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GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATION
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2

How China's leader lost faith in his top military generals

Chris Buckley
May 9

THE PURGE China's leader, Xi Jinping, has inflicted on the military elite what was plain to see at a recent legislative meeting. A year earlier, state television footage showed around 40 generals in the room. This time, there were only a handful.

Yet Xi indicated that an upheaval that rivaled those of the Mao Zedong era was not over.

"The military," he said, "must never have anyone who harbours a divided heart towards the party."

It was a rare public reference by Xi to one of the worst political crises of his 13 years in power: He had lost faith in the military leadership that he had spent a decade remolding.

"When Xi uses the words 'divided heart,' they are heavy with meaning," said Chien-wen Kou, a professor at National Chengchi University in Taiwan. The phrase is found in ancient Chinese treatises that counsel rulers against treacherous generals, including a volume Xi has kept on his bookshelf.

"Even his most trusted and important confidants have fallen," Kou said. "Who else can gain his trust?"

The crisis threatens one of Xi's great feats: the transformation of the Chinese military into a formidable force with new aircraft carriers, hypersonic missiles and an expanding nuclear arsenal. And it comes as China's rivalry with the US has intensified, and as the Trump administration has put American firepower, and its limits, on vivid display in Venezuela and Iran.

China's war readiness may be disrupted for years by the very cleanup that Xi has said is necessary to purify and strengthen the ranks. What once looked like a limited



"The military must never have anyone who harbours a divided heart towards the party"

XI JINPING
CHINA'S LEADER

crackdown on corruption became a sweeping dismissal of dozens of top officers, and culminated in the downfall early this year of Zhang Youxia, China's top uniformed commander, who had appeared to be a confidant of Xi's.

"This is Xi Jinping's military," said Daniel Mattingly, an associate professor at Yale University who studies China's politics and military. "Why does he break the thing that he built?"

The corruption Xi has been hunting is real. But earlier internal speeches by Xi, not previously reported in detail, reveal another fac-

tor: a leader who saw in any sign of disobedience the seed of a political threat to his rule. He became convinced, analysts say, that the commanders he had chosen to modernize the military could no longer be trusted, their loyalty and effectiveness eroded by graft and cronyism.

Analysts say the upheaval has also exposed the tensions between Xi's two imperatives — preparing for combat and enforcing loyalty.

Early on, Xi appeared determined to avoid the fate of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, who was widely seen to have failed to establish his authority over China's military commanders.

Hu's directives to army commanders were "more like suggestions they would consider," said John Culver, a former CIA analyst now at the Brookings Institution. "Basically you had a system that was no longer responsive to the party."

After coming to power in 2012, Xi launched investigations against commanders who had grown wealthy, and overweening, under Hu, including some previously deemed untouchable because of their status.

From his first years in power, Xi also began entrenching a "chairman responsibility system," an overhaul that tightened his control over the military by giving him intelligence and control deep into its ranks. He declared his confidence in his own ability to spot the right commanders for promotion.

By late 2025, the purges were reshaping not just the ranks but the balance of power among remaining commanders.

Analysts suggested that as the investigations deepened, there was growing turbulence inside the military elite, including between commanders focused on warfighting goals and officers tasked with enforcing political loyalty.

The final straw came when Xi moved to promote Gen Zhang Shengmin to vice chair of the Central Military Commission, said Christopher K Johnson, a former US government intelligence officer who is now president of China Strategies Group, a consultancy firm. **NYT**

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GS 3: INTERNAL SECURITY
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 3

• TECH-DRIVEN APPROACH HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SHARP FALL IN INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS

From ground to the skies: How drones are reshaping operations along borders

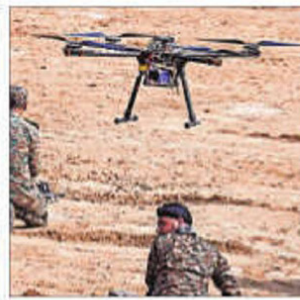
OPERATION sindoor
A YEAR LATER

Arun Sharma
Jammu, May 9

IN THE early hours of June 26, 2021, two consecutive blasts rocked the highly fortified Indian Air Force station in Jammu. This was the first terror attack in which drones were used to airdrop bombs on a major security

installation. Though the explosions caused no serious damage, the attack reflected a paradigm shift in the tactics of Pakistan-based terror groups: the threat had moved from the ground to the air, rendering traditional security measures permanently inadequate.

The use of drones, however, had already been a regular feature across the restive Line of Control and International Border in J&K for over a year. One such drone, carrying a US-made M4 semi-automatic carbine, two magazines, 60 rounds



• **DRONE SHIELD**

KAMIKAZE DRONES deployed during Operation Sindoor

KAVACH LASER system used to detect drone infiltration attempts and send early warnings

JAMMERS deployed to disrupt hostile drone flights, High-Altitude Long-Endurance drones to monitor difficult terrain

and seven Chinese grenades, was shot down by the BSF near Kathua district's Rathua village

on June 20, 2020. The payload was reportedly marked with the »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GS 3: INTERNAL SECURITY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 4

From ground to sky

name of Ali Bhai — believed to be a code name for a Jaish-e-Mohammad operative.

The introduction of drones has rendered established security measures obsolete and fundamentally changed how border security is conceived. According to a Ministry of Home Affairs report last year, two to three drones were sighted, and one drone incursion occurred daily, over the past five years. While the focus of incursions in Punjab and Rajasthan is primarily smuggling, the situation in J&K is especially challenging.

In J&K, drones are being used to airdrop weapons, ammunition and narcotics, conduct tactical surveillance, guide infiltrating militants and carry out attacks. Soon after the beginning of Operation Sindoor last year, drones became the weapon of choice — the first such use of drone swarms in an Indo-Pak conflict, changing the nature of border warfare permanently.

Between May 7 and 8 last year, Pakistan launched drone attacks using nearly 300-400 drones targeting around three dozen locations from Kashmir to Sir Creek in Gujarat. A large number targeted Jammu and Kashmir, and almost all were

neutralised by Indian defence forces, an Army officer said.

Indian armed forces deployed SkyStriker Kamikaze drones, HAROP and Nagastra-1 during their campaign. Counter-drone systems were activated, including Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), Direct Energy Weapons (DEWs) and the indigenous anti-drone D-4 system. A laser system called KAVACH has also been put into action in J&K to detect drone infiltration attempts and send early warnings. Forces have additionally deployed jammer to disrupt hostile drone flights and High-Altitude Long-Endurance (HALE) drones to monitor difficult terrain.

The BSF, primarily responsible for border security, raised its first drone squadron last year to bolster its capabilities.

In air, and on ground

While drones have transformed military operations over India's borders since Operation Sindoor, the shift is equally visible on the ground. A senior Army officer in the Northern Command told *The Indian Express* that the "advent of drone and anti-drone technologies changed the dynamics along the

Indo-Pak border to a great extent."

He described an array of advanced sensors — thermal imagers, underground sensors (UGS), fibre-optic sensors, radar and sonar — that carry an invisible electronic barrier even where physical patrolling is impossible, providing round-the-clock real-time monitoring. Drones also help "carry out effective surveillance," reduce troop fatigue from physical domination patrols, enhance reaction capabilities and overcome weather and terrain-related difficulties. Optical fibre cable-based and tethered drones, which are not prone to jamming, provide an added advantage, he said.

Another officer put it starkly: "Everything is different after Op Sindoor. The very nature of military campaigns has changed across the world. I think drones have done to military strategy what cellular phones did to telephone communication. Till recently, physical patrolling was the only way to confront infiltration attempts. It was a tiresome exercise that continued round the year. Now there is additional support to keep watch."

Officials in the security forces and the UT administration say that Pakistan's frequent use of drones has significantly altered security dynamics along both

the International Border and the Line of Control. The technology-driven approach has contributed to a sharp fall in infiltration attempts and a significant decrease in militant skirmishes on the border.

"Earlier, we used to consider only the five-kilometre belt along the borders as crucial for maintaining vigil and accordingly impose dusk-to-dawn curfew restricting all movement there," a senior UT administration official said. "Now, with the advent of drones from Pakistan, joint teams of security forces and police patrol and establish nakas behind this five-kilometre belt as well, to rule out drone droppings near civilian areas." Policing in border areas has been further intensified through the recruitment of Village Defence Guards from local youth, who patrol and keep vigil in their respective areas around the clock.

The shift is evident from the sharp fall in human infiltration bids — from 143 in 2018 to just 34 in 2021. Since that year, contraband, arms, ammunition, explosives and even Indian currency, which earlier came mainly through cross-border land routes and underground tunnels, are being dropped in J&K by Pakistani drones. J&K Police and other security agencies have seized nearly

68,000 kg of narcotics valued at around Rs 30,000 crore across the UT. Of these, heroin tops the list by value, with more than 539 kg — valued at nearly Rs 3,200 crore — seized by J&K Police in Jammu region alone over the past five years.

Nearly 1,000 weapons, mostly AK rifles, along with over 28,000 rounds of ammunition and 252 detonators, were seized between 2021 and May 2023 across J&K. In the Jammu region, police alone have seized 247 weapons, 182 IEDs, 409 grenades, more than 11 kg of explosives, two packets of RDX, cash worth Rs 2.53 crore and 15,000 US dollars.

Why Pakistan made the switch

Former J&K DGP Kuldeep Khoda said Pakistan turned to drones because border fencing, night vision devices, lasers and other monitoring systems made ground infiltration along both the International Border and LoC near impossible. "As drones were easier to penetrate, it started sending weapons and narcotics through them to keep low-grade terrorism alive in J&K. Through drones, it managed to avoid the human chain used earlier for sending weapons and the hawala network for funding terrorism. Now, drones are dropping weapons for use by terror-

ists and narcotics to fund terrorism through their sale proceeds," he said.

Former DGP S P Vaid described drone use as part of Pakistan's continuously evolving tactics. "Earlier, it sent arms through guides; when India raised fences, they gave militants wire cutters. When India electrified the fence, they used plastic ladders and tunnels. Drones are just the latest tactic to try and destroy India," he said, acknowledging that despite counter-drone measures, some drones continue to get through.

A retired senior Army officer noted that drone introduction has brought a new type of soldier — one who is well-versed in technology and capable of responding to modern warfare. He cautioned that not every drone can be picked up by radar due to factors like coverage area and low-altitude flight, making 24x7 vigilance imperative.

"Earlier, troops were especially alert at night along borders — during the day, everything coming through land routes was visible. Now they have to cover the borders around the clock," he said. He also flagged a tactical concern: Pakistan may be using drones to keep troops occupied watching the sky while pushing terrorists through land routes.

GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE 2

126 MLAs-elect in T.N. have criminal cases against them; TVK tops the list with 41

19 MLAs-elect from the TVK, 14 each from the DMK and the AIADMK, and two each from the Congress and the PMK have declared that serious criminal cases are pending against them, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms and Tamil Nadu Election Watch

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

At least 126 candidates who secured a victory in the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections have criminal cases pending against them, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Tamil Nadu Election Watch (TNEW) on Saturday, which analysed the criminal, financial, and educational backgrounds, besides the gender and other details of the winning nominees.

The Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) topped the

list, with 41 MLAs-elect from the party declaring that they have criminal cases pending against them.

The report by the ADR and TNEW, which analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 233 of the 234 winning candidates in the 2026 Assembly election, said that at least 56 of those who won have declared that they have serious criminal cases against them.

The report stated that TVK candidate T. Arunkumar was not analysed due to an unclear affidavit uploaded on the Election Commission of India (EC) portal. One of the winning candidates has declared



Two winning candidates have declared that cases relating to crimes against women were pending against them. GETTY IMAGES

that a case relating to murder (Section 302 of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code) was pending against him, while six other winning candidates have declared that attempt-to-murder cases (Section 307 of

the erstwhile IPC) were pending against them, the report said. Two winning candidates have declared that cases relating to crimes against women were pending against them.

A party-wise analysis showed that criminal cases were pending against at least 41 MLAs-elect from the TVK, 37 from the DMK, 33 from the AIADMK, four from the PMK, three from the Congress, two each from the CPI(M) and the VCK, and one each from the AMMK, the CPI, the DMDK, and the IUML. The sole BJP MLA-elect declared that he did not have any criminal or serious criminal case pending against him.

Moreover, 19 MLAs-elect from the TVK, 14 each from the AIADMK and the DMK, two each from the Congress and the PMK, and one each from the AMMK,

the CPI, the DMDK, the IUML, and the VCK have declared that serious criminal cases were pending against them.

Offences for which maximum punishment is five years or more; offences that are non-bailable and cognisable; electoral offences; offences relating to loss to the exchequer; offences that involve assault, murder, kidnapping, or are related to rape; offences mentioned in Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act; offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act; and crimes against women and children fall under 'serious criminal cases'.

GS 3: SECURITY

THE HINDU PAGE : 3

Lt. Gen. N.S. Subramani named next CDS; Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan to be Navy chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Saturday announced two major appointments, naming Lieutenant-General N.S. Raja Subramani (retd) as the next Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan as the next Chief of the Naval Staff.

According to the Ministry of Defence, Lt.-Gen. Subramani will succeed General Anil Chauhan, whose tenure as the CDS ends on May 30. Along with the role of the CDS, he will also serve as Secretary, Department of Military Affairs.

Key positions

Currently serving as Military Adviser in the National Security Council Secretariat since September 2025, the senior officer has earlier held key positions, including Vice Chief of Army Staff and General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Command.

Commissioned into the 8 Garhwal Rifles in December 1985, Lt.-Gen. Subramani is a graduate of the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy. He has also attended the Joint Services Command Staff College in the U.K. and the National Defence College in New Delhi.



Lieutenant-General N.S. Raja Subramani (retd) and, right, Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan.

Lt.-Gen. Subramani, who will succeed General Anil Chauhan, will also serve as Secretary, Department of Military Affairs

During a distinguished career spanning over four decades, he commanded formations in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, the Central Sector and along the Western Front, including the prestigious 2 Corps. He has also served in several important operational, instructional and strategic staff appointments. For his distinguished service, he has been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Sena Medal, and Vishisht Seva Medal.

Vice-Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, who has been appointed as the next

Chief of Naval Staff, will succeed Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, who retires on May 31.

He currently serves as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command. Commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1987, he is a specialist in Communication and Electronic Warfare. Over the course of his Naval career, he commanded several frontline warships, including *INS Mysore* and aircraft carrier *INS Vikramaditya*, and held key appointments in operations, personnel and training.

A recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, and Vishisht Seva Medal, the Vice-Admiral has also served as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff and holds multiple postgraduate degrees, including a Ph.D. in International Studies.

GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE HINDU PAGE : 3

India test-fires advanced Agni missile that can deploy multiple warheads

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

India has successfully test-fired an advanced Agni missile with the strategic ability to deploy multiple payloads to separate targets simultaneously – a milestone that places the country among a select league of global powers.

The testing of the missile with Multiple Independently Targeted Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) system was carried out from Odisha's A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island on Friday, according to the Defence Ministry.

The MIRV feature ensures that a single missile



An image from the flight trial of an advanced Agni missile on Friday. DEFENCE MINISTRY

can deploy multiple warheads at different locations simultaneously.

The missile was flight-

tested with multiple payloads, targeted to different targets spatially distributed over a large geographical area in the Indian Ocean Region, the Ministry added.

While the Ministry said the flight test of an advanced Agni missile with MIRV was carried out, authoritative sources said it was an Agni-5 missile and the trial was conducted to check the MIRV technology under 'Mission Divyastra'.

Incredible capability

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has complimented the Defence Research and

Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Army, and the industry partners concerned on the successful flight-test of the missile. This will add an incredible capability to the country's defence preparedness against the growing threat perceptions, he said.

The Ministry said the telemetry and tracking was carried out by multiple ground and ship-based stations. "These systems tracked the entire missile trajectory from lift-off till the impact of all payloads. Flight data confirmed that all mission objectives were met during the trial," it said.

GS 3: ECONOMY (LABOUR LAWS)

THE HINDU PAGE : 5

Centre operationalises Labour Codes, publishes Rules; trade unions protest

The Codes will replace 29 labour laws that governed provisions, including wages, social security, working hours, retirement benefits, and trade union rights; officials maintain the Rules have been published with 'minor amendments' to the draft rules pre-published in December 2025

A. M. Jigeesha
NEW DELHI

Over 30 gazette notifications issued on Friday and Saturday, the Union government fully operationalised the four Labour Codes.

Officials maintained that the rules had been published with "minor amendments" to the draft rules pre-published in December 2025.

The government had announced the implementation of the four Labour Codes from November 21, 2025. With the notification of the Rules, the Codes will replace 29 labour laws that governed provisions, including wages, social security, working hours, retirement benefits, and trade union rights.

Soon after the publication of Rules, members of 10 central trade unions held protests across the country, burning copies of it. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh said it was studying the Rules and would soon come up with a comment on them.



Protesters called for the withdrawal of Labour Codes at a recent rally in Delhi. SHIV KUNAR PUSHPAKAR

The Opposition parties alleged that the publication was a direct attack on the rights of workers.

All stakeholders had been given one month's time to submit responses on the draft Rules, a senior government functionary said.

"We have gone through all the responses and considered some of the suggestions, and amended the Rules accordingly," the official

said, adding that the amendments were minor.

Minimum wages

On the controversial subject of minimum wages, the Rules of the Code on Wages said the criteria shall be separately specified by the Union government by a special or general order, and the rate of wages for a day is fixed, and "such amount shall be divided by eight for fixing

the rate of wages for an hour and multiplied by twenty six for fixing the rate of wages for a month..."

For fixing the floor wage, the Union government, according to the Rules, may consult a Central Advisory Board, taking into account the minimum living standard, including food, clothing, housing, and any other factors considered appropriate by the

Union government from time to time. The number of hours of work for a normal working day "for an employee whose wage period is on a daily basis" shall be eight hours. For other employees, the total number of weekly working hours shall not exceed 48 hours. The Rules mandate that every employer shall issue wage slips, electronically or in physical form to the employees.

The Rules for Code on Social Security changes 12 rules, including the Employees' State Insurance (Central) Rules, 1950 and the Employees' Provident Funds Appellate Tribunal (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1997.

The Code on Industrial Relations says where there is only one registered trade union operating in an industrial establishment having its membership not less than 30% of the total workers employed in the industrial establishment, the employer of such industrial establishment shall recognise such trade union as the sole negotiating un-

ion of the workers. Commenting on the Rule, senior leader of Centre of Indian Trade Unions R. Karumalaiyan said the Union government had ignored the amendments moved by the CTUs.

"We had submitted amendments seeking clarity on working hours, trade union rights, minimum wages, floor wages, and protection of social security. This government has ignored all our suggestions, forcing us to go on protests," Mr. Karumalaiyan said.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) said in a statement that the Union government "deceptively waited" till the Assembly election in four States and a Union Territory were over before notifying the Rules. "Within just four days after the announcement of results, they have now operationalised the Labour Codes. This exposes the deceptive modus operandi of the BJP-led Union government," the CPI(M) said, urging States to reject the Rules.

GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE : 8

What is the Governor's role in a hung Assembly?

Why did the Governor refuse to swear in TVK party president Vijay as the new Tamil Nadu Chief Minister for many days? What is the primary objective of the Governor in such situations? What has the Supreme Court ruled in the past? Is the floor test the best way of proving majority?

Krishnadas Rajagopal

The story so far:

Despite the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) emerging as the single largest party in the 2026 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Governor Rajendra Arlekar refused to swear in party president C. Joseph Vijay as the new Chief Minister for several days. The Lok Bhavan insisted that Mr. Vijay prove majority by handing over physical letters of support from at least 118 MLAs in the 234-seat Legislative Assembly. On May 9, Mr. Vijay met the Governor for the fourth time and staked claim to form the government. He is scheduled to take oath at 10 a.m. on Sunday.

What is the role of the Governor in the formation of a new government if there is a hung Assembly following an election?

The Governor appoints the Chief Minister under Article 164 of the Constitution. The Constitution does not provide a settled procedure for a Governor to choose a Chief Minister in a hung Assembly though constitutional conventions dictate that the Governor's actions must be guided by sobriety.

The primary objective of the Governor, as a constitutional head of the State, is to ensure the formation of a stable government. To this end, the Sarkaria Commission; the five-member Committee of Governors appointed by the President pursuant to the decision taken at the Conference of Governors held in New Delhi in November 1970; and conventions evolved through successive Supreme Court rulings provide that the personal bona fide or any ipse dixit of Governors is irrelevant.

The Lok Bhavan must proceed legally and explore all possibilities with political parties,

The Supreme Court has time and again held that the House, and not Lok Bhavan, 'is the place where democracy is in action'

groups, and independent MLAs within a reasonable time to maintain the constitutional machinery in the State. Only if all alternatives fail, and to avoid any violence to correct constitutional practice, should a Governor, as a last resort, initiate the process for declaration of President's rule in the State under Article 356 of the Constitution.

The Constitution has not defined the 'reasonable time' a Governor could take to explore possibilities for forming a responsible and stable government. But the Governor cannot wait indefinitely, and in the process, lay the field open for horse trading. In fact, the Supreme Court has interpreted in the *B.R. Kapur* (2001) and *Rameshwar Prasad* (2006) judgments that the Governor could dissolve a Legislative Assembly under Article 174(2)(b) even before the first meeting of the State Legislature, to avoid a breakdown of the constitutional machinery due to parties' inability to stake claim to form a meaningful government for want of requisite strength. The Governor cannot be in limbo, neither being able to appoint a government nor exercise the power of dissolution.

What is the hierarchy or order of preference to extend an invitation to form a government?

The Sarkaria Commission Report of 1988, endorsed by the Supreme Court, has recommended that a Governor should first invite the pre-poll alliance which has won a majority. However, in Tamil Nadu, no such alliance has a clear majority. The next option is to invite the single largest party that could demonstrate majority support.

A nine-judge Bench in the *S.R. Bommai* judgment (1994) reasoned that the Constitution does not create an obligation that the political party forming the government should necessarily have a majority in the Assembly. "Minority governments are not unknown. What is necessary is that that government should enjoy the confidence of the House," the Supreme Court said.

The third in the order of preference is a post-poll alliance of parties that can demonstrate a majority in the Assembly. The use of this third option has become more frequent in recent times, with coalition governments becoming the norm. The Court had found nothing wrong in ideologically similar parties engaging in mutually convenient post-poll alliances to cross the Rubicon of the 'golden majority' in the House.

If none of these options work, the Governor can recommend President's rule, although this is an extreme measure. The Court has advised

that a "constitutional machinery in the State should, as far as possible, be maintained". This advice has assumed new relevance in recent years, with Governors seen as using their discretionary powers to recommend President's rule to "promote the political interests of the party in power at the Centre."

Has the floor test been a constant, objective means to prove majority?

Critics have said Governor Arlekar's insistence on physical letters of support is the sole reason for the deadlock in Tamil Nadu. A writ petition has been filed in the Supreme Court, arguing that the Governor is "duty-bound" to invite Mr. Vijay to form the new government, swear him in, and immediately subject his claim to a trust vote on the floor of the Assembly.

The Committee of Governors had also concluded that the test of confidence in the government should normally be left to a vote in the Assembly.

Though the *S.R. Bommai* judgment includes a paragraph indicating that a floor test should be confined to testing the strength of an incumbent Chief Minister who is alleged to have lost majority support, and not used in the formation of a new government after elections, successive Supreme Court precedents have nevertheless relied on the floor test as the most objective and transparent way to ascertain majority. These judgments also highlighted that the fate of the electorate's mandate must not be left to the personal discretion of the Governor.

What are some instances where floor tests rescued the constitutional machinery in States?

Repeated occasions of the Court ordering floor tests to assess a claim to govern, whether by an existing or incoming government, has made it the touchstone for ensuring a stable government. In 2017, the Court declined to stay the swearing-in of the Bharatiya Janata Party's Manohar Parrikar as Goa Chief Minister at the head of a post-poll alliance, but reduced the 15-day window allowed to him to prove majority over the Congress, which was the single largest party, and ordered a floor test in 48 hours. Mr. Parrikar won the floor test. The Court intervened in Karnataka the next year after the Governor invited B.S. Yediyurappa to form the government while giving him 15 days to prove majority. On a challenge by the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) combine, the Court allowed the swearing-in but cut short the time for the floor test to 24 hours and said it must be conducted on live camera and not by secret ballot. Mr. Yediyurappa resigned before the trust vote.

The Supreme Court has held that the House, and not Lok Bhavan, "is the place where democracy is in action." That is, the decision on who should govern must not be left to the subjective satisfaction of the Governor but be determined on the floor of the House.



TVK chief Vijay meets Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Lok Bhavan in Chennai on Friday. PTI

GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE HINDU PAGE : 8

Why is hantavirus drawing global attention?

What is hantavirus? What happened on the expedition cruise ship MV *Hondius* early this month? How does hantavirus spread? Why are health agencies monitoring recent cases? What are the symptoms and treatment options? How concerned should the public be?

Athira Elssa Johnson

The story so far:

Following a hantavirus outbreak on the MV *Hondius* expedition cruise ship in early May, in which three deaths were reported and at least five others were infected, global attention has once again turned to the group of viruses. Hantavirus had made headlines last year following the passing of Betsy Hackman, wife of renowned American actor Gene Hackman.

What happened on the ship?

The Dutch expedition cruise ship was travelling from Ushuaia in Argentina across parts of the South Atlantic towards Cape Verde and the Canary Islands when cases were identified among both the passengers and the crew.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said 147 passengers and crew were onboard, and 34 passengers and crew had previously disembarked. It said that as of May 8, there were eight cases (six confirmed and two probable cases) reported. Three of them died (two confirmed and one probable) after contracting the Andes strain of hantavirus. Several others were hospitalised with symptoms including fever and breathing difficulties.

WHO has stated that hantavirus does not spread easily between humans like airborne viruses such as influenza or SARS-CoV-2

After confirmed and suspected cases had been identified among passengers after they left the ship and travelled to different countries, health authorities in Singapore, Switzerland, South Africa, Spain, and the U.S. began tracking and monitoring passengers.

What is hantavirus?

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses mainly carried by rodents such as rats and mice. Human beings can get infected after coming into contact with infected rodent urine, saliva, or droppings, especially while cleaning or disturbing contaminated areas, which can release virus particles into the air.

Hantavirus infections can affect either the lungs or the kidneys. Some strains can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, a severe respiratory illness, while others can lead to haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, affecting the kidneys and blood vessels. WHO states that even though most hantaviruses do not spread from one human to another, the Andes virus strain found in parts of South America has shown some human-to-human transmission, usually among close contacts.

Why are health agencies concerned now?

The outbreak linked to the MV *Hondius* cruise ship drew attention because passengers travelled across several countries before the infection was identified. WHO reported that cases were characterised by fever, gastrointestinal symptoms, pneumonia, respiratory distress, and shock. Reacting to fears of another pandemic, officials from WHO and the Disease Control and Prevention have stressed that hantavirus spreads very differently from viruses such as COVID-19 and is far less transmissible.

What are the symptoms?

WHO states that symptoms usually appear between one and eight weeks after exposure. Early symptoms are often flu-like and can include fever, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, chills, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and dizziness.

In severe cases, the infection can affect the

lungs, causing coughing, chest tightness, breathing difficulty, and fluid build-up in the lungs. Some forms of the disease can also affect the kidneys and blood vessels, leading to kidney complications or bleeding problems. Since the symptoms can resemble illnesses such as influenza, COVID-19, dengue, or pneumonia, diagnosis may sometimes be delayed. Even though infections remain rare overall, severe respiratory forms of hantavirus infection can be dangerous, particularly without early medical care.

Who is at risk?

People living or working in rodent-prone environments face the highest risk. Farmers, forestry workers, campers, construction workers, and people cleaning poorly ventilated or abandoned buildings are vulnerable. Health agencies also advise caution while handling pet rodents or entering rodent-infested spaces.

Is there a treatment or cure?

WHO notes that early diagnosis and timely medical attention can significantly improve outcomes. Prevention is important, particularly through rodent control, proper sanitation, and safe cleaning practices in potentially contaminated environments.

Currently, there is no specific antiviral cure or approved vaccine for hantavirus infection. Treatment mainly focuses on supportive medical care, including oxygen therapy, fluid management, and intensive care support during severe illness. Some patients may require mechanical ventilation.

Could this become another pandemic?

Public health agencies say current evidence does not suggest a COVID-19-like global pandemic scenario. WHO has repeatedly stated that the overall risk to the wider public remains low and that hantavirus does not spread easily between humans like airborne viruses such as influenza or SARS-CoV-2.

The outbreak has also drawn attention to zoonotic diseases – infections that spread from animals to humans – and highlighted the importance of staying prepared as global travel and human-animal interactions increase. At the same time, WHO and other health agencies have stressed that stronger surveillance, quicker reporting, testing systems, and coordination between countries are helping health authorities respond effectively.



MV *Hondius* docks off Cape Verde's Praia port on May 4, as health authorities investigate suspected hantavirus cases. REUTERS