

Ankita Konwar Scripts History, Becomes First Assamese Woman to Cross English Channel



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GUWAHATI, July 6, 2026 — Assam's endurance athlete Ankita Konwar has created history by becoming the first Assamese woman and the first woman from Northeast India to successfully cross the English Channel, one of the world's most demanding open-water swimming routes.

Konwar completed the iconic Dover-to-Calais crossing as part of a six-member international relay team in 13 hours and 5 minutes. The relay began at 1:30 am and concluded at 2:35 pm (London time) on July 3. The achievement has been officially recognised by the English Channel Swimming Association (ECSA).

The English Channel is regarded as one of the toughest endurance swimming challenges in the world, with swimmers facing freezing water temperatures, strong currents, unpredictable tides and rapidly changing weather conditions.

What makes Konwar's achievement even more remarkable is that she learned to swim only three years ago. Since then, she has established herself as one of India's leading endurance athletes, completing a Full Ironman in Barcelona and competing in the T100 Triathlon in Dubai.

"The English Channel is far more than a swim—it's a journey of resilience, teamwork and trusting yourself when nature tests every ounce of your spirit," Konwar said after the crossing.

"Carrying the Indian flag while representing Assam and the Northeast is an honour I will cherish forever. If someone like me, who wasn't even a swimmer once, can stand here today, then anything is possible with consistency and courage," she added.

Konwar, who is married to fitness icon Milind Soman, credited him for being "the biggest support a partner can ask for" and thanked her coach Arjun Kawle for helping her recover from an injury earlier this year. She said the relay was completed "with a promise of a solo one day to myself."

The achievement comes during the centenary year of Gertrude Ederle's historic feat of becoming the first woman to swim across the English Channel in 1926.

Congratulating Konwar, Assam Health Minister Ashok Singhal hailed her journey from a non-swimmer to an Ironman and now an English Channel swimmer. Education Minister Dr Ranoj Pegu also praised her courage, perseverance and determination.

While swimmer Elvis Ali Hazarika became the first Assamese to complete an English Channel relay in 2025, Konwar is the first woman from Assam and the Northeast to achieve the feat.

Konwar said she has already begun preparing for her next endurance challenge and hopes her journey inspires more women and young athletes to pursue ambitious goals.

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