researchers inspected organically managed tea gardens in Margherita and studied the traditional method of preparing Falap by the Singpho people. The team also visited the historic

Bisa village in Ledo and was hosted at the residence of Bisa Raja Mungdang Gam Singpho.

To learn about the history of Bisa Raja and the Singpho community, each member of the team purchased two recently published books written by noted writer and journalist Jagat Changmai of Ledo. The books are titled "Bisa Rajar Perat Abaddha Swamil Itihās" and "Singpho Jati Aru Bisa Raja Itibritta". The researchers also collected additional copies for preservation and research purposes in Japan. The team expressed deep appreciation after reading the books through AI-assisted Japanese translation. They encouraged author Jagat Changmai to continue his work, stating that it was a matter of pride that the books had crossed international borders and reached Japan.

## Sivasagar Rongali Bihu Sanmilian begins

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, May 9:** The three-day 29th Sivasagar Sanmilita Rongali Bihu Sanmilian at the Boarding Field began on Saturday morning with a colourful inaugural ceremony.

Pradip Kanti Das, president of the Bihu committee, hoisted the bihuan, while Jayanta Dutta, Mridul Phukan, Rajen Chutia, Pradip Khandelia, Santosh Sahevala and Ponaram Mili performed the smriti-charan.

Manoj Kumar Borthakur, along with Dr Prabudha Prasad Chetia, Bikash Dey, Mridul Phukan and others, lit earthen lamps in front of portraits of Zubeen Garg. Manoj Kumar Borthakur spoke briefly on Zubeen Garg's legacy. Sarat Hazarika, general secretary of the Bihu committee, spoke in detail about the Sanmilian's long record of social service in different fields over the years. On its 29th year of Bihu celebrations, the committee felicitated 29 distinguished personalities from various walks of life, including Kartick Dutta, Pranjal Rajguru, Bijuli Basfor.

## Women SHGs support election management in Morigaon

Rural women's groups provide catering services during Assembly polls

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, May 9:** In a significant development, women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs) played a vital role in the recently concluded Assembly election in Morigaon district by providing food and catering services to officials engaged in election duty.

The initiative, undertaken by the District Administration led by Deputy Commissioner Anamika Tewari and the Morigaon Zila Parishad under the leadership of CEO Ananta Kumar Gogoi, aimed at generating livelihood opportunities for rural women while ensuring smooth logistical support during the election process.

The effort has drawn appreciation from various sections of society for successfully combining election management with women's economic empowerment.

Members of several SHGs were engaged in setting up food stalls at polling material distribution and receipt centres, where they served freshly prepared and hygienic food

items to polling personnel and other officials on election duty.

Among the participating groups, Samridhi Tiffin and Catering Service, functioning under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), was entrusted with supplying evening tea and snacks to nearly 700 election duty officials, including reserved polling personnel, on the polling material distribution day. Following their efficient service, the group was again assigned catering responsibilities on the poll day for nearly 1,500 officials deployed at material receipt centres, election cells and other duty points.

The group executed food supply orders worth ₹ 1.57 lakh. In addition, it earned around ₹ 25,000 through the sale of tea, rice cakes, drinking water and cold beverages at food stalls set up near the election venues. Thirty members of the group were also engaged in catering services at the canteen established for police personnel during the polling material distribution



day and poll day, earning an additional ₹ 30,000 for their services. During the counting process, the SHG further generated ₹ 17,000 by operating a paid canteen from a stall constructed by the District Administration in front of the counting venue.

Another women-led organisation, Uttaran Sanmilita Mahila Gusthi, also actively participated in election-related catering services. The organisation supplied food during election preparedness meetings and generated business worth nearly ₹ 1.85 lakh by serv-

ing fresh and hygienic meals to election officials. The organisation was additionally entrusted with serving lunch on the polling material distribution day and dinner for polling personnel on the poll day after the submission of polled EVMs and other election materi-

als. Around 50 members participated in food distribution activities and collectively earned ₹ 50,000 for their services.

Election officials appreciated the disciplined, timely and hygienic services provided by the women's groups. Notably, nearly 90 per cent of the members associated with the organisations belong to SHGs under ASRLM.

The initiative has been widely hailed as a successful model of convergence between the administration and community institutions for promoting women's entrepreneurship, self-reliance and inclusive development.

When contacted, Champa Bodo, a leading SHG member of Samridhi Tiffin and Catering Service, expressed gratitude to the District Administration, Morigaon, for providing the opportunity and support to open food stalls at the election venue. She also conveyed special thanks to Ananta Kumar Gogoi, CEO of Zila Parishad, for his guidance and encouragement.

## Women's University holds week-long coaching for competitive exams



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 9:** The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and the Alumni Association of Assam Women's University jointly organised a one-week UGC NET-SET coaching programme from May 4 to May 8, 2026, at the Kaliapani, Teok campus of the university.

The coaching programme was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor, Prof Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar. In her inaugural lecture, she highlighted the growing use of technology in higher education and competitive examinations and emphasised the need for students to adapt to the changing academic environment.

The resource persons of the programme included Dr Binud Chandra Borah, Registrar of Assam Women's University, who spoke on the Indian Constitution. Other faculty members and scholars who served as resource persons included Moumita Konwar, Anannya K N Khanikar, Monika Baruah, Dipsikha Das, Jimpy Dutta, Punam Rajak and Maitreyee Borthakur.

The sessions focused on various aspects of UGC NET, SET and other competitive examinations, providing guidance to participants on syllabus orientation, preparation techniques, examination strategies and emerging trends.

The programme was coordinated by Dr Prashanta Puzari, Dr Santosh Kumar Rajak (PT) and Moumita Konwar.

The participants were also guided on effective preparation methods, making the programme informative and beneficial for aspirants.

## 70-year-old man disappears from Kheroni residence

**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, May 9:** A sense of panic has gripped the Majgaon area of Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong after a 70-year-old man went missing early on Saturday morning.

The missing person has been identified as Shaligram Rai, who suffers from dementia (memory loss). According to family members, Rai stepped out of his daughter and son-in-law's residence early Saturday morning and has not been seen since.

Rai is a resident of Padumpukhuri in Dimapur. He had recently travelled to Kheroni to stay with his son-in-law, Manoj Thapa, while undergoing medical treatment. His sudden disappearance has left the family in a state of deep distress.

The family is making an urgent appeal to the public for help in locating him and has requested anyone with information to contact 910120-6976 or 86385-19062.

## Editor's pick

## Expectations from Assam's New NDA Government

By: Dr Buljit Buragohain

On 12 May 2026, the BJP-led NDA government will take oath for the third consecutive term in Assam. Therefore, it is natural that the expectations and aspirations of the people of the state are quite high. As citizens, we expect visible improvements from the new government, especially in the areas mentioned below.

A large number of educated youths in Assam are still facing unemployment. As citizens, we hope that the government will ensure a transparent and timely recruitment process for government jobs. At the same time, more employment opportunities should be created through the expansion of industries and the private sector. It is also essential to provide easy loans, training, and support to encourage startups and self-employment. Moreover, the government should focus on job-oriented skill development programmes according to present-day demands so that the youth become self-reliant and employable. A portion of the development budget should also be invested in career counselling, skill development, and self-employment opportunities for the youth to build a stronger future for the state.

Many students in Assam complete their schooling without having a clear understanding of the wide range of career opportunities available today. Most of them focus only on traditional professions such as medicine, engineering, teaching, or government jobs. However, in the modern world, there are vast opportunities in areas such as information technology, digital services, entrepreneurship, tourism, and agri-technology. Due to the lack of proper guidance, many young people fail to choose the right career path and remain unemployed or underemployed despite having educational qualifications. Therefore, establishing career counselling centres is extremely important. These centres can provide students with reliable information and guidance regarding education, training, scholarships, competitive examinations, and employment opportunities.

Every year, floods and river erosion in Assam destroy the lives, livelihoods, homes, and agricultural lands of thousands of people. Therefore, we expect the new government to find a permanent solution to the problems of floods and erosion. It is essential to build sustainable flood control systems, strong embankments, and improved drainage infrastructure. Scientific river management should also be adopted to address river course changes and erosion problems in the long term. The government must give greater importance to the quick rehabilitation of flood- and erosion-affected families, proper compensation, and the restoration of livelihoods.

Quality education and healthcare are the foundations of a developed society. Even today, both rural and urban areas of Assam face many challenges in these sectors. Therefore, as citizens, we expect the new government to improve the quality of schools and colleges and strengthen the educational environment. Increasing the quality of education through the recruitment of skilled and experienced teachers is also very important. At the same time, special attention should be given to modern educational resources, research facilities, and the overall development of students. On the other hand, rural health centres must be strengthened with modern facilities, and the shortage of doctors and healthcare workers should be addressed. Ensuring affordable and quality healthcare for the common people is also the need of the hour.

The youth of Assam hope to find better employment opportunities within the state itself. Therefore, we expect the new government to give greater emphasis to industrial growth, investment, and infrastructure development. Creating more job opportunities through the establishment of new industries and the expansion of the industrial sector is highly necessary. Improved roads, railways, internet connectivity, and communication systems will contribute significantly to the overall development of the state. Greater investment should also be attracted in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), tourism, agriculture, and technology sectors by utilizing local resources and skills effectively.

Assam's rich language, culture, and multi-ethnic harmony have shaped the unique identity of the state. Therefore, we hope that the new government will take firm steps to protect the rights and interests of indigenous communities. Greater importance should also be given to the preservation and promotion of the Assamese language, literature, art, culture, and heritage. At the same time, maintaining social harmony, brotherhood, and peace among different communities, religions, and ethnic groups is extremely important. Sensitive issues of the state should be handled responsibly, democratically, and with restraint so that the trust of all sections of society remains intact.

Particularly in major cities such as Guwahati, traffic congestion, artificial flooding, and waste management have now become major challenges. Therefore, we expect the new government to develop better and more accessible public transportation systems so that people can travel conveniently. Planned urban development is necessary to control traffic congestion, illegal construction, and unplanned urban expansion. In addition, the government should focus more on creating clean, green, and safe urban environments to improve the quality of life of citizens.

We expect a transparent, accountable, and people-oriented system of governance. Therefore, we hope that the new government will take strict and effective measures to establish a corruption-free administration. Greater importance should be given to ensuring that public services in government offices are accessible, transparent, and delivered on time. The development of digital governance systems should also make government services easily available online, reducing both time and inconvenience for citizens. Quickly addressing the grievances, problems, and needs of ordinary people is another important responsibility to maintain public trust in the government.

This massive public mandate is not merely a political victory; it reflects the deep trust, hope, and expectations that the people have placed in the government. We hope that the new government will bridge the gap between promises and action and take strong steps towards the overall development of the state. In the coming years, the success of the government will be judged on the basis of real development, job creation, improvements in education and healthcare, control of floods and erosion, and the extent to which the quality of life of ordinary people improves. A welfare-oriented, transparent, and accountable administration alone can strengthen public confidence and pave the way for the holistic development of Assam.

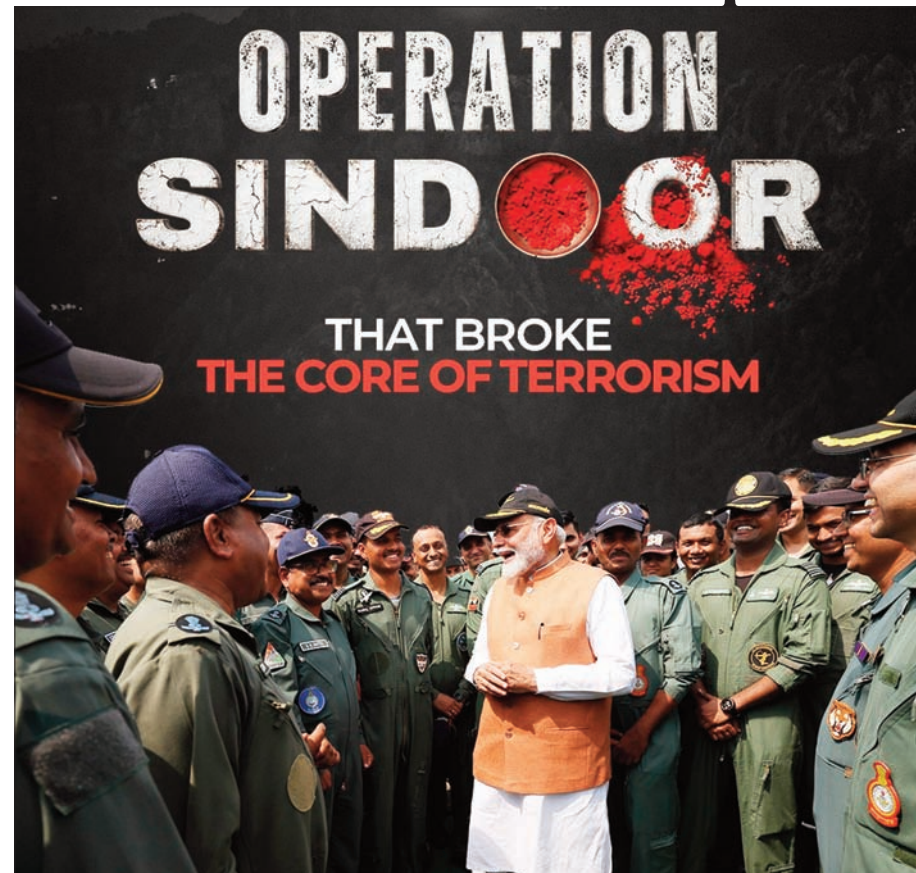
# The Precision and Power of Operation Sindoor

By: Satyabrata Borah

The emergence of Operation Sindoor marks a profound departure from India's historical military posture, signaling the birth of what experts are now calling a new strategic DNA. For decades, India's approach to national security was defined by a doctrine of strategic restraint, a cautious, often reactive stance that prioritized diplomatic moral high ground over preemptive military action. However, as the global landscape shifts under the weight of the protracted war in Ukraine and the volatile, unresolved tensions in West Asia, India has demonstrated a sophisticated evolution in its willingness to apply force. This operation was not merely a tactical success; it was a masterclass in the calibrated use of power, reflecting a nation that has finally harmonized its military capabilities with its political will and diplomatic finesse.

To understand why this shift is so significant, one must look at the broader context of modern warfare. In the current era, we see two extremes of conflict. On one side, there is the grinding, attritional warfare seen in Eastern Europe, where vast resources are consumed with little clarity on how the violence might end. On the other side, there is the persistent instability of West Asia, characterized by a cycle of low-level violence that never quite escalates into total war but never settles into a true peace. Between these two poles, Operation Sindoor stands out as a distinct third way. It represented the decisive application of sharp, controlled military force aimed at achieving specific, calibrated strategic outcomes rather than the total destruction of an adversary.

The hallmark of this new strategic DNA is the concept of a manageable escalatory ladder. In the past, the fear of escalation often paralyzed Indian decision-making. The assumption was that any significant military strike would inevitably lead to a full-scale war. Operation Sindoor shattered this myth. By meticulously planning the scale and scope of the strike, India demonstrated that it could climb the ladder of escalation just far enough to inflict meaningful



pain and send a clear deterrent message without triggering an uncontrollable spiral of violence. This requires not just military bravery but an exceptional degree of intellectual rigor in the planning rooms.

Equally impressive was the clarity of the exit strategy. One of the greatest pitfalls for any global power, as seen in the long-term engagements of the United States in the Middle East, is the "forever war" syndrome. Getting into a conflict is easy; getting out is the challenge. Operation Sindoor was designed with the end in mind. The objectives were transparent to the

decision-makers, and the forces were withdrawn as soon as those objectives were met. This precision ensured that the military action did not become a drain on national resources or a source of diplomatic embarrassment. Instead, it was a clean, surgical intervention that achieved its goals and concluded before the fog of war could settle too heavily.

This evolution is inextricably linked to the political objectives of the current government. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, there has been a deliberate effort to sync the country's defense capabilities with its global as-

pirations. The government's political mandate for "zero tolerance" toward security threats provided the necessary air cover for the military to innovate and take calculated risks. This synergy between the political executive and the military high command is the "secret sauce" of the new strategic DNA. It replaces the old bureaucratic silos with a unified national security architecture where everyone is reading from the same script.

The operation serves as a potent form of deterrence. In the realm of international relations, your words only carry as much weight as your willingness to back them up with action. By executing Operation Sindoor, India has sent a message to both its immediate neighbors and the wider world. To the adversaries, it says that the cost of provocation has risen exponentially. To the allies and partners, it signals that India is a reliable, capable power that can take care of its own interests and contribute to regional stability.

The "humanized" element of this strategy lies in its restraint. Despite having the conventional superiority to cause massive damage, India chose a path of precision. This reflects a mature understanding that in the 21st century, true power is not just about the ability to destroy, but the ability to influence. By avoiding collateral damage and focusing strictly on military or strategic targets, India maintained its ethical standing while asserting its dominance. This balance is difficult to achieve, yet it is essential for a country that seeks to lead on the global stage.

It becomes clear that India has moved past the era of being a "soft state." The new strategic DNA is characterized by confidence, technological prowess, and a lack of hesitation. It is a DNA that is comfortable with power, yet disciplined in its use. While the rest of the world remains mired in old conflicts with no end in sight, India has shown that it is possible to use military force as a precise instrument of statecraft to achieve peace through strength. This transition marks the end of an old chapter and the beginning of a new, more assertive era for India in the global order.

## KALYANI DEVALAYA: A story of faith and mystery

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Located on the banks of Dipara Pukhuri in Kalyanpur of Barongabari under Gohpur subdivision in Biswanath district of Assam, Kalyani Devalaya is a heritage-rich pilgrimage site where a unique blend of mythology, historical events, and cultural richness can be observed. The folklore and historical background associated with this temple have established it as an important symbol of the religious and cultural life of Assam. Kalyani Devalaya is not merely a religious place; it is a living document of Assam's heritage, reflecting the deep connection of faith, tradition, and history among local people as well as devotees from different parts of the state.

The origin story of Kalyani Devalaya is also mysterious. According to local folklore, there once lived a landlord named Kochan in the Dipara region. He had four daughters, and a very beautiful young woman used to frequently visit their house to weave cloth. Her beauty and charm captivated everyone. One day, King Arimatta arrived at the landlord's house and was mesmerized by the young woman's beauty. He proposed marriage to her, but she rejected his proposal and fled. The king chased her, but to escape from him, the young woman struck the ground with her foot. Instantly, a cavity was formed at that spot, and she disappeared into it. This incident left the king distressed and created a deep void in his mind. Later, the king saw in a dream that the young woman was actually an incarnation of Goddess Kalyani. The goddess instructed him that if he built a temple at the place where she had disappeared and performed worship, his life would be saved. The king immediately followed this instruction and built a temple at that very spot, which later came to be known as Kalyani Devalaya. Through this story, the mythical significance of the temple is established, and it becomes the center of faith for the local people.

Within the depth of this folklore, a distinct aspect of Assam's religious and cultural beliefs is revealed. The story of the miraculous disappearance of the young woman and the creation of the cavity symbolically represents the relationship between humans and nature, as well as belief in supernatural powers. Because of this cavity, the temple is also known as "Gambhar," which further deepens its mysterious character. The people of this region worship Goddess Kalyani as a benevolent and protective force. Shakti worship holds an important place in the history of Assam, and Kalyani Devalaya stands as a living example of it. Through this story, the unique blend of imagination and religious belief of the local people is reflected. The tale of the goddess's incarnation serves as a symbol of prosperity, peace, and protection in the lives of the people of this region.

Another fascinating story associated with the construction of Kalyani Devalaya is the existence of a tunnel from the temple to the Brahmaputra River. According to folklore, King Arimatta had constructed a tunnel to carry the flowers and basil offered in worship at the temple to the Brahmaputra River. Whether this story is historically accurate or merely part of mythological belief, it adds a unique dimension to the mysterious identity of Kalyani Devalaya. Although there is no reliable historical evidence of the existence of this tunnel, the story reflects the depth of imagination and tradition among the local people.

Another important aspect of the historical background of Kalyani Devalaya is its relocation and preservation efforts. According to folklore, the original temple began to be damaged due to the erosion of the Brahmaputra River. The local people preserved the stone slabs, idols, and other architectural elements of the temple. After the devastating earthquake of 1950, the need for relocation of the temple became evident. At that time, the local people united and relocated the temple to the banks of Dipara Pukhuri. Through this

process, the community's sense of responsibility toward preserving heritage and the depth of their religious belief became evident. This event established Kalyani Devalaya not only as a religious site but also as a symbol of cultural unity and solidarity among the local community. Due to these efforts, Kalyani Devalaya continues to shine as a living witness to Assam's heritage.

This temple is not just a religious place but a living symbol of the faith, traditions, and historical memories of the local people. The folklore and stories associated with it reflect the imagination and creativity of the community. These narratives create a unique blend of mythological and historical elements within the daily life of Assam. The rituals and religious ceremonies of the temple foster unity and social cohesion among the local people. Especially during Durga Puja, a large number of devotees gather here, reflecting the vibrancy of local culture. Through the worship of Goddess Kalyani, people seek prosperity and peace in their lives. These religious events cultivate a sense of unity and mutual connection within the community, establishing Kalyani Devalaya as a cultural center.

The environment of Kalyani Devalaya is another important aspect of its attraction. Situated on the banks of Dipara Pukhuri, the temple is surrounded by natural beauty, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere. The still waters of the pond and the mythological background of the temple add a unique dimension to this place. Visitors and devotees find spiritual peace here. The combination of natural beauty and religious significance makes Kalyani Devalaya an attractive destination. The calm surroundings and the mysterious stories of the temple leave a deep impression on visitors. This environment establishes the temple not only as a religious site but also as a symbol of the relationship between humans and nature.

The preservation efforts of Kalyani Devalaya serve as an excel-



lent example of heritage conservation in Assam. After the earthquake of 1950, the process of relocating the temple demonstrated remarkable unity and cooperation among the local people. The effort to preserve the stone slabs and idols from the erosion of the Brahmaputra reflects the deep cultural connection of the community. Through these preservation initiatives, Kalyani Devalaya continues to exist as an important part of Assam's historical and cultural heritage. These collective efforts have helped maintain the temple's historical dignity. The unity and dedication of the local people have established Kalyani Devalaya as a living witness to Assam's heritage.

The tourism potential of Kalyani Devalaya is highly significant. Like other historical and religious sites of Assam, this temple can become an attractive destination for tourists. Its mythological stories, historical importance, and natural beauty can draw the attention of visitors. With the cooperation of local administration and the tourism department, steps have been taken to develop it as a tourist center. This can contribute to the improvement of the local economy as well as promote Assam's heritage. The peaceful environment and historical significance of the temple can offer a unique experience to visitors. Particularly in the field of religious tourism, Kalyani Devalaya holds great potential. Through tourism promotion, its historical and cultural importance can be shared with visitors from across the world.

At the same time, giving importance to the preservation of Kalyani Devalaya is essential. The folklore and historical narratives associated with it form an important part of Assam's cultural heritage. There is a need to document these stories in written form and disseminate them among the younger generation. Alongside this, the physical structure of the temple requires preservation through cooperation between the local community, administration, and heritage conservation organizations. Special measures should be taken to protect the temple from natural disasters such as river erosion. With the support of the local community, con-

servation efforts can become more effective. Through such initiatives, the historical and cultural significance of Kalyani Devalaya can be preserved for future generations.

The religious significance of Kalyani Devalaya is also noteworthy. Devotees from various communities gather here throughout the year for worship, reflecting the vibrancy of religious life in the region. The people of this area worship Goddess Kalyani as a benevolent force and seek prosperity and peace through her blessings. During Durga Puja, the temple witnesses a large gathering of devotees, further highlighting its religious and cultural importance. These religious events foster a sense of mutual connection and cooperation among people, establishing the temple as a cultural hub.

The folklore and historical narratives associated with Kalyani Devalaya present a profound picture of Assam's cultural heritage. The story of the young woman's miraculous disappearance, the creation of the cavity, and the construction of the temple reflect the depth of local imagination and belief. At the same time, the story of the tunnel connecting the temple to the Brahmaputra highlights the deep relationship between nature and religion. The combination of all these elements establishes Kalyani Devalaya as a valuable asset of Assam's cultural heritage. The temple embodies a unique blend of mythological, historical, and religious elements, making it a living symbol of Assam's heritage.

To conclude, Kalyani Devalaya is an invaluable treasure of Assam's historical, cultural, and religious heritage. The folklore and historical narratives associated with it create a unique blend of mythological and historical elements within the life of the people. Through proper preservation and promotion, this heritage can be safeguarded for future generations. At the same time, the temple's religious and cultural significance fosters unity and social cohesion within the community. The mythological stories, historical background, and natural beauty of Kalyani Devalaya establish it as a living symbol of Assam's heritage.



# Commercialisation, not merely privatisation: India's space reform strategy

*The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was, for an extended period, unable to delegate its outputs and thus became the comprehensive assembler of launch vehicles, satellites, and spacecraft. Understanding the timeline concerning the space reforms is of paramount importance. First announced in May 2020 as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, these reforms encountered resistance from some workers who sought to classify ISRO as an 'industry' under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947. However, this intent is contradictory since ISRO is known worldwide as a space agency led by space-domain scientific and technological experts and operates as a strategic scientific R&D institution under the central gov't's jurisdiction; its employees are governed by the Central Civil Services Rules, which prohibit union-like activities, and it is not a public-sector enterprise. When the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, received presidential assent on 28 September 2020, the gov't designated the sovereign activities of the space*

By: Chaitanya Giri

Since 2020, the Indian government has enacted space reforms, supplemented by the geospatial policy, the space policy, the streamlining of non-governmental financing mechanisms, and a wide range of support and encouragement for space-domain innovation. The sentiment within the innovation ecosystem has remained optimistic, with little to no awareness of the tribulations the reforms overcame. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was, for an extended period, unable to delegate its outputs and thus became the comprehensive assembler of launch vehicles, satellites, and spacecraft. This occurred at a time when the majority of leading spacefaring nations, such as China and the United States (US), had transitioned to full-scale commercialisation. The reforms introduced through the 2023 National Space Policy explicitly appointed ISRO to focus "...research and development of new space technologies and applications, and for expanding the human understanding of outer space." Few within the ecosystem may have been aware of the increasing political pressures exerted on ISRO and the Department of Space to desist from implementing reforms other than the one attempted, the disruptive rechartering of ISRO.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was, for an extended period, unable to delegate its outputs and thus became the comprehensive assembler of launch vehicles, satellites, and spacecraft. Understanding the timeline concerning the space reforms is of paramount importance. First announced in May 2020 as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, these reforms encour-



tered resistance from some workers who sought to classify ISRO as an 'industry' under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947. However, this intent is contradictory since ISRO is known worldwide as a space agency led by space-domain scientific and technological experts and operates as a strategic scientific R&D institution under the central government's jurisdiction; its employees are governed by the Central Civil Services Rules, which prohibit union-like activities, and it is not a public-sector enterprise. When the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, received presidential assent on 28 September 2020, the government designated the sovereign activities of the space, atomic energy, and defence sectors as non-industry sovereign pursuits. However, some workers opposed this move too and launched an anti-privatisation drive as the Industrial Relations Code legislatively prevented ISRO from being deemed an industry. The agenda has been reinforced from the portrayal of the space reforms as 'privatisation' in the media, which has often been used interchangeably with 'commercialisation', even though they have different meanings. The vision of the Indian Space Policy 2023 clearly states the following:

"To augment space capabilities; enable, encourage and develop a flourishing commercial presence in space; use space as a driver of technology development and derived benefits in allied areas; pursue international relations, and create an ecosystem for effective implementation of space applications among all stakeholders; for, the nation's socio-economic development and security, protection of environment and lives, pursuing peaceful exploration of outer space, stimulation of public awareness and scientific quest."

The policy document explicitly emphasises the equal importance of endeavours undertaken by both the public and private sectors, advocating increased private-sector participation and contributions through commercial space innovation compared with the period before 2020. It further underscores that ISRO should concentrate on high-end R&D activities, which are difficult for the private sector, and on the transfer of mature technologies and innovations for subsequent commercialisation. Furthermore, the award of the contract for the commercial construction of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, coupled with its superior performance against competing entities—Adani Aerospace and

Defence and Bharat Dynamics Limited—demonstrates the government's unwavering commitment to the commercialisation of the space sector rather than privatisation, contrary to under-evaluated perceptions. These perceptions add fuel to the goals of such quarters.

The policy document explicitly emphasises the equal importance of endeavours undertaken by both the public and private sectors, advocating increased private-sector participation and contributions through commercial space innovation compared with the period before 2020.

The government's endeavour to commercialise the space sector aims to establish contingency measures to address India's continually expanding space requirements. In light of supply chain constraints, the government has sought to develop options to ensure the successful delivery of mission-critical products. ISRO remains committed to its fundamental objective as a space agency despite efforts to deem it as an industry; however, the responsibility for safeguarding R&D activities does not end here.

Indian space startups will remain Indian, and their intellectual property will stay in the national interest only if domestic patient capital is mo-

bilised in their support across stages—from pre-seed to later-stage funding rounds. The INR 10,000 crore Startup India 2.0 Fund of Funds, the INR 1,00,000 crore Research, Development, and Innovation Fund (RDI), and the INR 1,000 crore Antarksh Venture Capital Fund for space-tech promotion all testify to the central government's financial commitment to innovation. The focus should be on providing anchor and patient capital that attracts reluctant private capital of Indian origin to invest equally or more. However, mere commitment is not enough; investing wisely and quickly is necessary. It has been one year since the Antarksh Venture Capital Fund, managed by SIDBI, commenced operations, and its first investments are scheduled for 2027, a two-year delay. Such investment sluggishness does not help the national space programme.

The global geopolitical landscape and the escalating civil-military integration within the international space sector constrain India's capacity to remain indifferent to foreign capital and to the potential for foreign expropriation of intellectual property developed in India by Indians. In April 2026, Ray Dalio, the founder of the renowned hedge fund Bridgewater Associates, predicted in his Time Magazine opinion piece that the world would enter a perilous phase of capital warfare, resulting from the collapse of the global monetary order. As these conflicts over capital intensify, debt ownership will be amplified, monetary flows will be stringently regulated, and innovation will be excessively safeguarded. The Indian government is the primary provider of the significant financial support required for ISRO-led R&D at low technology readiness levels, a critical source of capital for mid- and high-TRL R&D conducted by private startups, and the procurer of space-defence innovations for the armed forces.

The benefits of commercialisation substantially exceed those of privatisation, a fact that the architects of space reforms must communicate effectively through various channels.

The government's role in space R&D remains unwavering. It continues to serve as the primary supporter of the civilian, commercial, and defence space sectors. It is unwise to assume that India's space sector has been fully privatised, and it would be equally incorrect to allow such an assumption to dominate biased political discourse or to hinder progress through physical obstruction as was seen in the case of an ISRO cargo being blocked by workers over 'growing wages' in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, in September 2021. Indeed, concerns regarding external influence are legitimate and must be addressed cautiously by the government as it advances the commercialisation of space R&D in the national interest, fostering a sense of national, societal, and Indian civilisational trusteeship in space enterprises. The benefits of commercialisation substantially exceed those of privatisation, a fact that the architects of space reforms must communicate effectively through various channels. It is also vital to emphasise the importance of fostering a strong awareness of sovereignty within the startup ecosystem, as these entities are the agile alter ego of ISRO, which navigates internal constraints while focusing on high-end R&D pursuits in the national interest. (Courtesy: ORF)

## What is Hantavirus and why it is 'Not Like COVID': All you wanted to know

Three cruise ship passengers with suspected hantavirus infections were flown to the Netherlands on Wednesday for treatment. Three people have died and one body is still on the Dutch ship at the center of the outbreak, the MV Hondius, which is now heading for Spain's Canary Islands. The patients were evacuated via the Cape Verde islands off West Africa.

About 150 passengers are isolating in their cabins, and officials say those on board show no symptoms. The World Health Organization says the outbreak's global risk is low, with the organization's top epidemic expert telling The Associated Press, "This is not the next COVID." There have been eight cases, five of them confirmed by laboratory testing, the WHO says.

Hantavirus is a rare, rodent-borne illness that usually spreads when people inhale contaminated residue of rodent droppings. The Argentine government's leading hypothesis is that a Dutch couple contracted the virus during a bird-watching tour at a garbage dump before boarding the cruise, according to two officials.

### Here's the latest:

**The illness starts with flu-like symptoms**  
An infection can rapidly progress and become life-threatening. Experts say it can start with symptoms including fever, chills, muscle aches and maybe a headache — much like the flu.

Symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome usually show between one to six weeks, or more, after contact with an infected rodent. As the infection progresses, patients might experience tightness in the chest as the lungs fill with fluid. The other syndrome caused by hantavirus — known as hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, which can cause bleeding, high fever, and kidney failure — usually develops within a week or two after exposure.

Death rates vary by which hantavirus causes the illness. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is fatal in about 35% of people infected, while the death rate for hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome varies from 1% to 15% of patients, according to the CDC.

**2 British passengers who left the ship before the outbreak are now self-isolating**

The U.K. Health Security Agency says "a small number" of contacts of the two cruise passengers are also self-isolating.

Both the passengers and their contacts aren't showing any symptoms. People who came into contact with them on their journey back to Britain are being traced.

The hantavirus incubation period can be one to six weeks, or more.

Some 19 British nationals and four British crew members were listed as being on the cruise. They'll be flown back once the vessel arrives in the Canary Islands, as long as they do not have symptoms, the agency said.

**The first 2 patients had a long, winding path before the cruise**

Argentina's Ministry of Health says it's working with authorities across the

country to retrace the winding path of the Dutch couple that became the first to fall ill with hantavirus on the cruise ship before dying.

The ministry said the couple arrived in Argentina on November 27 last year and traveled 40 days by car before crossing into Chile on Jan. 7. They returned to Argentina on Jan. 31 for a road trip through various provinces, including Neuquén, in north-central Patagonia, and Misiones in the far northeast. On March 13, they visited Uruguay and returned a week later to Argentina's southernmost town of Ushuaia, from where the stricken Atlantic cruise sailed.

Pursuing a hypothesis that the couple was infected by exposure to rodent droppings during a bird-watching tour at a landfill in Ushuaia, the government said it will send technical teams from the state-funded Malbrán Institute to analyze the possible presence of the virus in Ushuaia and the surrounding Tierra del Fuego Province. Tierra del Fuego has never reported a hantavirus case in its history.

**A German passenger is going to a specialised hospital in their home country**

Prof. Dr. Torsten Feldt, head of the tropical medicine department at University Hospital Duesseldorf, said the passenger "has had contact with an infected individual" and "to the best of our knowledge, is asymptomatic."

He said the person would undergo an initial medical assessment and virological testing.

Another patient from the ship arrived Wednesday night at the Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands, according to Dutch national broadcaster NOS. The hospital did not identify the patient for privacy reasons.

Associated Press journalists saw two patients from the cruise ship arrive Wednesday evening at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. One of them was taken away in a German ambulance, and the other in a Dutch ambulance.

The two patients were covered head-to-toe in white biohazard suits as they walked across the tarmac, flanked by people in similar protective clothing.

Passenger shares empty ship scenes as people on board isolate

The World Health Organization said passengers are isolating in their cabins.

"Our days have been close to normal, just waiting for authorities to find a solution," passenger Qasem Elhato, 31 — who sent AP the video footage — said via WhatsApp.

"But morale on the ship is high and we're keeping ourselves busy with reading, watching movies, having hot drinks and that kind of things," he said.

**The Dutch government is studying virus risks**

Dutch Foreign Minister Tom Berendsen said Wednesday that experts are assessing all risks from the passengers aboard the cruise ship, and the Dutch government is working with the WHO and the ship operator to manage the situation.

He spoke Wednesday evening, when two patients disembarked from a medical

evacuation flight at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport for treatment in Dutch and German hospitals. "It is important that we ensure we manage this as well as possible," he said, according to Dutch national broadcaster NOS.

**A lot of unknowns about the illness and treatment**

Frannie Twohig, a researcher and doctoral candidate, prepares samples of inactivated material as part of hantavirus research at the Center for Global Health at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Monday, May 4, 2026. (AP Photo/Susan Montoya Bryan)

There is no specific treatment or cure, but early medical attention can increase the chance of survival.

Despite years of research, many questions have yet to be answered, including why it can be mild for some people and severe for others and how antibodies are developed. Some researchers have been following patients over long periods of time in hopes of finding a treatment.

"In the Americas, hantavirus infection is very serious, but it's also quite rare," Bradford said. "And so for a time that probably led to less research into it because of funding priorities, but I know there's been a lot of interest in funding hantavirus work of late."

What researchers do know is that rodent exposure is key.

The best way to avoid the germ is to minimize contact with rodents and their droppings. Use protective gloves and a bleach solution for cleaning up rodent droppings. Public health experts caution against sweeping or vacuuming, which can cause virus particles to get into the air.

**Two patients taken away in ambulances**

After the medical evacuation flight landed at Amsterdam airport Wednesday evening, one patient disembarked and was put into a German ambulance and driven away.

Then a second patient got off the plane and was put into a Dutch ambulance and driven away. Other emergency vehicles remained on the tarmac nearby.

**Hantavirus infections have been relatively uncommon globally**

The WHO reported that in 2025, eight countries within the Americas had documented 229 cases and 59 deaths. In Argentina, the health ministry said hantavirus led to 28 deaths nationwide last year.

In the U.S., federal health officials began tracking the virus after a 1993 outbreak in the Four Corners region — the area where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah meet. It was an astute physician with the Indian Health Service who first noticed a pattern of deaths among young patients.

Most U.S. cases are in Western states. New Mexico and Arizona are hot spots, likely because the odds are greater for mouse-human encounters in rural areas.

**Medical evacuation flight lands at Amsterdam airport**

The cruise ship operator had said two

of the passengers who were evacuated "remain in a serious condition." The third has no symptoms but was "closely associated" with a passenger who died May 2.

**Hantavirus is on the rise in Argentina**  
Many local public health researchers attribute the increase to the recently accelerating effects of climate change.

Higher temperatures expand the virus' range because, in part, as it gets warmer and ecosystems change, rodents that carry the virus can thrive in more places, experts say.

"With the climate changing, the epidemiological picture has completely changed," said Hugo Pizzi, a prominent Argentine infectious disease specialist. "The ship may be an isolated case. But this virus isn't going anywhere."

**After evacuating 3 patients, Cape Verde says its duties under international regulations are complete**

The cruise ship has been cleared to continue its voyage and the three patients were evacuated from the country "with maximum safety," National Director of Health Angela Gomes said in a statement Wednesday.

Cape Verde is a group of islands about 450 miles (725 kilometers) off the west coast of Africa.

**WHO says the body of a dead passenger will remain on the ship**

A German passenger's body will be taken to Spain's Canary Islands, where the cruise ship is set to be received, a World Health Organization official told the AP on Wednesday.

"The Cape Verdean authorities here could not take care of the body to cremate it. So it's kept in a cold room and it's going with the boat," Ann Lindstrand, the WHO representative in Cape Verde, said. The WHO has not yet verified if that passenger was a confirmed case of hantavirus.

**WHO says confirmed cases rise to 5, including 2 passengers evacuated Wednesday**

The World Health Organization had previously confirmed three cases and five suspected ones.

Ann Lindstrand, the WHO representative in Cape Verde, said in a phone interview that a sample from the third patient evacuated from the ship is still being checked. "So far of all the cases related to this boat, the eight cases, we now have five confirmed with laboratory testing for Andes virus," she said. "So it's quite a lot."

**Health officials are tracking down dozens of people in South Africa who might've been near infected passengers**

Two passengers left the cruise ship at different islands in the South Atlantic and traveled to South Africa. One has died and the other remains hospitalised.

Health officials in that country have identified 62 people — airplane passengers, airport workers, health workers, hospital cleaners, port of entry officials and others — who likely had contact with those two patients.

So far, officials have tracked down 42 of them, and none tested positive for hantavirus. However, some of the 20 people

still being traced may have traveled to other countries, the health ministry said in a report.

**Evacuation plane will stop to refuel in the Canary Islands**

A plane evacuating two of the patients with suspected hantavirus infections from the cruise ship off Cape Verde is stopping at an airport in the Canary Islands to refuel, the Spanish health ministry said.

A flight tracker showed the small plane circling near the island of Gran Canaria where it is expected to make its short stop before continuing on to the Netherlands.

**WHO confirms it's the Andes type of hantavirus**

Samples taken earlier from the patients now evacuated from the ship were examined and also confirmed to be the Andes type, the World Health Organization said at a briefing Wednesday.

The WHO says the Andes virus is found in South America, primarily in Argentina and Chile, and can spread between people, though that's rare and only through close contact.

The cruise ship will be leaving Cape Verde in around two hours and has gotten medical reinforcement after its doctor became sick and was evacuated, Ann Lindstrand, WHO representative in Cape Verde, said at the briefing. "One medical doctor from WHO ... will be taking care of patients if there will be more cases on board," Lindstrand said.

**'This is not the next Covid'**

The World Health Organization's top epidemic expert told the AP that the risk to the public is low, and the Andes type of the hantavirus is known — even if the WHO has never seen a hantavirus outbreak on a ship.

"This is not the next Covid, but it is a serious infectious disease," Maria Van Kerkhove said. "Most people will never be exposed to this."

For those on the ship, access to clinical care is important, she said, because infected people can develop severe acute respiratory distress and need oxygen or mechanical ventilation. The hantavirus incubation period can be one to six weeks, or more, she added.

**Investigators say a couple on cruise ship possibly got hantavirus while bird-watching in Argentina**

Two Argentine officials investigating the origins of the hantavirus outbreak on the cruise ship that sailed from southern Argentina say the government's leading hypothesis is that a Dutch couple contracted the virus during a bird-watching outing in the city of Ushuaia before boarding. They said the couple visited a landfill during the bird-watching tour where they may have been exposed to rodents carrying the infection.

**Hondius cruise company confirms 3 patients have left the ship**

Oceanwide Expeditions says they are being taken by specially equipped planes to "locations able to provide specialized care and appropriate medical screening."

A Dutch hospital has confirmed it will take one of the people, and German au-

thorities say they are preparing to pick up a second from the Netherlands.

The Dutch company says two of the people medically evacuated "remain in a serious condition." The third has no symptoms but was "closely associated" with a passenger who died May 2.

The company also says that it is "expanding medical care on board with two infectious disease physicians, arriving today by plane from the Netherlands."

**A Dutch hospital is preparing to take one patient from Hondius**

The Leiden University Medical Center says the department where the patient will be seen is well prepared.

In a statement posted on its website, the hospital said, "In addition to isolation rooms for patients, all protective equipment for our staff is available. Treatment takes place in strict isolation, following the applicable protocols. The LUMC has specialized isolation facilities."

It also seeks to reassure other visitors to the hospital, saying patients or visitors "run no risk of infection. You do not need to take any special measures. You can continue to visit as usual."

**Düsseldorf University Clinic to test person who came in contact with a hantavirus case on board**

In Germany, the Düsseldorf University Clinic said that one of the three passengers who was evacuated from the ship and is being flown to the Netherlands, who was in contact with one of the hantavirus cases on board the ship, would be brought to the hospital for testing later Wednesday.

It said in a statement that the person would be brought to Düsseldorf from an unspecified Dutch airport with the help of specialists from the city's fire service.

The hospital stressed that the patient is asymptomatic and that the testing is a precaution.

**Spanish officials say the remaining passengers and crew members are all without symptoms**

The arrival of the boat "won't represent any risk for the public," Spanish Health Minister Mónica García said.

She said that the boat will arrive at a secondary port on the island of Tenerife, which is located 10 minutes from an airport. From there, the roughly 140 passengers will be repatriated to their home countries. García said that the operation to send the passengers and crew home will be overseen by the European Union's civil protection program.

The 14 Spaniards who are on board will be flown by military plane to the mainland, where, if necessary, they will be kept in quarantine. Canary Islands regional president warns of lack of protocol for receiving ship passengers

The regional president of Spain's Canary Islands, Fernando Clavijo, said Wednesday that the Hondius had requested permission for the ship to dock on the island of Tenerife on May 9.

Clavijo, however, expressed his surprise that the passengers were being forced "to travel for three days" instead of flying to their homes from the airport in Praia. (AP)

## Pak-China expert Lt Gen Subramani named next CDS Vice Admiral Swaminathan to be new Navy Chief

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** Lt Gen NS Raja Subramani (ret'd) has been named India's next Chief of Defence Staff and his primary mandate will be to implement the ambitious military theatisation plan and bolster tri-services synergy.

The government has also appointed Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan as the next Chief of the Naval Staff. While Lt Gen Subramani will replace incumbent Gen Anil Chauhan as the country's senior-most military commander, Vice Admiral Swaminathan will succeed Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi as the Navy Chief, according to an official statement.

Widely known as an expert on Pakistan and China, Lt Gen Subramani retired as Vice Chief of Army Staff on July 31 last year and is currently serving as military adviser to the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). He will take over as the Chief of Defence Staff on May 30. Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, presently heading the Western Naval Command, will take charge on May 31. Both Gen Chauhan and Admiral Tripathi are retiring from service.

The government has appointed Lt Gen NS Raja Subramani (Ret'd) as the Chief of Defence Staff and he will also function as the secretary of the department of military



affairs, the defence ministry said on Saturday. As Chief of Defence Staff, Subramani's primary task will be to implement the theatisation model by rolling out integrated military commands.

Gen Chauhan, a former Eastern Army Commander, took charge as the country's senior-most military commander in September 2022, over nine months after the first CDS General Bipin Rawat died in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu.

In his illustrious career spanning over 40 years, Lt Gen Subramani served across a wide spectrum of conflict and terrain profiles and held a host of Command, Staff and Instructional appointments. He served as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff from July 1, 2024, to July 31, 2025, and was General Officer Command-

ing-in-Chief of the Central Command from March 2023 till June 2024. The officer is a graduate of the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy. He was commissioned into the eighth battalion of the Garhwal Rifles on December 14, 1985.

Lt Gen Subramani is an alumnus of the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Bracknell (UK), and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He holds a Master of Arts degree from King's College, London, and an MPhil in Defence Studies from Madras University.

He commanded the 16 Garhwal Rifles in counter-insurgency operations in Assam as part of Operation Rhino, the 168 Infantry Brigade in Jammu and Kashmir, and the 17 Mountain Division in the Central

Sector during a challenging operational environment. He also distinguished himself by commanding two corps, including a premier strike corps of the Indian Army on the Western Front. The officer possesses insightful knowledge and a deep understanding of operational dynamics on both the Western and Northern borders, according to the Defence Ministry. As the Navy Chief, Vice Admiral Swaminathan's focus is likely to be on taking forward the ongoing modernisation of the force.

The Flag Officer was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1987, and is a specialist in communication and electronic warfare.

He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla; the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivernham, United Kingdom; the College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the US Naval War College, Newport. A recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM), Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) and Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM), the Admiral has held several key operational, staff and training appointments in his naval career, including the command of missile vessels INS Vidyut and Vinash, the missile corvette INS Kulish, the guided missile destroyer INS Mysore and the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. (PTI)

## Centre playing 'dangerous games' with Punjab, says Mann

**CHANDIGARH, May 9:** Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann alleged that the BJP-led Centre is playing "dangerous games" with Punjab as he slammed it after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday conducted fresh searches against Punjab Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora.

He also accused the Centre of using agencies like the ED and the CBI as "weapons" to meet their political ends. Mann also accused the BJP of indulging in "divisive and politics of hatred", and called it "Bharat Jalao Party".

He said the BJP is playing "dangerous games" with Punjab, but the state won't let them do so.

Addressing a news conference in Sangrur, CM Mann alleged agencies like the ED, CBI and Income Tax Department are "four to five weapons at the BJP's disposal that have been politicised".

"For a long time, they have been using them for their politics. Be it Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Karnataka, West Bengal. Now, Punjab is on their target," CM Mann said.

The ED on Saturday conducted fresh searches against Arora and some others allegedly linked to him as part of an investigation into a newly registered money laundering case, officials said. They said Arora's official residence in Chandigarh is among the five premises raided. The searches were launched after the central agency registered a fresh case under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the officials said.

In April, the ED had raided Arora and his linked entities under the civil provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). Arora (62) is an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA from the Ludhiana West Assembly seat. "I strongly condemn the misuse of ED, which they are doing," Mann said hitting out at the Centre.

"By conducting ED raids, their purpose is not to find any black money or any illegal document, their purpose is to convey to the



person at whose premises the raid is carried out to join the BJP, and everything he has done will be forgiven," he said.

Mann cited the example of Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Mittal and questioned what happened to the ED action against him after he joined the BJP recently.

The Punjab chief minister said the ED's "so-called" searches against Arora were going on, the third time in just over a year, "though nothing has been found from the previous searches".

He alleged that the Centre operates by instilling fear like this among the opponents and added that they may be able to do so in other states, but their tactics won't work in Punjab.

"I want to tell the BJP, Modi and Amit Shah very clearly that this is Punjab, it is not scared by such threats. Modi had to take U-turn and apologise over three farm laws. Maybe Modi is still harbouring that pain," he said.

Earlier, Mann wrote in a post on X, "I want to tell Modi ji that Punjab is the land of the Gurus, which even Aurangzeb could not subdue". Mann further said, "This is the land of Bhagat Singh, who never bowed before the British, so Punjab will never bow before Modi's tactics. The end of this unethical alliance of ED-BJP will begin from Punjab itself." Several other AAP leaders, including Harpal Singh Cheema and Aman Arora, slammed the Centre over

the ED searches.

Addressing the press conference in Sangrur, Chief Minister Mann alleged the Centre was adopting discriminatory attitude and had not yet released rural development funds, the funds of flood relief package announced last year and failed to address any issues beneficial to Punjab, including matters related to the Bhakra Beas Management Board, water resources, Panjab University and Chandigarh.

Mann alleged that the BJP plays "divisive politics" and makes two communities fight and then stands with one of them to seek votes.

"This won't work in Punjab. In Punjab, Hindu-Sikh bonding is very strong. On this fertile land of Punjab, anything which is sown can grow but this land has no place for politics of hatred, I want to tell this to the BJP, which does politics of hatred," he said. The "so-called Vijay Rath of Modi" will halt in Punjab after the 2027 Assembly polls, Mann claimed. He alleged that the BJP uses elections based on the "misuse of agencies" and tactics like "vote deletion", which amount to the "murder of democracy", but added that Punjabis won't allow such tactics. "...This is how they prepare for elections by conducting ED raids... Such things won't work here," he said.

"I want to tell them that if they look at Punjab with an evil eye, then Punjabis will give a stern reply... this kind of dictatorship will not work in Punjab," he said. (PTI)

## 34 years on, Gujarat police crack woman's murder

**AHMEDABAD, May 9:** Thirty-four years after a woman was allegedly murdered and buried, the Gujarat police have arrested two brothers following the exhumation of skeletal remains from a house in Ahmedabad, an official said on Saturday. The crime branch nabbed the accused, Shamsuddin Khedawala (61) and his brother Iqbal (63), in connection with a 1992 murder case, after DNA from the exhumed bones matched with siblings of the victim, Farzana Doshu Radhanpuri, he said.

The victim was Shamsuddin's wife, and the latter had allegedly killed her with the help of his brother and two others. They then buried the body in the pit in the veranda of a house in Qutub Nagar in the Vatva area, the official said.

Acting on a tip-off, the police dug at the site on April 29 to recover a jawbone and teeth, which were subsequently analysed by the Forensic Medicine Department at BJ Medical College to establish the victim's identity.

Following enquiries with locals, the police traced the victim's family to Dholka taluka, where her brother, Liyakat Ali, revealed she had been missing for 35 years. To confirm the identity, investigators compared DNA from the skeletal remains with blood samples from Farzana's sister, Mehbooba, resulting in a positive match, the official said. The family informed the police that Farzana had left home 35 years ago and had later married Shamsuddin, he said. Based on the information, the police registered a first information report (FIR) against the Khedawala brothers and an Abdul Javarwala and Shaliyabbi Pathan, both of whom are deceased. As per the FIR, Shamsuddin, along with his brother Iqbal, his friend Abdul Javarwala, and Shaliyabbi Pathan, allegedly killed Farzana and buried the body in a pit in the veranda and sealed it.

A case has been registered against all four accused under sections 302 (murder), 201 (destruction of evidence), and 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, police said.

The brothers have been arrested and will be produced in the court on Saturday, Deputy Commissioner of Police Ajit Rajian said. (PTI)

## BJP's ideology gained recognition in West Bengal, says Gadkari

**NAGPUR, May 9:** Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday said the BJP's "spectacular" victory in West Bengal shows that the party's ideology has now gained recognition among people there, and the power change brought by them will pave the way for development of the eastern state.

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways was talking to PTI Videos here before heading to Kolkata to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Su-

vendu Adhikari as West Bengal Chief Minister.

The BJP secured 207 seats in the 294-member West Bengal assembly in the recently-concluded elections, ending the Trinamool Congress (TMC)'s 15-year rule and scripting its most significant breakthrough in eastern India.

Adhikari, who defeated TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee in the Bhabanipur assembly seat, on Saturday took oath as the first BJP chief minister of West Bengal,

marking a watershed moment that redrew the state's political landscape after decades of resistance to saffron politics.

Before the TMC came to power in 2011, the Left Front, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), ruled the state for 34 consecutive years.

Gadkari said, "BJP's spectacular victory in West Bengal for the first time is a tribute to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee." (PTI)

## Decision on Kerala CM likely in 24 hours, says Cong leader Muraleedharan

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/NEW DELHI, May 9:** Amid intensifying lobbying and public campaigns by supporters of the three main contenders for Kerala chief minister's post, senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan on Saturday said the party high command was likely to take a final decision on the issue within 24 hours.

The Congress-led UDF's sweeping victory in the Assembly polls has triggered hectic lobbying within the party, with flex board campaigns, poster wars and demonstrations breaking out in several parts of the state in support of senior leaders V D Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala and K C Venugopal.

"The information from Delhi is that discussions on the chief ministerial candidate will be completed within 24 hours," Muraleedharan told reporters in Thiruvananthapuram.

The senior leader, however, asserted that flex boards and public demonstrations alone would not determine the leadership issue.

"I will not publicly reveal what I told the high command representatives. I have conveyed the sentiments of the people of my constituency. The opinions expressed by the people were clearly communicated to them," he said. "A decision will come at the appropriate time. Seniority is not the sole criterion while selecting the chief minister. The party has not always followed that yardstick," Muraleedharan added.

According to him, the views of the majority of MLAs and coalition partners would also be crucial as the Congress-led UDF was not a single-party government. "The views of coalition partners also have to be considered naturally. This is a coalition government," he said.

Meanwhile, KPCC president Sunny Joseph told reporters in New Delhi that the Congress leadership was expected to arrive at a final decision at the earliest. He said a meeting involving the three senior leaders would be held at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in New Delhi at 4 pm. "I hope a consensus will emerge. We expect a quick decision. The matter has been completely left to the AICC leadership," Joseph said. He also urged party workers to refrain from public demonstrations and flex board campaigns over the chief ministerial candidature issue.

Senior Congress leader P J Kurien and Kalpetta MLA T Siddique also expressed strong resentment against the ongoing protests, flex board campaigns and public sparring among supporters of various leaders.

"Everyone has the right to express opinions. But destroying flex boards and pouring black oil on them is wrong. These are all pressure tactics. A chief minister cannot be decided through pressure tactics," Kurien said.

Siddique expressed "deep pain and disappointment" over the public attacks targeting senior leaders. "Leaders who dedicated their lives to public activity should not be humiliated in public. This is not Congress culture," he said. The remarks came amid continuing public campaigns across Kerala backing different contenders for the top post following the Congress-led UDF's emphatic victory in the Assembly elections. Apart from widespread flex boards and posters supporting Satheesan, road shows and demonstrations by party workers demanding his elevation as chief minister were reported from various districts. (PTI)



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## West Bengal will see cultural, spiritual and economic resurgence: CM Adityanath

**LUCKNOW, May 9:** The resolve of 'Sonar Bangla' will now be fulfilled and West Bengal will enter a period of cultural, spiritual and economic resurgence, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday after attending the swearing-in of Suvendu Adhikari as the chief minister of the first BJP government in the eastern state. After a historic saffron sweep, Adhikari took oath in Kolkata at a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other Union ministers, chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of the NDA.

"Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated Suvendu Adhikari and wished him a bright and successful tenure. The UP Chief Minister also draped Suvendu Adhikari with a saffron angavastra on the stage," the UP government said in a statement. CM Adityanath congratulated Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Ashok Kirtania, Kshudiram Tudu and Nisith Pramanik, who took oath as ministers.

After the swearing-in ceremony, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari met the Prime Minister, Union ministers, and chief ministers present on the stage and expressed his gratitude to all of them.

"I am fully confident that under the successful guidance of esteemed Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji and your dynamic leadership, the resolve of 'Sonar Bangla' will be fulfilled, and the state will enter the 'amrit kaal' of cultural, spiritual, and economic resurgence.

"May your tenure become a golden chapter in fulfilling the aspirations of every individual in Bengal and restoring democratic values -- this is my prayer to Maa Kali," Adityanath later said on X. CM Adityanath held a number of rallies during the election campaign in West Bengal. Adhikari had presented the firebrand Hindutva leader with a saffron angavastra and had knelt on the dais as a mark of respect at a public rally.

The swearing-in ceremony on Saturday at the iconic Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata was rich in symbolism. (PTI)

## Haryana to Bengal: BJP secures first-time CMs in nine states since Modi became PM

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** With the BJP's resounding victory in West Bengal, ending the 15-year rule of the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, the party has secured the chief minister's post for the first time in nine states since Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014.

The journey began with Haryana and Maharashtra in 2014, followed by Assam (2016), Arunachal Pradesh (2016), Manipur (2017), Tripura (2018), Odisha (2024), Bihar (2026), and now West Bengal. In Haryana, the party formed a government on its own for the first time and appointed Manohar Lal Khattar as chief minister.

In Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnis became the state's first BJP chief minister after the BJP emerged as the single-largest party in the assembly polls and formed the government with allies in the Mahayuti alliance.

The BJP expanded its footprint in the Northeast in 2016 by winning Assam, where Sarbananda Sonowal became the party's first chief minister in the state.

Since then, the BJP has retained power in Assam and won two more consecutive assembly elections, including the one held in April.

The same year, 2016, the BJP formed its first full-fledged government in Arunachal Pradesh after a major political realignment in the state.

In July 2016, Congress leader Pema Khandu took over as chief minister amid a prolonged political

crisis, but in September, he and a majority of Congress MLAs joined the People's Party of Arunachal (PPA), an ally of the BJP.

A few months later, in December 2016, Khandu, along with 33 MLAs, joined the BJP, giving the party a clear majority and its first stable government in the state.

The BJP had briefly headed a government in Arunachal Pradesh in 2003 under former chief minister Gegong Apang. Apang, who had left the Congress and joined the BJP at the time, headed the government for only 44 days before returning to the Congress.

In 2017, the BJP stitched together a post-poll alliance with the National People's Party (NPP), Naga People's Front (NPF), and other regional parties in Manipur and installed N Biren Singh as chief minister, marking the party's first government in the border state.

In 2018, the BJP ended the Left Front's decades-long rule in Tripura and formed its maiden government under Biplab Kumar Deb. The party achieved another breakthrough in eastern India in 2024 by defeating the Biju Janata Dal in Odisha, where Mohan Charan Majhi took oath as the BJP's first chief minister in the state, ending Naveen Patnaik's uninterrupted 24-year run.

In Bihar, where the BJP has long been part of coalition governments led by Nitish Kumar, it did not have a chief minister from the party until 2026. (PTI)

## EU-India partnership 'limitless', PM Modi's 'not an era of war' message resonates with European values: Envoy

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** The European Union-India partnership is "limitless, ambitious and progressive" and both sides have elevated the relationship to a "totally new level" in both qualitative and strategic terms, EU Ambassador Herve Delphin has said.

In an address at an event, the envoy also noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "not an era of war" message "deeply resonates" with Europe's values and identity, and called the EU "fundamentally a peace project".

Characterising the EU-India summit held three and a half months ago as a milestone, Delphin said the confluence of symbolism, substance and strategic significance resulted in "momen-

tous outcomes".

"We have placed our relationship to a totally new level, in qualitative and strategic terms. The EU-India partnership is limitless, ambitious and progressive," he said.

"These achievements would not have been possible without the political conviction and trust shared by our leaders," the envoy said at the Europe Day celebrations on Friday night.

Delphin cited the unveiling of a joint strategic agenda for the next five years, the conclusion of negotiations for an ambitious free trade agreement, the signing of a security and defence partnership pact and the firming up of a comprehensive framework on mobility as

major takeaways from the summit.

"Fundamentally, we are global forces for good. We are both recognised as trusted, reliable partners working for global stability and prosperity, promoting global cooperation and solutions," he said.

"That India and the EU and its member states are deepening their ties like never before is truly a reason for celebration this year. This is the Europe-India moment," Delphin said in the presence of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and a sizeable number of diplomats, academicians and foreign policy experts.

The envoy characterised the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen



and European Council President Antonio Costa as the Chief Guests at India's Republic Day parade and the EU-India summit as a "moment where symbolism, substance

and strategic significance came together, resulting in momentous outcomes".

The free trade agreement between the two sides has been billed

as the "mother of all" trade deals.

"We are already India's leading trading partner. With the FTA in place, we expect our two-way trade to double in value in the next years," Delphin said.

The envoy also cited a report titled the "EU business economic footprint in India" released this week that analysed various dimensions of the two-way economic engagement.

"About 6,000 EU companies, generating the creation of close to six million jobs, exporting close to 25 billion euros (worth of goods) from India to the world (6 per cent of India's total exports)," he said.

The EU, as a bloc, is India's largest trading partner in goods. For the financial year 2024-25,

India's total trade in goods with the EU was worth about USD 136 billion, with exports around USD 76 billion and imports at USD 60 billion. In his remarks, Delphin also mentioned what he described as Russia's "war of aggression" against Ukraine.

"Wars cause immense human suffering, massive economic losses. Ultimately, aggressors end up paying the higher price. Russia is not winning but losing the war of aggression it deliberately launched," he said.

"We will continue to stand with Ukraine and in support of a just and lasting peace. This message of (PM Modi) -- 'not an era of war' -- deeply resonates with Europe's values and identity," he said. (PTI)

# Bengal entering new era of development under BJP: Khandu

## Arunachal CM backs Adhikari's leadership in Bengal

**ITANAGAR, May 9:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday congratulated Suwendu Adhikari on taking oath as the first BJP chief minister of West Bengal and expressed confidence that the state would witness a "new era of development and good governance".

Khandu said the people of West Bengal can look forward to an era "where every corner of the state thrives, every voice is heard, and every dream finds its ground".

Adhikari and five other BJP MLAs took the oath at the iconic Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata in the presence of Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the BJP's central leadership and chief ministers of NDA-ruled states.



"A new chapter for West Bengal is about to begin. One that will be written with the ink of development, peace and harmony."

Khandu posted on X, after witnessing the swearing-in ceremony in Kolkata.

Extending his wishes to the new chief minister, Khandu credited the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the BJP's rise in West Bengal.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the dynamic guidance of Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, I am confident that West Bengal will witness a new era of transformation, development, and good governance," he said.

Khandu expressed hope that West Bengal would emerge from "decades of fear and uncertainty" and move towards "peace, prosperity, and renewed confidence". (PTI)

# Assam Rifles hands over 18.8 acres of land to AAI for Dimapur airport expansion



**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 9:** Assam Rifles on Friday handed over 18.8 acres of land, presently under occupation of Assam Rifles Training Centre and School (ARTC&S), 3rd Mile, Chumoukedima, to the Airport Authority of India (AAI) for the

Phase-I expansion of Dimapur airport.

The land was handed over at a joint handing over and taking over programme at Dimapur airport, which was attended by Moa Ponggen, airport director, AAI, Dimapur airport, Col KD Sharma, CO,

No 2 Bn, ARTC&S, Sentiwapang Aier, secretary (airports, inland waterways, and railways cell), Nagaland transport department, Polan John, DC, Chumoukedima, M Ababe Ezung, OSD, Nagaland transport department, along with other officials.

Before the formal handing over and taking over programme was executed, the officials inspected the identified area at ARTC&S.

The issue relating to the transfer of the remaining areas, presently under the occupation of ARTC&S, for Phase-II expansion of Dimapur airport was also discussed during the programme.

It was stated that further directives from the appropriate authorities would be required for the transfer of the remaining areas for Phase-II development works.

# Firearm, ammunition seized in Manipur, one held

**IMPHAL, May 9:** Security forces arrested a person from Manipur's Churachandpur district after a firearm and ammunition were seized from his possession, police said on Saturday.

The person, who is a resident of Churachandpur but an "active cadre of Kuki National Army (Burma)" was apprehended from Zou Veng area on Friday, a senior officer said.

One 9 mm pistol, one magazine and seven live rounds of bullets were recovered from his possession, he said. Former chief minister N Biren Singh said the arrest of armed KNA(B) cadre in Churachandpur is a "serious matter that cannot be ignored".

In a post on X, he said Manipur would not tolerate unlawful activities. "The recovery of sophisticated weapons and evidence of unlawful armed activity confirms the growing threat posed by foreign-linked militant elements operating along our

borders," Singh said.

Meanwhile, the Assam Rifles said patrolling by security forces near the international border with Myanmar ensured peace and security after armed militants attacked three Naga villages in Manipur's Kamjong district on Thursday.

Armed militants burnt several houses at Namlee, Wanglee and Choro villages, located less than 1 km from the international border.

"Despite the volatile situation, troops of the Assam Rifles responded proactively and moved into the affected area under challenging conditions to safeguard people. Fifteen villagers, including women and children, were safely evacuated and provided humanitarian assistance," the paramilitary force said.

One armed man was apprehended with an AK-47 rifle and ammunition during search operations, it said. (PTI)

# ANSAM alleges cross-border militant attacks on Naga villages in Manipur



**IMPHAL, May 9:** The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) strongly condemned what it described as "barbaric cross-border terrorist aggression" perpetrated by nomadic Kuki armed militants under Suspension of Operation (SoO) and the foreign Burma-based People's Defence Force (PDF), jointly with the Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B) and supported by Kuki refugees, against Naga villages along the Indo-Myanmar frontier in the Kamjong area of Ukhrul district.

The student body said the "coordinated attacks" have been continuing on Naga villages including TM Kasom, Ringui, Thoyee, Sharkaphung, S Laho and Sinakeithei. It alleged that a large-scale armed "invasion" was carried out in the early hours of May 7, 2026, at Z Choro, Namlee, Wanglee Market and Ashang Khullen (KAKA) in which houses were set on fire.

ANSAM said these incidents exposed what it termed an "organised terror campaign" intended to terrorise indigenous people and advance a "Zalengam" narrative based on what it called fabricated stories and distorted history. It also alleged involvement of external backing for armed groups targeting Naga populations.

The statement further claimed that on the same day at around 12:30 PM, Sinakeithei village was again attacked from the Lungthar hill range with indiscriminate gunfire in which an innocent villager sustained multiple gunshot wounds.

ANSAM alleged that armed groups, including KNA-B and PDF elements from Myanmar, along with refugees taking temporary shelter were involved in repeated attacks, including firing and coordinated as-

saults from multiple directions. It also alleged use of combat drones during the operations, escalating the scale of violence against civilians.

The student body further claimed that houses were burned and destroyed with the involvement of "refugee elements," forcing women, children, and elderly villagers to flee into forests under "horrific conditions of terror and displacement."

It also alleged that homes, granaries, livestock and civilian property were looted and destroyed, describing these acts as deliberate attempts to destabilise and economically weaken Naga villages.

ANSAM stated that KNA-B and PDF, which it described as foreign Burma-origin formations had no historical or territorial legitimacy in Naga areas and strongly condemned their alleged presence and activities.

The organisation also raised concern over what it called inaction and questionable neutrality by Indian security forces, particularly the Assam Rifles, alleging repeated attacks occurred despite their presence. It claimed this had created public suspicion among local communities.

ANSAM demanded immediate intervention for the release of abducted Naga civilians, deployment of Manipur state forces and commando units in affected areas and removal of central forces, including Assam Rifles, from the region. It also called for search operations to locate missing persons, recover looted property and rehabilitate displaced families. The student body expressed solidarity with affected villagers and urged authorities to act on what it termed "grave violations," warning that continued failure to address the situation could have serious consequences. (NNN)

# NPF farmers' wing to undertake statewide inquiry tour across Nagaland

**KOHIMA, May 9:** The ruling Naga People's Front's farmers' wing on Saturday announced a statewide tour to engage directly with farming communities across the state to understand the ground realities and to highlight successful agricultural practices and initiatives.

Addressing a press conference in Kohima on Saturday, NPF Central Farmers' Wing (CFW) president Vikheho Swu said as part of a statewide 'appreciative inquiry tour', three teams would cover all districts of the state, travelling towards Tuensang, Mon and the central region.

He said the tour aims to identify and acknowledge successful Naga farmers, promote agricultural initiatives, and interact with Krishi Vigyan Kendras, agri and allied departments, and field officers.

Swu appreciated the government's efforts in promoting agriculture through distribution of seeds, saplings, farm tools and identification of crop clusters, while also highlighting challenges such as the ageing farming population and climate change.

He said younger generations are increasingly moving away from farming towards white-collar jobs,

adding that farmers must adopt climate-resilient crops and farming methods to cope with unpredictable weather conditions.

On modern farming, Swu said the shift from traditional jhum cultivation would require collective decision-making involving both the government and local communities, while stressing that jhum remains deeply linked to Naga culture and identity.

NPF CFW general secretary Chikrokroyo Kezo said the tour would also help farmers access information on government schemes, seeds and saplings through coordination with departments.

Meanwhile, NPF CFW secretary and administrator Nguto Assumi said the initiative aims to encourage farmers to adopt progressive and scientific farming practices while preserving traditional systems.

Swu further said that the CFW intends to continue visiting villages hosting crop-based festivals and agricultural celebrations in the future.

"We will be submitting our reports to the government and see what best we can do for the farming community," he added. (PTI)

# Arunachal Pradesh: Man arrested with drugs worth ₹ 30 lakh

**ITANAGAR, May 9:** A person was arrested with drugs worth around Rs 30 lakh at the Polo Colony in Arunachal Pradesh's Naharlagun on Friday, police said. During an anti-drug raid, police seized 113 plastic vials containing heroin weighing around 144 grams, and 30 Nitrazepam tablets, a sedative, weighing close to 300 mg, Naharlagun Superintendent of Police Nyelam Nega said. A suspected drug peddler, Vijay Parang (30), was also arrested, the police officer said, adding that cash, suspected to be proceeds of drug trafficking, was seized during the raid. A case has been registered at the Naharlagun Police Station under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the police officer added. (PTI)

# UNC alleges cross-border attacks on Naga villages, seeks Centre's action



**IMPHAL, May 9:** Alleging that Kuki militants based in Myanmar were responsible for attacks on Naga villages on May 7, the United Naga Council (UNC) has demanded "immediate and decisive military action by the Government of India to neutralise the foreign aggressors and restore the sanctity of the international Indo-Myanmar border".

According to the UNC, at around 4 AM on May 7, more than one hundred "heavily armed terrorists" breached the international Indo-Myanmar border from Myanmar and carried out a premeditated assault on the Naga villages of Namlee, Wanglee, Ashang Khullen (KAKA) and Z Choro.

The UNC demanded urgent deployment of Manipur state forces, emergency relief for displaced women, children and elderly persons taking shelter in jungles, and a high-level, time-bound inquiry into how around 100 militants allegedly crossed the border undetected following a security visit on May 6, 2026.

The organisation said it would not remain silent while what it described as Naga ancestral territory along the Indo-Myanmar border is violated and its people are rendered refugees in their own homeland. It also condemned what it called a "barbaric cross-border invasion" by Myanmar-based Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B) and attacks by Kuki militants under Suspension of Operation (SoO) on May 7 at the international border and at Sinakeithei village.

The UNC said Sinakeithei village was attacked from the Lungthar hill range, where heavily armed militants allegedly opened fire, injuring civilians around 12:30 PM on May 7. It also alleged that houses were set ablaze and civilians were targeted indiscriminately. It further claimed that women, children and elderly villagers were forced to flee into deep jungles without food, shelter or medical care, calling it a violation of India's sovereignty and the dignity of indigenous Naga people.

The UNC strongly criticised what it termed the "failure and inaction" of central security forces deployed along the Indo-Myanmar border, alleging that militants were able to attack villages shortly after a security inspection. It said such incidents had eroded public trust in security forces.

The organisation also condemned the Government of India's silence, stating that continued inaction in the face of alleged foreign aggression amounts to complicity.

It further claimed that while around 300 Kuki refugees are currently sheltered in Namlee-Wanglee, some of their children are linked to armed groups involved in arson attacks and described the situation as a coordinated cross-border invasion rather than a refugee crisis. The UNC also alleged selective protection by security forces and claimed that Naga village defence structures were being dismantled while other areas were left untouched. It raised concerns over alleged bias by sections of the Assam Rifles and other central forces.

The council warned that the situation reflected a "coordinated aggression" and could have wider implications for national security.

It further stated that if the Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs are unable to ensure protection of Naga civilians and their property, the deployment of security forces along the border should be reconsidered, adding that the Naga people would take steps to defend their land. (NNN)

# Australian envoy meets Meghalaya Governor

## Talks focus on higher education, water sports, sustainable development and tribal safeguards

**SHILLONG, May 9:** Australian High Commissioner to India, Philip Green, OAM, called on Meghalaya Governor CH Vijayashankar at Lok Bhavan on Friday, with discussions covering higher education, water sports, sustainable development and constitutional safeguards for tribals.

The meeting was also attended by Bernard Lynch, Consul General of Australia to India and HC Chaudhary, Additional Chief Secretary to the Governor.

The meeting witnessed discussions on areas of mutual interest, including higher education, development of the water sector, water sports such as surfing, kayaking, water skiing and diving, sustainable development and opportunities for deeper collaboration between Australia and Meghalaya.

During the interaction, Green appreciated the constitutional safeguards for tribals in Meghalaya and expressed keen interest in understanding the state's unique socio-cultural and constitutional framework for the protection of tribal rights and provisions that preserve the distinct identity and heritage of indigenous communities. The Governor elaborated on Meghalaya's democratic traditions, constitutional protections and the importance of preserving its rich tribal customs while pursuing inclusive growth and development.

The two sides also discussed higher education, exploring opportunities for academic collaboration, student exchange programmes, research partnerships



and knowledge-sharing initiatives between institutions in Meghalaya and Australia.

The interaction underscored the importance of strengthening global academic linkages to empower youth, promote innovation and enhance the quality of higher education in the state.

Given Meghalaya's abundant natural resources and scenic landscapes, discussions also touched on the state's potential in ecotourism, adventure tourism and development of the water sector, including water sports such as

surfing, kayaking, water skiing and diving.

The Governor highlighted Meghalaya's extraordinary natural wealth and apprised the High Commissioner of the state's rich flora and fauna, ecological diversity and the immense potential of its medicinal plants for research, wellness and sustainable economic opportunities.

Earlier, Green attended a programme organised by Asian Confluence in Shillong, where deliberations focused on strengthening international engagement,

regional connectivity and fostering greater academic and cultural exchanges.

His visit to Meghalaya reflects the growing interest in enhancing collaborative partnerships and people-to-people engagement between Australia and the Northeast region of India.

The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment towards exploring avenues of cooperation in education, cultural exchange, environmental sustainability and developmental initiatives of mutual benefit. (NNN)

## The conditions at Chepauk have shifted from their traditional extreme slow CSK face LSG with aim to keep playoff hopes alive

**CHENNAI, May 9:** The sixth-placed Chennai Super Kings will look to keep their playoff hopes alive when they face a beleaguered Lucknow Super Giants, currently languishing at the bottom of the points table, in an Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

With the league stage entering a decisive phase, CSK still remain in contention for a top-four finish despite an inconsistent campaign marked by batting collapses and patchy performances both at home and away.

Returning to Chepauk could offer the five-time champions an opportunity to regain momentum against LSG who have endured a forgettable season and are already staring at an exit.

CSK's campaign has largely revolved around Sanju Samson, whose starts at the top have often dictated the team's fortunes.

While new recruit Samson has emerged as the team's batting anchor and "backbone", skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad has struggled for consistency with the bat this season.

After a poor start, Ruturaj has regained form in the beginning of this month with crucial unbeaten knocks of 74 and 67, his resurgence helping steer CSK towards the top five, even though he failed in their last outing against Delhi Capitals with Samson remaining unbeaten on a match-winning 52-ball 87.

The hosts would also expect bigger contributions from the middle-order featuring Dewald Brevis,



Kartik Sharma, Jamie Overton and Shivam Dube, hoping to accelerate in the death overs.

MS Dhoni is yet to play any match due to a persistent calf injury sustained before the season. While he has trained in the nets, he has not featured in the playing XI so far.

The conditions at Chepauk have shifted from their traditional extreme slow, spin-friendly nature to more balanced and batting-friendly, but they still retain some assistance for spinners, hence the

duo of Akeal Hosein and Noor Ahmad could be the key for CSK in the middle overs.

LSG, on the other hand, are enduring a disastrous season, sitting at the bottom of the table (10th place) with only three wins from 10 matches.

Skipper Rishabh Pant is experiencing a challenging season and has so far struggled to justify his record Rs 27 crore price tag with befitting efforts with the bat. He showed flashes of brilliance, including a 32 off 10 balls against defending cham-

pions Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday, but his overall form has been underwhelming.

However, Mitchell Marsh's 56-ball 111 in the nine-run win against RCB has given fresh impetus to LSG's campaign in a season in which they struggled for consistency throughout, with both their batting and bowling units failing to click collectively and consistently.

The win against RCB ended a six-match losing streak for the LSG. Although struggling at the bottom

of the table, this win kept LSG's slim hopes for the playoffs alive.

The big-hitting Nicholas Pooran will also have a key role to play in the middle overs.

As far as the LSG bowling attack is concerned, it is spearheaded by experienced India seamer Mohammed Shami, with useful support coming from Prince Yadav and spinners Shahbaz Ahmed and Digvesh Singh Rath.

Injuries to Josh Inglis and Mohsin Khan have also pegged LSG back.

**Teams:**

**Chennai Super Kings:** Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Dewald Brevis, MS Dhoni, Urvil Patel, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ayush Mhatre, Shreyas Gopal, Jamie Overton, Khaleel Ahmed, Anshul Kamboj, Gurjapneet Singh, Mukesh Choudhary, Noor Ahmad, Akeal Hosein, Prashant Veer, Matthew Short, Sarfaraz Khan, Matt Henry, Rahul Chahar, Zakary Foulkes, Spencer Johnson, Kartik Sharma, Aman Khan.

**Lucknow Super Giants:** Rishabh Pant (c&wk), Abdul Samad, Akshat Raghuvanshi, Ayush Badoni, Mukul Choudhary, Himmat Singh, Josh Inglis (wk), Aiden Markram, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Arshin Kulkarni, George Linde, Mitchell Marsh, Shahbaz Ahmed, Akash Singh, Avesh Khan, Mohammed Shami, Mohsin Khan, Anrich Nortje, Prince Yadav, Digvesh Rath, Manimaran Siddharth, Arjun Tendulkar, Naman Tiwari, Mayank Yadav.

Match starts: 3.30pm IST. (PTI)

## RCB look to regain batting firepower against MI to break 2-match losing streak



**RAIPUR, May 9:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru will want their batting group to rebuild its muscle to snap a two-match losing streak, and put their IPL campaign back on track when they face Mumbai Indians here on Sunday.

The Royal Challengers were off to an early season flier, winning four out of their first matches and the playoffs entry appeared a mere formality. But now the situation has changed. The title holders have lost three of their last five matches to slip into a little mid-tournament crisis.

RCB, who is currently third on the table with 12 points from 10 matches, are still in a prime position to enter the knockout stage. But the Bengaluru outfit will certainly be aware that they have lost a bit of steam towards the business end of the tournament. The RCB are tied with Rajasthan Royals and Gujarat Titans on 12 points, and either RR or GT will go ahead them after their Saturday's match at Jaipur, pushing the Bengalureans down to fourth.

That points table scenario in itself is slightly worrying, but apart from that external factor, the RCB will need the batting group regaining its range. On a tad tacky Ahmedabad pitch against the Titans, the RCB batters failed to go beyond 155 and even the 9-run DLS margin defeat against Lucknow Super Giants was not as close as the margin suggests.

The RCB required 19 runs in the final over to cross the line, but could not come close to that.

Now, RCB batter are up against an even more potent, at least on paper, Mumbai attack that consists of Jasprit Bumrah, Corbin Bosch, AM Ghazanfar and Will Jacks.

The Raipur, the designated home venue of RCB, pitch is a bit of an unknown commodity and the champions will need their batters at their very best on the weekend.

**Faltering Bethell, Jitesh**  
In that context, RCB would dearly welcome some runs from Jacob Bethell, who came in for an injured Phil Salt. But his four outings so far have produced 14, 20, 5 and 4, rob-

bing power from RCB's opening combination, and it has left Virat Kohli to do all the heavy lifting.

Equally discomfiting is the diminished returns from wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma, as his highest score this season is 23. It has dented RCB's late charge to a certain extent, and he needs to buck the trend at the earliest. While RCB batting has its own niggles, the MI line-up showed the glimpse of a glorious past, successfully chasing down 228 against LSG in the recent match. Rohit Sharma marked his return from an injury lay-off with a blistering 84 off 44 balls, and the victory gave them a temporary relief after a slew of defeats.

Rohit and his opening companion Ryan Rickelton will have to negate the potent RCB new ball pair of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood. Hardik Pandya missed the match against Lucknow with back spasms, and Suryakumar Yadav stepped in as captain.

Pandya has travelled to Raipur, but his fitness will be monitored closely before taking a final call on his availability for this match.

**Teams:**

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Rajat Patidar (captain), Virat Kohli, Tim David, Jacob Bethell, Romario Shephard, Josh Hazlewood, Nuwan Thushara, Devdutt Padikkal, Jitesh Sharma, Krunal Pandya, Rasikh Dar, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jordan Cox, Suyash Sharma, Venkatesh Iyer, Swapnil Singh, Jacob Duffy, Kanishk Chouhan, Abhinandan Singh, Mangesh Yadav, Phil Salt, Satvik Deswal, Vicky Ostwal, Vihann Malhotra.

**Mumbai Indians:** Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya (captain), Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Trent Boult, Deepak Chahar, Will Jacks, Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickelton, Naman Dhir, Corbin Bosch, Sherfane Rutherford, Shardul Thakur, Mayank Markande, Robin Minz, Raj Bawa, Atharva Ankeolekar, Mayank Rawat, Raghu Sharma, Keshav Maharaj, Danish Malwana, Mohammed Salahuddin Izhar, AM Ghazanfar, Ashwani Kumar.

Match starts at 7.30pm. (PTI)

## Inter-district athletics meet inaugurated in Hojai



**HT Correspondent**

**HOJAI, May 9:** The two-day 12th Inter-Hojai District Athletics Competition-2026 was inaugurated on Saturday at the Vivekananda Sports Playground under the aegis of the Hojai District Sports Association.

The programme began with the hoisting of the association's flag by secretary Ashim Mazumdar at 10 am.

Addressing the participants, Mazumdar said the large participation of young athletes reflected growing interest in athletics and sports activities in the district.

He urged players to compete with sportsmanship and discipline rather than focusing solely on winning medals.

He also said athletes performing well in the competition would get the opportunity to participate in state-level events.

More than 250 boys and girls from Lanka, Lumding, Hojai, Jamunamukh, Jugijaan, Kaki, Murjarhar and Doboka are participating in the competition, which features events across 10 categories.

Sports Association secretary Sudip Kumar Das said the competition includes running races, high jump, long jump, discus throw, shot put, javelin throw and several other events.

The events are being conducted by Tapas Sen, Chandrashekhar Nath, Zabador Rahman and Ramkani Chanda.

Winners will be awarded certificates by the Hojai Sports Association, organisers said.

## AICF assures prize money for Abhijeet after GM approaches Sports Ministry over unpaid dues

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** Renowned Indian Grandmaster Abhijeet Gupta, left frustrated by the delay in receiving prize money for his Odisha Open title earlier this year, has now received assurances from the All India Chess Federation that the issue will be resolved and "necessary action" is initiated to clear his dues.

Gupta, a Chess Olympiad medallist and five-time Commonwealth champion, had been left exasperated as repeated letters to the AICF failed to secure his payment even four months after winning the title, forcing him to seek intervention from the Sports Ministry.

Sources said the Odisha association, which organised the tournament, is embroiled in infighting, with its bank account frozen and the organisers unable to clear the dues. "I kindly request the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to look into this matter and help ensure that players receive their rightful prize money with transparency and accountability," wrote the 36-year-old Gupta on 'X'.

"This is not just about one unpaid prize. It is about protecting the dignity and trust of every chess player in India." Gupta also told PTI that the organisers owe him Rs 5.5 lakh in prize money for the tournament which he won in January.

However, he later posted on social media that AICF president Nitin Narang had assured him that the issue would be resolved.



"The President of All India Chess Federation @narangnitin ji called me and assured me that the necessary action has been initiated!" wrote Gupta. The Grandmaster had earlier said in his post that he was assured the prize money would be paid within a month, but the payment never materialised. "However, when I followed up later, they (organisers) stopped responding," he said.

"As a sports person, you learn to accept losses more often than victories -- that is part of the journey. But what hurts even more is winning and still not receiving what you rightfully earned."

A source in the AICF said the organisers of the Odisha Open were unable to pay Gupta because their bank account had been frozen amid infighting within the state association.

"There is infighting within the association, with

rival factions locked in a dispute, because of which the account has been frozen and players are not getting their dues," the source said.

Gupta also wrote that he had tried reaching out to the AICF but received no response.

"Since the tournament was affiliated with the All India Chess Federation, I also reached out to the federation's president and secretary, hoping the matter would be resolved fairly. Unfortunately, there has been no response from them either.

"If this can happen to someone honoured with the Arjuna Award, one can only imagine the struggles faced by players at the grassroots level of chess in India," added Gupta.

A senior AICF official, however, said on condition of anonymity that the federation had "reached out" to Gupta. "I am 100 per cent certain that the issue will be resolved soon. The idea is to work for the players. Let us understand the issue (with Odisha association) and then we will resolve it," the official added.

Gupta said part of the responsibility for ensuring payment of the prize money also rested with the AICF as the state association is affiliated to the national body. "The infighting in the (the Odisha association) has been going on for years. They conducted the tournament and it was affiliated by the AICF. So there has to be some responsibility on the part of the national federation. (PTI)

## Jadhav wins maiden World Cup medal with bronze in Shanghai

**SHANGHAI, May 9:** Reigning World University Games champion Sahil Jadhav clinched his maiden Archery World Cup medal in only his second appearance on the global circuit, winning a bronze in the compound men's event of the Stage 2, here on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Maharashtra archer defeated Denmark veteran player-cum-coach Martin Damsbo 147-144 in the bronze medal playoff to secure India's first medal of the ongoing tournament.

It also marked India's final medal in the compound section after none of his fellow mates reached the medal rounds.

India, traditionally a powerhouse in compound team events, had endured a disappointing campaign as all their teams bowed out early.

India will now look to add two more medals on the concluding day on Sunday in the recurve section. The women's team will compete for gold, while Simranjeet Kaur will begin her campaign from the semifinals, needing one win to secure her maiden World Cup medal.

Jadhav was trailing by one point after the opening end

as the 40-year-old Damsbo started with three perfect 10s. But the Indian responded strongly in the second end, shooting a perfect 30 while the Dane managed 27, helping Jadhav move ahead 59-57 overall.

From there, Jadhav stayed firmly in control, dropping just two points from his final nine arrows to seal a memorable three-point victory.

Jadhav, who had made his World Cup debut only last month in Puebla (Mexico), enjoyed a breakthrough campaign in Shanghai.

His impressive run began with a victory over India's senior-most compound archer and multiple World Cup and Asian Games medallist Abhishek Verma in the round of 32. He then defeated Germany's Ruven Fluss in the pre-quarterfinals before edging past 2022 world champion and world No. 6 Nico Wiener of Austria in a tense shoot-off to enter the semifinals.

However, his bid for a gold ended in heartbreak as reigning world champion and world No. 3 Nicolas Girard of France edged him by a solitary point in a high-quality semifinal. (PTI)

## Suryansh credits Ponting, Iyer for mindset shift

**NEW DELHI, May 9:** Punjab Kings all-rounder Suryansh Shedge on Saturday credited head coach Ricky Ponting and skipper Shreyas Iyer for helping him undergo a crucial mindset shift that has played a key role in his strong performance in the ongoing Indian Premier League season.

The Mumbai all-rounder said regular conversations with Iyer and Ponting have helped him focus on preparation, staying in the present, and trusting his instincts — lessons that have enabled him to make the most of opportunities once he broke into the playing XI.

"Shreyas bhai told me during an internal match before the IPL that I was batting well and not to overthink. If I had thought about things not in my control, I wouldn't have

been able to perform in that situation," Shedge said during a round table on Saturday. "He talks a lot about technique and attitude."

On Ponting's influence, Shedge said the Australian great has constantly stressed the importance of preparation. "Ricky sir has been all about preparation and preparation. He says whatever happens, be courageous, back yourself and know that you belong," he said.

Shedge revealed a conversation with Ponting after he had spent the early part of the season on the bench left a lasting impact on him.

"After the fourth and fifth game, he asked me if I was frustrated. At first I said no, but then he asked me to tell him honestly. He said he understood how I was feeling — it's

easy to get bogged down and feel negative, but harder to stay in the present and focus on the job ahead so that you're ready when the opportunity comes."

The 23-year-old said that period on the sidelines eventually became a blessing as he got more time to prepare. "When I wasn't playing, I got one extra month for preparation. I think the attitude that I kept working as hard as possible every day helped me get into the playing XI."

Shedge, known for his aggressive finishing ability, said his preparation is tailored as per his role in the team.

"I have to be switched on from ball one. That's what I do in net sessions. I give myself scenarios — targets in one over and how to achieve them. (PTI)

## What led to BCCI's IPL crackdown?

# Reels in restricted zones, late night outings among reasons

**BENGALURU, May 9:** Reels made in restricted areas, outings that did not have security approvals and players' proximity to social media influencers were some of the concerns that prompted the stern advisory from BCCI and IPL franchises are now scrambling to ensure compliance without compromising on individual privacy.

The Board's Anti-Corruption Unit flagged unauthorised guests in the hotel rooms of players, support staff and team officials and also warned of potential honey traps. As a result, the BCCI came up with an advisory that placed restrictions on the guests and made it mandatory for the players to keep security informed about their movements.

One of the major violations pointed out was the players' "excessive proximity" to influencers, who get hired for short durations to create social media content for the participating teams.

In one such incident, one of the younger players asked the newcomers in the content team to assist him with reels, videos and pictures to be used on his private social media accounts. While it's not an un-

common practice for a player to take external help for neo-media content generation, in this particular instance, the vlogger used some of the videos and pictures on his own private account to gain traction.

The shoot happened inside the boundary line with clear visuals of the team's training and other on-field activities. It later spilled over to the player's hotel room as well.

The BCCI was not amused. "Yes, we have received a new set of rules from the BCCI and steps are being taken to follow them with diligence. The new crop of players are so much into this social media activity. Yes, it is a modern trend, we accept it. But it has to be done within the limit set by the BCCI," a franchise official told PTI.

"...it's impossible to track each and every movement of people. It's an issue. What we are trying to do is to make the players and content teams more aware of the BCCI norms, and the consequences if they break them."

A step in that direction is cutting down the size of content teams.



"We are trying to limit the number of content team members, particularly those who get hired for a fixed term like 2-3 months during an IPL season. Senior players will know the rules and how to follow them. But at times, cricketers coming to the IPL for the first time might not know the gravity of the situation. They will be eager to emulate the stars and get some social media likes and comments. So, we need to educate them more," the official added.

**The intruders**

As for unauthorised visitors in players' and support staff's rooms, the Board's concerns deepened after another player was recently found hosting a few people in his room well into the night quite often.

The BCCI ACU officer immediately summoned the team manager to enquire about the meetings, but the reply was "casual and disinterested". The manager cited the player's seniority in the team's ranks to defend him.

"I am not surprised. At times, the players use their stature within the team to bend the rules. Once I told a player to host his friends in the lobby restaurant, not in his room.

"I told him there are some board instructions on such matters. He just snapped: 'You don't worry. I will tell the board (officials), if they ask,'" said a former official, who worked for a long time in the IPL as team manager.

Another franchise official offered his view on this. "Well, I don't know about such arm-twisting (by players). But we have now given out clear instructions that a written or at least verbal permission is re-

quired to invite friends and family to the hotel where the team stays. "I know they also need to meet family and friends. But we have told them not to entertain guests after 10 pm, and such meetings should happen in the lobby or any other public place where the team manager/officials should have ready access," the official stated.

In another instance, a player failed to return calls from a team official, who knocked on his hotel room door to pass on information. He eventually walked into the hotel quite late at night, accompanied by a group of friends. But it was brushed under the carpet, as the player was perceived to be close to franchisee's owners.

"I agree that sometimes rules are not followed in letter and spirit or sometimes some exemptions will be given to the players. Now, we are looking to put in place constant checks on the players.

"But we should also ensure that it's not an intrusion into their privacy. We will also be in talks with the BCCI as to how to implement this particular rule without any issue," the official said. (PTI)