

# Assam CM Backs Big-Screen Tribute to Ahom Hero Lachit Borphukan, Meets Director Aditya

**Guwahati, 17 July :** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that he held discussions with 'Dhurandhar' director Aditya Dhar for a movie on legendary Ahom general Lachit Borphukan.Sarma asserted that a grand-scale Hindi film on Borphukan will further encapsulate him and his heroics at the national and international level.

"The movie 'Dhurandhar' was a big hit. Aditya Dhar was the director, and he is



among the best-known names among his contemporaries," the CM said during a Facebook Live on Thursday evening.

Borphukan was a legendary army commander of the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826) and is known for his leadership in the 1671 'Battle of Saraighat', which thwarted a protracted attempt by the Mughal forces to retake Assam.

Sarma said he has already spoken to Dhar for a film on Borphukan for a pan-India audience, and the National Award-winning filmmaker has told him he will meet the chief minister in August to take the discussion forward."I think if our gov-

ernment can produce a film on Lachit Borphukan, we can make his heroics known globally. And, it will be a special achievement for us," Sarma asserted.

The state government's budget for 2026-27, which was laid in the assembly on July 10, has proposed films on the lives of Borphukan and freedom fighter Kushal Konwar.

This once again strengthened the perception that the trend in southern Ra-



jasthan plays a key role in deciding the direction of power. Tribal voters are the biggest political strength of this region. Of the total 25 ST-reserved Assembly seats in Rajasthan, 16 fall in Mewar-Vagad.In urban areas like Rajasamand, Nathdwara, Chittorgarh and Udaipur, Rajputs, Brahmins, Jains, Vaishyas, Gurjars, Jats, Dangis and other OBC communities also influence election results.Therefore, support from just one community is not considered enough to win here.Political parties have to strike a social balance.

Sachin Pilot's tour is also being seen as part of this larger political strategy. He met party workers in Ban-

swara, Dungarpur, Salumbar and Udaipur, took part in programs of the tribal community and cornered the BJP government on local issues.

Within the Congress, this is being seen as an attempt to activate the organization in the tribal belt and to politically counter the challenge posed by BAP.

The 2028 Assembly elections are still sometime away, but the political message is clear. The BJP wants to retain its lead, the Congress is trying to regain lost ground, and BAP wants to further strengthen its role in tribal politics.In such a scenario, Mewar-Vagad has once again become the center of Rajasthan's electoral politics.That is why Pilot's tour is being seen not just as an organizational program, but the opening move in the battle for 2028.

Nikolas Roth, a senior director at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, said the breach could pose a "serious" risk to the plant's safety, according to the report.The report said the leaked documents included some blueprints, supplier details, inspection records, and equipment reviews, and admitted that it could not verify their authenticity.

It added that the documents do not appear to be linked to the nuclear reactor's core systems supplied by Russia's state-owned Rosatom.World Leaks, the ransomware group behind the leak, is infamous for posting stolen corporate data on its website if the companies refuse to pay them ransom, with its website accessible only with a specialised browser.

# Ram Temple Trust holds 10-day rite to ‘atone’ for donation ‘theft’, ‘seek forgiveness’

**New Delhi, 17 July :** Ayodhya is not new to rituals, but what makes an ongoing 10-day purification ritual organised by the Ram temple trust unique is that it is meant to "atone" for the recent donation "theft" and "seek forgiveness" from the god.

A brainchild of Govind Dev Giri, the treasurer of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, the purification ritual that began on Wednesday involves the recitation of the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra -- chanting 1,000 different names of Lord Vishnu, a ritual Hindus believe ushers in positivity, prosperity and good luck -- by the gurukuls of Ayodhya.

"Following the theft of offerings, the trust has initiated a special 10-day ritual for atonement and purification across the temple premises and various gurukuls to restore the temple's sanctity and dignity," Giri told PTI on Friday.

He said the aim is to ensure at least

251 recitations of the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra daily.

Trust member Dinendra Das said that the recitation of the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra is being done to rectify the "mistakes committed at Ram Lalla's place".He said along with the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra, the Valmiki Ramayan is also being recited.

Reacting to the development, Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai said, "The buddhi-shuddhi yagya has proven what we have been saying since the beginning that something hugely wrong has taken place in Ayodhya. I wish Lord Ram gives them the wisdom to realise their sins and atone for their mistakes."

Talking to PTI, Samajwadi Party (SP) national secretary and spokesperson Abhishek Mishra said, "According to Sanatan Dharma, the purification and the atonement yagya holds no value unless those actually responsible for the embezzlement of donations at the temple them-

selves participate and seek forgiveness. Otherwise, this entire exercise will eventually prove to be futile and entirely cosmetic, not cosmic." Giri had earlier said the alleged theft of temple donations has hurt the devotees of Lord Ram.

"All of us are deeply hurt, saddened and ashamed," he had said, adding that the "truth" would come out with the blessings of the lord.The donation-theft row erupted on June 7 and has since snowballed into a major political controversy.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was formed by the Uttar Pradesh government on June 13 to look into the allegations and based on its preliminary findings, eight people associated with donation counting at the temple were arrested. The then general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Champat Rai, and trustee Anil Mishra resigned in the wake of the controversy.

# Punjab Paddy Yields At Risk Amid 28% Rain Deficit, Rise In Cultivation Costs

**Amaravati, 17 July :** Punjab's Kharif season is facing increasing pressure as below-normal rainfall and a weak monsoon continue to affect crop cultivation across the state. Paddy, the main Kharif crop in Punjab, requires a large amount of water during the transplantation stage, making it particularly vulnerable to prolonged dry conditions. Farmers in several districts say they are being forced to depend heavily on tube wells as rainfall remains inadequate, leading to higher cultivation costs and growing concerns over crop yields.

In Moga district, farmers say irrigation has become more difficult due to poor rainfall, irregular electricity supply and limited canal water. The increased dependence on groundwater has raised the cost of farming, with growers spending more on irrigation, fertilisers and crop protection chemicals to keep their fields healthy.

Iqbal Singh, a farmer from Singhawala village cultivating nearly 100

acres, said the lack of rainfall has forced farmers to use additional fertilisers and pesticides while water shortages continue in many fields. He said cultivation expenses have increased significantly this season, adding to the financial burden on farmers.

Another farmer, Jaswinder Singh, who has transplanted paddy on 14 acres, said delayed rainfall, inadequate canal water and frequent power cuts have disrupted irrigation schedules. He warned that if sufficient rainfall does not arrive soon, crop losses could increase and affect overall production.

Agricultural official Dr Amarjeet Singh Doshanj has also expressed concern over the rainfall deficit. According to estimates, Punjab could receive around 28 per cent below-normal rainfall during the current monsoon season. If dry conditions continue, Kharif crop yields may decline by one to five per cent, resulting in estimated financial losses of around Rs 2,500 to Rs 3,000 per

acre. Officials have advised farmers in water-scarce areas to gradually shift towards less water-intensive crops such as maize, moong and bajra to reduce pressure on groundwater resources.

Punjab Meteorological Department Director Surinder Paul said the state has received only 88.9 millimetres of rainfall so far against the normal 123 millimetres, leaving the state with a rainfall deficit of nearly 28 per cent. He said the shortfall is mainly because the southwest monsoon has remained in a weak phase over the past several days.

According to Paul, the weak monsoon conditions are expected to continue for another two to three days. However, he said there are signs of improvement after July 19, with rainfall activity likely to increase across Punjab on July 20, 21 and 22. This is expected to improve the overall rainfall situation and reduce the existing deficit during the remaining part of July.

# Alipurduar–Kolkata Gets Premium AC Sleeper Bus Service, Offering Comfortable Overnight Travel

**Kolkata, 17 July :** An AC sleeper bus service was launched between Alipurduar and Calcutta.The service, which began operations on Thursday, is being operated by a private company.

The launch follows the success of the Jaigaon-Calcutta sleeper bus service introduced on November 9 last year.Jaigaon, a town in Alipurduar district located on the India-Bhutan border, responded well to the service, prompting the company to introduce the second one from the district headquarters.

"The new service is expected to benefit people who regularly travel between Alipurduar and Calcutta. With train tickets often difficult to obtain, there is a growing demand for an alternative mode of comfortable long-distance travel," said Samrat Sanyal, who is associated with the transport company."The Jaigaon-Calcutta service is extremely popular. Besides tourists, traders and general passengers use the service regularly. Going by the response, we plan to launch a similar service from Barobisha on the Assam-Bengal border within the next six months," he added.

Usually, over 1,000 people travel from Alipurduar to Calcutta every day.The fully air-conditioned sleeper bus has 34 berths and a bio-toilet.

Every day, the bus will depart from Alipurduar at 4.30pm. The bus on its way back will leave Calcutta daily at 5.30 pm. The fare will range between ₹2,000 and ₹2,200.Representatives of the company said that the bus would move through the Dooars route. Tourists visiting the Dooars can board the bus from places like Madarihat, Birpara and Chalsa and Lataguri, close to the Jaldapara and Gorumara national parks.

"Tourists can also take the bus service to reach

these places," said a representative.he Ritabrata Banerjee-led faction of Trinamool was granted permission to hold their meeting at the Gandhi statue on Mayo Road and the Congress was allowed to organise their meeting at Sahid Minar. The advocate-general argued: "Allowing a third party to hold a rally within the vicinity of Esplanade can create law-and-order problems and traffic congestion."

Justice Bhattacharya reminded the state of a party's fundamental rights. The judge said: "It is the fundamental right of the party to hold its rally. How can the court deny that? The court is giving you



some time, ask your client (the police) where the petitioner's party can be allowed to hold its programme, near Victoria House or Birla Planetarium."

Around 1pm, the state's advocates returned to the court and said that the police can permit them at Raja Subodh Mullick Square.Bandyopadhyay refused to accept the proposal. Ultimately, the judge asked the advocate-general to allow the petitioner near the planetarium.Bandyopadhyay made a fresh prayer, so at least 5,000 people are allowed to attend the rally, which the judge turned down.

After the court passed the order, Mamata appeared on a Facebook video and said: "As you all know, every year we observe Shahid Tarpan... we hold it in their (the martyrs') remembrance. 'No ID card, no vote' — our workers fought for it. When I was the Youth Congress president, they attacked me. They fired tear gas and held a revolver near my chest. At that time, I had only one security guard."

"We are thankful to the Hon'ble Court for granting permission for July 21. However, we had sought permission for Mayo Road but did not get it, while others did. Regarding the permission we received from the court, with due respect, I would like to say that all of you can assemble in front of Birla Planetarium from 11am."

"I do not want my picture or anyone else's picture. Just keep the Trinamool symbol and the slogans 'Birla Planetarium Cholo' or 'Kolkata Cholo'. Do not go anywhere else. If the police stop you, break the barricade," Mamata added.

The high court directed Banerjee to comply with its May 21 order that granted protection from coercive action till July 31 in the intimidatory speech case, contingent on his cooperation with the investigation. The TMC MP has petitioned the high court to quash the FIR regarding his alleged intimidatory comments against a rival party's leaders and workers at a public meeting before the second phase of the West Bengal assembly polls, held on April 29.

The roads leading to Nagarayan, headquarters of the urban development and municipal affairs department, Purta Bhavan, the state PWD headquarters, and the stretch outside Bidhannagar (north) police station are riddled with potholes.

# New Town Family Keeps Centuries-Old Jagannath Chariot Tradition Alive, Linking Kolkata to Puri Rath Yatra

**Kolkata, 17 July :** In Siddha Town complex lives a descendant of the family that has for generations painted the Jagannath chariot in Puri."This honour has been passed down from countless generations in my family," says Bidhubhushan Maharana, who works at Sector V's Webel Animation Academy and has been living at Siddha Town since 2022. "In our complex too, we celebrate Rathayatra, and I chip in to paint the chariot. It's a different matter that here the kids love painting it so much that they hardly give anyone else a chance!"

Maharana was about 12 years old when he got to paint part of the Puri Rath for the first time. "Various tasks for the Rathayatra there are divided, and often there are designated families that have been performing it down the ages. My grandfather Bhuban Maharana was renowned for all kinds of artistic work there, besides painting the Rath and even today we are known as the 'Bhuban family'. When going to paint the Rath, he would ask if we wanted to come, and I would excitedly go over."

His grandfather, being a professional, would paint much of the panels in a day, "but I would be nervous as it was for Jagannath. I would go over the strokes carefully and rather slowly so as to get it right," he recalls. "I have 17 cousins, and though many are now working in different parts of the country, whenever we go over we are allowed to paint it. We are also given a nominal fee for it, but no one does it for the remuneration. We do it to serve Jagannath; it an honour that is invaluable."

Maharana hasn't been able to paint the Puri chariot after college as he has been away for work. "The three Puri chariots are so huge that painting needs to be started a month in advance, and it takes 20 to 30 people. I can never get leave long enough to be able to paint and pull the Rath on the same trip," he sighs, although adding that the Siddha Town chariot evokes the same devotion in him.Most of his neighbours, however, do not know about Maharana's lineage. "We had no idea about this but are blessed to have with us someone associated with the Puri Rath," said Pinaki Mohapatra, one of the organisers of the Siddha Town Rathayatra, when informed by The Telegraph Salt Lake.

This festival serves bhog for about 1,200 residents and the rituals are conducted by monks from Iskcon.Devesh Pandey, the Kurseong DFO, on Wednesday said the division recorded zero wildlife fatalities due to road accidents along the vulnerable stretches of the highways passing through the Bagdogra and Ghoshpukur forest ranges over the past year.Three highways, NH27, NH10 and AHII, pass through these areas."Earlier, certain stretches of these highways witnessed frequent incidents of wild animals being hit and killed by speeding vehicles. However, sustained awareness campaigns, strict enforcement of speed limits and continuous coordination with local stakeholders helped eliminate such accidents over the past year," said Pandey.

During this period, the division rescued over 100 wild species, including snakes, civet cats and barking deer, from human habitations and forest fringe areas, preventing potential human-wildlife conflict while ensuring the safe release of the animals into their natural habitat, Pandey added.

IPS officer N R Babu, who held the post of director general of the Correctional Services, will now be the DG and IGP, CID, it said.Amit Kumar Rathod will replace Tripurari Atharv as the new commissioner of Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate, the order said.The Election Commission had, prior to the Bengal assembly polls in April this year, transferred Sarkar from the post of Kolkata Police Commissioner.

K Jayraman, who was the ADG North Bengal, will be posted as the director of the Directorate of Economic Offences, the notification said. The civic body is expected to examine existing ward sizes, population density and infrastructure requirements while preparing the new boundaries.

# Murshidabad School Van Tragedy: Train Rams Vehicle at Open Crossing, 3 Dead Including Two Students

**Kolkata, 17 July :** Three people, including two school students, were killed and three others injured after a passenger train rammed into a school van at an allegedly open level crossing near Karna Subarna railway station in Bengal's Murshidabad district on Friday morning.Railway authorities have launched a probe into the fatal accident, arrested the gateman for alleged dereliction of duty, and announced an ex gratia of Rs 10 lakh for the families of each deceased.

The accident occurred around 7 am at the Gobindpur level crossing on the Azimganj-Katwa section in Murshidabad's Berhampore area.According to railway officials, the school van, also referred to as a pool car, was ferrying children to school when it attempted to cross the tracks and was struck by a local passenger train.

"The pool car, carrying the students to school, was crossing the rail lines at the level crossing gate near the Karna Subarna Station, about 48 km from Katwa, when the local train hit the vehicle," an Eastern Railway official said.The collision left the school van mangled, with visuals from the scene showing its wreckage strewn across the railway tracks.

Three people, including two

schoolchildren, died in the accident, while three others, including the van driver, sustained injuries. The injured were initially taken to a local hospital before being shifted to Bardhaman Medical College and Hospital for treatment.Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced an ex gratia of Rs 10 lakh for the next of kin of each of the deceased.

Eyewitnesses alleged that the level crossing gate was open when the van entered the tracks. Local residents claimed that the gate had been reopened after an up-line train passed but was not closed again despite another train approaching on the adjacent track, leading to the collision. They demanded strict action against those responsible for the alleged safety lapse.

Railway authorities said the gateman of the level crossing has been arrested on charges of alleged dereliction of duty.A 10-member Eastern Railway team has been constituted to investigate the circumstances leading to the accident.

"The level crossing gate was reported to be open when the accident occurred," the railway official said.

The inquiry will examine why the level crossing gate remained open

when the train was approaching and whether any lapses by railway personnel contributed to the tragedy.

The accident also disrupted train services on the Azimganj-Katwa section of Eastern Railway's Howrah division as officials carried out rescue and restoration work. Railway authorities said the investigation is underway to determine the exact sequence of events leading to the fatal collision.

During the first public hearing, residents raised a range of issues, including pending payments under the Annapurna Yojana, demands for assistance under the government housing scheme, and compensation claims for houses damaged by wild elephants.

The minister heard the people and assured that the matters would be taken up with the departments concerned.The initiative has been welcomed by residents, teachers, and education officials, who said the weekly office would make it easier to approach the minister without having to travel long distances.

"It is uncommon for a cabinet minister to hold such an office as they are often occupied with administrative responsibilities and official engagements across the state. This weekly office is expected to strengthen direct

communication between him and the residents of Falakata," said Pronoy Gope, a trader based in Falakata.

He suggested Metro Channel in Esplanade or a road in front of Birla Planetarium as alternate venues, noting that the latter is about two kilometres away from the sites of the other two rallies.Banerjee further told the court that July 21 has been observed as Martyrs' Day since 13 Congress workers were killed during a rally in 1993 when Mamata Banerjee was the Youth Congress president.

Responding to the court's query, he said the rally is expected to draw around 15,000 to 20,000 participants.

Advocate General Surojit Nath Mitra submitted that the police were not opposed to granting permission for the rally but maintained that it should be held at a different venue.

The court questioned why a third rally could not be allowed in the vicinity if adequate police arrangements were made, given that permission had already been granted for two other events.Justice Bhattacharyya adjourned the hearing till 12:30 pm on Wednesday, when the Advocate General is expected to present the state government's response to the proposed alternative venues.

## Emergency Nos.

- Airlines**  
Air India : 2211- 6869 Dum Dum airport : 2511- 8787
- Railway**  
Howrah Station Old Complex : 2638-7412 New Complex : 2638 2217 Sealdah Station : 2350 3535/3537 Reservation : 139, Women Security : 182
- Emergency Services**  
Lalbazar Police Control Room : 2214- 3230 Bengal Police : 2214 3230 South 24 Parganas Police : 2479 1870 Fire Brigade: 2252 6666 Bhabani Bhavan : 2479 1761 Missing : 2450- 6100
- Night Medicine, Oxygen**  
Life Care : 2475 4628 Nandan Medical : 2358 1723 Jivandwip : 2455 0962 South Kolkata Bureau : 2484 4322.
- Nurses / Nurse Assistant**  
South Kolkata Nurses : 2484 4322 City Point : 2567 4113 Janakalyan : 2867 5012 Health Care : 2416 4675 Alo : 2472 1039 Sister: 2442 6385 Loknath : 2372 2763 Life Care : 2578 8720 Nivedita : 2284 7810 Anandamoyee : 2464 7294 Relief : 2289 7362 Care : 2334 7068 Sanjibani : 2360 7881 Trend Nurses : 2554 2757 Nurses Association : 2241 682
- Ambulance**  
Garpar Srijan : 2354 5847 South and Policlinic : 2466 2433 Life Care : 2475 4628 Okhard : 2475 4320 Diganta : 2474 5455 Sisir Kumar Institute : 2533 0382Rani Rashmoni Mission : 2431 9885 Jangmangal : 2466 2879 Medical Bank : 2554 0084 Alipore Chetla Basti Unnayan : 2449 0286 Meera Seva : 2411 8316 Matri Sangha Janakalyan Ashram : 2475 4527 Dr. Bidhan Roy Memorial : 2574 9738 Kumartuli Institution : 2530 5561 Taltala People : 2265 3239 MAR Care : 2320 3181
- Blood Bank**  
Central Blood Bank : 2351 0619 Peoples Blood Bank : 2455 5164 Lions : 2248 5780 Life Care : 2284 6940 Ashok Lab : 2472 0333 Hemophilia Society : 2426 3739 Ramkrishna Seva Pratishthan : 2475 3636-9
- Hospital**  
SSKM : 2204 1100 Vision Hospital : (033) 71-222-000 R N Tagore : 2436 4000 Thakurpukur Cancer Research : 2453 2781 CMRI : 2456 7700 NRS : 2265 3214 Ram Krishna Mission Seva Pratisthan : 2475 3636 National Medical College : 2289 7122 R G Kar : 2555 7675 Shambhunath Pandit : 2302 2800 Nitangle : 2282 7462 Peerless : 2462 2394 Priyambada Birla Aravind Eye : 2289 4343 Ruby General : 3987 1800 B M Birla : 2456 7890 Renaissance : 4014 4014 Medical College : 2241 4901 Matribhavan : 2464 4189 Kalpataru : 2562 2280 West Bank : 2644 5516 Bangur : 2473 3354 Balananda Brahmachari : 2478 7801 Sushrut : 2358 0201 Apollo Glanigles : 2320 2122 Eye Care : 2287 2809 North City : 2321 1101 B P Poddar : 2445 8901 Barasat Cancer Research : 2552 2222 Escag Sanjiboni : 2554 1818 Medi Rehab : 2281 7881 Vinayak Health World : 2532 9950 Dafodil : 2534 6649 Mission Hospital, Durgapur : (0343) 2535 555
- Nursing Home**  
EEDF : 2473 3601 Speed Edge : 2534 3170 Repose : 2287 1442 Mind Care : 2534 6220 Belle View : 2287 2321 New Life : 2570 8090 Woodlands : 2456 7079 Capital : 2350 7272 Ekbulpore : 2449 5151Medica ENT : 2426 4901-03 Dr. Nihar Munshi Eye Foundation : 2461 8733
- Dead body Carriage**  
Hindu Satkar : 2241 3849 New Alipore Suruchi Sangha : 2400- 9950 Garpar Srijan : 2354 5847 Park Circus Puja : 2287 1793 Sarkar Bangan. : 2554 1881 Baranagar Karmisangha : 2558 7526 Meera : 2411 8316 Rajib Memorial : 2454 9550 Lake Town Committe : 2521 9578 Kumartuli Institute : 2530 5561 Sribhumi Sporting : 534 0002 Udayer Pathe : 3250 1089
- Burning Ghat**  
Kooratala : 2466 6602 Sirti : 2403 2013 Kashipore R K Mahasaman : 2558 3484 Kashi Mitra : 2554 2967 Nimtala : 2269 1955