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## BJP sweeps West Bengal, Vijay shocks TN

Congress finds relief in Kerala as voters reject incumbency, party struggles elsewhere

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA**  
 ■ New Delhi

The 2026 Assembly election results come with elements of shock, awe, and surprise, with the BJP completely bulldozing the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, leaving Left and Congress to count on their debris in the State bordering Bangladesh.

Tamil Nadu catapulted a 'Star' to the power hot seat at Chennai by disrupting the decades-long dominance of DMK as well as AIADMK who turns to rule over the Dravidians. While Assam and Puducherry expressed their wisdom to negate any anti-incumbency in their territories, Kerala voted for the anti-incumbency ballot by giving a face-saver to the grand old party Congress in the five State assembly elections results declared on Monday.



BJP supporters celebrate party's lead near the residence of West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during vote tabulation on the day of Assembly election results in Kolkata

While West Bengal assembly results were more on expected lines given the optimistic exit polls and BJP's top leadership who were counting on the historic poll percentages of 92 percent with issues around like SIR, infiltration, industrial rehabilitation laced with ingredients of Bengal famous snacks jhalumri, the daylong debate shifted to the meteoric rise of merely two years old political party TVK in Tamil Nadu.

Popular as Vijay, he defied the odds and the taint of a stampede during his rally in September 2025, in which 41 people were killed. Joseph Vijay Chandrasekhar, who

adopted Christianity, broke bipolar Dravidian politics and emerged as the single largest party in Tamil Nadu with 109 of the State's 234 seats in its debut poll battle also registering three-member win in neighbouring Puducherry.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi congratulated Vijay and is expected to support TVK with others in Government formation as the duo were ever engaged in talks due to a match of ideology and thought process. Sources close to Vijay said that the central Congress was ever in favour of an alliance with TVK, while local leadership in Tamil Nadu played the spoilsport, or the alliance of TVK-Congress would have been a major hit.

Vijay's assurances in the party manifesto included Rs 2,500 monthly assistance for women below 60 years of age, 8 gm gold for marriage, and six free cooking gas cylinders a year per family.

As confident Union Home Minister Amit Shah camped in West Bengal for almost 15 days to nourish the confidence of party workers to dethrone the TMC from its citadel, incumbent Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was eyeing a fourth straight term for Trinamool.

"The Lotus blooms in West Bengal! The 2026 West Bengal Assembly Elections will be remembered forever. People's power has prevailed, and the BJP's politics of good governance has triumphed," Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared his joy on social media.

A political fighter in Mamata Banerjee, however, disapproved of the message her citizens read out for her and her party through the ballot box and stated that a false narrative is being spread.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a victory celebration at the BJP Delhi headquarters, in New Delhi

## PM calls West Bengal win a 'new sunrise'

**RAJESH KUMAR**  
 ■ New Delhi

Asserting that "Lotus is blooming from Gangotri to Gangesagar", Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the BJP's "historic and unprecedented" victory in West Bengal saying 'poribartan hoi gaiche,' (Change has come about in Bengal).

Addressing BJP workers at the party headquarters after the win in assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry, Modi said the people had shown the world why India is known as the "mother of democracy". PM Modi said, "A new chapter has been added to the destiny of Bengal from today. Bengal has been freed from fear and is now filled with the confidence of development. Banglay poriborton hoyeche (Change has arrived in Bengal)".

"I dedicate the credit for the Bharatiya Janata Party's success in Bengal - this victory - to the people of Bengal... A new sunrise has dawned on the sacred land of Bengal," he added. He even declared it as his "guarantee".

It was also a matter of pride for the BJP that Anga

## BJP storms across West Bengal

**PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH**  
 ■ New Delhi/Kolkata

The BJP's landslide victory in the 2026 West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections, decimating the 15-year-long rule of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC), is no overnight miracle. It reflects a perfect storm of anti-incumbency, strategic planning and messaging coupled with TMC's self-inflicted wounds.

By the fag end of her term, West Bengal Government led by Mamata Banerjee faced accusations of entrenched corruption, syndicate raj, extortion networks and governance failures.

Scandals ensnared senior TMC leaders, leading to even the arrests of ministers like Partha Chatterjee and Jyotipriya Mallick. These cases,



CM Mamata Banerjee lost from Bhabanipur

probed by central agencies (CBI, ED), eroded trust even among TMC's traditional welfare beneficiaries.

15-years since coming to power, silent resentment had started to set in against the TMC-led State Government.

## Vijay outpaces Stalin

**RAJESH KUMAR** ■ New Delhi

Actor-turned-politician Vijay has delivered his biggest blockbuster in Tamil Nadu, recording one of the most striking electoral upsets in recent years, only two years after forming the TVK. Bagging 109 seats, his performance, like his films, was packed with suspense, notwithstanding the tragic stampede in Karur that claimed 41 lives on September 27, 2025.

Moreover, he has rewritten the southern State's historical political trends, which have long been identified with Dravidian politics. Vijay not only won his seat from Perambur with a margin of over 49,000 votes but his debutant party outpaced both DMK and AIADMK across regions.

The TVK on Monday emerged as a dominant force in the Tamil Nadu. The AIADMK won 42 seats, while the DMK won 38.



CM Stalin lost in Kolathur Assembly constituency

## Kerala votes for change, backs UDF

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) on Monday made a decisive victory in Kerala by winning 102 seats in the 140 seats Assembly. The CPI(M)-led Left Democratic (LDF), which was ruling the State for past 10 years was reduced to 35 seats. Meanwhile, the BJP won three seats in the State. The UDF's major constituents, the Congress and the Muslim League won 63 and 22 seats respectively.

"Thank you to my brothers and sisters in Kerala for a truly decisive mandate. Congratulations to every UDF leader and worker for a hard-fought, well-run campaign."



CM Pinarayi Vijayan won from Dharmadam

## The Bystander



## Assam: BJP scores a hat-trick

**TONY DAS** ■ Guwahati

The ruling BJP-led NDA has secured third consecutive term in Assam. In Assam, BJP won 82 seats out of 126 seats and Congress got only 19 seats, with the failure of Gaurav Gogoi of more than 23,000 votes. BJP's allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) has secured 10 seat each.

"Hat-Trick with a century!" a jubilant Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X and thanked the people of Assam, after winning from his long time held seat - Jalukbari with a majority of 89,434 votes.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP office here, Sarma said, "It is an unprecedented victory for a ruling



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma won the Jalukbari constituency for the sixth time

alliance. It is for the first time that the BJP has secured a majority in the State." On the Congress' performance, Sarma said, "People have punished them for politicising singer Zubeen Garg's death."

He further claimed that barring one or two, there will be no Hindu MLAs in the Opposition.

## Rangasamy secures second term

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ Puducherry/New Delhi

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Chief Minister and All India NR Congress (AINRC) president N Rangasamy, will retain power in Puducherry as it has won in more than 17 seats in the 30-member Assembly. The halfway mark to form a Government is 16.

The victory marks a second consecutive term for the NDA, defying the Union Territory's (UT) trend of alternating power. The UT had an exceptionally high voter turnout of nearly 90 per cent.

Rangasamy was declared the winner in the Thattanchavady Assembly constituency. He secured victory by a margin of 4,441 votes.



CM N Rangasamy won from Thattanchavady and Mangalam

## SC slams 'inhuman' bail conditions in Odisha

- Flags caste bias against Dalits, Adivasis
- Says it violates dignity and Constitutional guarantees

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

The Supreme Court on Monday came down heavily on lower courts in Odisha for imposing bail conditions that require accused persons, mostly from Dalit and Adivasi communities, to clean police stations for two months.

Calling the practice "inhuman, degrading and caste-coloured", a Bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi declared such conditions "null and void" and directed that no court in the country should impose similar terms in future.

Taking serious exception, the court observed that such directions reflect a disturbing regression and violate the dignity of individuals from marginalised communities. "These conditions are ex-facie violative of human rights, they strike at the dignity of the accused and proceed on a presumption of guilt, which is impermissible in law," the Bench noted.

The court further warned that such caste-linked conditions risk reinforcing social discrimination, noting that they create a perception of systemic bias, especially when similar terms are not imposed on accused from privileged sections.

The observations came during a suo motu hearing by the Supreme Court based on reports highlighting a pattern of such bail orders in Odisha, particularly from courts in Rayagada district and one instance by the Orissa High Court. The cases were linked to anti-mining protests in tribal regions with most of the accused belonging to Dalit and Adivasi communities.

One such order, passed on

May 28, 2025, directed an accused, Kumeswar Naik, to clean the premises of the Kashipur police station daily for two months. Reports indicate that eight such orders were issued between May 2025 and January 2026, seven by courts in Rayagada and one by the High Court, with six of the accused belonging to Dalit communities and two to Adivasi groups.

Citing these instances, the Bench termed such conditions "abhorrent, cruel and unknown to law," and stressed that they violate Constitutional safeguards, including the prohibition of untouchability and the right to equality. It underscored that the judiciary is duty-bound to protect the dignity and rights of the most vulnerable sections of society.

Addressing Advocate General Pitambar Acharya, the Chief Justice said such practices are bringing disrepute to the justice system and must stop immediately.

The Supreme Court has directed that its order be circulated to all High Courts, ensuring that such "oppressive and caste-biased" conditions are not repeated anywhere in the country.

## PIONEER IN SHORT

**RUPEE HITS NEW LOW ON WEST ASIA CRISIS**

The rupee slid to a fresh lifetime low on Monday, weakening by 39 paise to close at 95.23 against the US dollar, as escalating West Asia tensions rattled global markets, kept crude oil prices elevated, and stoked inflation fears. Forex traders said persistent geopolitical uncertainty and firm Brent crude prices - hovering near \$110 per barrel - are intensifying pressure on oil-importing economies like India. The rupee opened at 94.95 in the interbank market, weakened steadily through the session, and settled at its weakest-ever closing level. It had previously closed at 94.84 on Thursday and touched an earlier low of 94.88 on April 29. Markets were closed on Friday for Maharashtra Day. Analysts noted that a stronger dollar index and sustained foreign fund outflows are widening pressure on the currency.

## From silver screen to CM chair: Vijay rewrites history

**RAJESH KUMAR**  
 ■ New Delhi/Chennai

Actor turned politician Vijay will now join the likes of former chief ministers MGR and Jayalalitha, both actors, as the stars who made it big in the political firmament in Tamil Nadu. He also did not repeat the mistakes of super stars like Kamal Haasan, Vijayakanth and Rajnikanth, who had entered Tamil Nadu politics but could not leave their marks.

And in that moment, a question began to echo across Tamil Nadu, was this just an election result. For the first time in decades, Tamil Nadu's long-standing two-party dominance appears to be breaking.



TVK chief Vijay addressing a public meeting in Chennai on April 21, 2026

financial aid. The actor-turned-politician also assured a quality silk saree in addition to gold for indigent brides and interest-free loans up to ₹5 lakh for women-run SHGs. He assured corruption-free good governance if voted to power in his maiden electoral fight. The manifesto also laid importance on education.

To prevent school dropouts, mothers or guardians of children studying in Government and State-aided schools will receive Rs 15,000 annually. Additionally, the party promised a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹3,500 per quintal for paddy and ₹4,500 per tonne for sugarcane.

of lofty poll promises and made "super six" poll promises for women including 8 gm gold for marriage, which is worth about ₹14,000 per gram (22 carat), six free LPG cylinders and monthly

## CM's Gujarat push Now, Odisha targets west coast investments

3-day, 4-city tour to focus on manufacturing partnerships

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar  
Riding on the momentum of recent investor roadshows in Hyderabad and Kolkata, Odisha is now turning its attention to western India with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi set to embark on a three-day, four-city visit to Gujarat from Tuesday. The outreach is being positioned as a strategic attempt to build stronger industrial linkages between eastern and western India. With Gujarat's established strength in manufacturing, the

Odisha Government is aiming to attract investments across key sectors such as textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals, metals and downstream industries, and pharmaceuticals. Officials said the visit is expected to generate fresh investment intent from the west coast while also strengthening ties with the Odia diaspora in Gujarat, linking them to Odisha's evolving industrial landscape. A major highlight of the tour will be a flagship investors' roadshow in Ahmedabad on May 4, where the Chief Minister will engage with industry leaders. This will be followed by sector-specific roundtable discussions and one-on-one meetings with leading cor-

porate players, aimed at facilitating focused and outcome-driven interactions. The visit is likely to see the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and the exchange of Investment Intention Forms (IIFs), reflecting growing investor interest in Odisha. Discussions will centre on high-growth sectors, including chemicals and petrochemicals, metal and downstream industries, pharmaceuticals and medical devices and textiles and apparel. As part of Odisha's port-led development strategy, the delegation will visit the Mundra Port on May 5 to explore collaboration in logistics and port-based industries. An investor interaction in

Vadodara on May 6 is expected to further expand engagement, particularly with capital goods manufacturers. The itinerary also includes a visit to Kevadia. The delegation will be accompanied by Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain along with senior government officials. Ahead of the visit, CM Majhi said Odisha is rapidly emerging as a preferred investment destination backed by robust infrastructure and a skilled workforce. He expressed confidence that the Gujarat outreach would open new avenues for employment and industrial growth, aligning with the State's long-term vision of building a "Samruddha Odisha" by 2036.

## Closing the gaps Subhadra scheme expands reach with Rs 61-cr disbursal

Drive brings 79,000 previously excluded women into the welfare net

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar  
Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on Monday disbursed financial assistance exceeding Rs 61 crore to more than 79,000 beneficiaries who had earlier been left out of the 'Subhadra' scheme. The funds were transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system during a virtual programme held at the Women and Child Development



Department headquarters here. These beneficiaries had missed earlier instalments due to technical and procedural issues such as inactive NPCI linkage, biometric errors in e-KYC, and unresolved grievances. Following verification and resolution at multiple administrative levels, they have now been brought into the fold. As per official figures, 21,901 beneficiaries received the first instal-

ment, 22,347 received the second instalment while 79,601 beneficiaries were covered under the third instalment in this phase. Officials said this latest disbursement builds on previous rounds of the 'Subhadra' rollout, under which lakhs of eligible women across Odisha had already received financial support in multiple instalments since the scheme's launch. Earlier phases focused on

rapid onboarding and wide coverage while the current exercise targets genuine beneficiaries left out due to technical discrepancies. Parida said no eligible beneficiary would be excluded, adding that a robust grievance redressal and verification mechanism is in place to ensure all deserving applicants receive benefits. She described 'Subhadra' as a key initiative for strengthening women's financial empowerment and economic security. The Deputy CM also reviewed the status of pending cases with district administrations, including Ganjam, Jajpur and Kalahandi, and directed officials to expedite verification for timely inclusion.

## CUO agri students' innovations win award Get 1st prize among 65 registered innovations

**PNS** ■ Koraput  
The Department of Agriculture, Central University of Odisha (CUO), proudly announced its outstanding achievement at INNOVATION 2026 "Innovative Solutions for Technical Problems," held on April 26 at Synergy Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, in collaboration with SKD Patent Services, Kolkata. The CUO secured the 1st Prize among 65 registered innovations of which 35 were shortlisted for the final round with model presentations. The remarkable success has brought immense pride to the university, its students and their families. The innovation was presented by Swapnarani Biswal (3rd Year BSc Agriculture) and Abhisikta Sahu (2nd Year BSc Agriculture). Vice-Chancellor, I/c, CUO, Prof NC Panda and Head, Department of Agriculture Dr Manjushree Singh expressed their appreciation over the development. The award-winning innovation addresses a critical issue in large-scale agriculture. In conventional



broadcasting methods of sowing, small and lightweight seeds are often displaced during irrigation especially under flood irrigation leading to uneven distribution, poor germination and reduced productivity. To address the challenge, the team developed a solar-powered seed pelleting (coating) machine. The technology enhances seed size and weight through coating, ensuring better stability, while also enriching seeds with essential fertilizers and micronutrients to support early growth. The innovation is a collaborative effort with scientists from Navsari Agricultural University including Dr Vipul Shinde (Head, Department of Agricultural Engineering), Dr Ashish, and Er Subham Dhakad, along with Dr Manjushree Singh, Head, Department of Agriculture, CUO, Koraput. The technology has been further refined to suit the specific soil conditions, geographical features and farming practices of the Koraput region.

## Journalists urge CM to ensure security, welfare measures

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar  
The Utkal Journalists' Association has urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take immediate steps to strengthen security and extend financial and social benefits to journalists in the State. In a memorandum submitted to the CM, the association said the economic and social conditions of journalists in Odisha remain comparatively weaker than in many other States. While several States recognise thousands of journalists, the number in Odisha is limited to around 200. The association highlighted that more than 20 States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Arunachal Pradesh, provide benefits such as pensions ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000, concessional transport and legal safeguards through Journalist Safety Acts. Recalling a protest held in Feb-

ruary 2024 near the State Assembly, the association said Mohan Majhi, then Leader of Opposition, had assured journalists that their demands would be met within six months if his party came to power. However, it expressed disappointment that even as the government nears two years in office, key demands remain unaddressed. Placing its demands, the body called for wider recognition of eligible journalists at district and State levels and reconstitution of the accreditation committee. It also sought enactment of a Journalist Protection Act in view of rising attacks on media persons. The association further demanded a minimum monthly pension of Rs 15,000 for journalists above 60 years, establishment of an Odisha Press Academy and construction of a dedicated building in Bhubaneswar to provide affordable accommodation to visiting journalists. It also urged inclusion of retired journalists and their family members under the Gopabandhu Health Insurance Scheme. The memorandum was submitted by association leader Bibhuti Bhushan Kar.

## Interview of the week

# We are first in Odisha to go plastic-free



**SUGYAN CHOUDHURY**



**MADHUSUDAN DASH**

Also top in population control

**M**adhusudan Dash, a 2014-batch IAS officer who opened his innings to Odisha Civil Service in 1992, is currently working as the Collector and District Magistrate of Nuapada since August 11, 2024. Alongside his administrative career, he is also a noted Odia poet with poetry collections such as 'Chitrita Andhara', 'BOU', 'Chitra Anka' and 'Jari Gotali Jhia' to his credit.

Under his stewardship, Nuapada has arrested national attention after becoming the first single-use plastic-free district in Odisha. By June 2025, the district had emerged as one of India's pioneering regions in implementing a strict ban on single-use plastic. More than 700 cleanliness drives involving over 1.4 lakh people were conducted, resulting in the removal of over 30 tonnes of plastic waste.

In an interview to *The Pioneer*, Dash spoke to Sugyan Choudhury about the developmental transformation and administrative reforms being undertaken in Nuapada.

**Nuapada has historically been regarded as one of the most drought-prone districts of Odisha. How would you assess the present situation?**

Nuapada is predominantly an agrarian district with a majority of the population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Nearly 53% of the agricultural land is irrigated, and farmers mainly cultivate paddy along with non-paddy crops such as vegetables. Although the district suffered severe drought conditions during the 1980s, the irrigation scenario has improved considerably with projects like the Upper Jonk Irrigation Project and the Lower Indra Irrigation Project besides several minor irrigation schemes. Ahead of the Nuapada by-election, the Chief Minister announced a mega project worth ₹1,500 crore with a major focus on lift irrigation and mega lift irrigation to enhance the district's irrigation potential. In addition, over the last nine months, nearly 1,000 solar lift irrigation projects have been installed, significantly transforming

the irrigation sector. Nuapada has historically been identified as a migration-prone district with many families depending on seasonal migration or the "Dadan" system for survival. How serious is the situation at present?

This was an extremely sensitive issue, and soon after assuming charge as Collector, I was informed about it by my senior authorities. After conducting a detailed assessment and consulting stakeholders across all blocks of the district, I identified certain gaps in the implementation of the MGNREGA. Although employment opportunities were being generated under the scheme, there were frequent interruptions in work availability, and many people were unaware of various welfare programmes. To address this, I launched an extended grievance-hearing initiative called "Prabasi Sramika Sachetanata Shivir," aimed at spreading awareness about government schemes beyond the routine Monday grievance hearings. Under my supervision, nearly 80 such camps were organised across the district, where benefits such as job cards, labour cards and subsidies under different schemes were also distributed. According to subsequent surveys, the migration rate has now declined to nearly 2 per cent.

**According to official data, nearly 10% of students in Nuapada are dropping out of school. What do you identify as the primary reasons behind this alarming trend?**

You will be surprised to know that according to the 2024 figures, the number of HSC dropout students stood at 485 whereas the number has now come down to 185. To reduce the dropout rate, we initiated a focused intervention under which headmasters were directed to personally visit the homes of students who remained absent from school, interact with their parents and motivate them not to engage their children as migrant labourers.

Simultaneously, efforts were made to create awareness about residential education schemes being implemented by the State and Central Governments such as the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and other residential hostel programmes. I also personally monitored the functioning of schools to ensure that classes were being conducted regularly, atten-

dance of both teachers and students was maintained properly and that teachers on leave had obtained prior approval. As a result of this, the educational performance improved significantly. According to the 2026 HSC examination results, the district secured the 15th position in Odisha with a pass percentage of 96.86%. Just two years ago, in 2024, the district was ranked 30th.

**Some media reports have highlighted the healthcare challenges in the district, particularly the shortage of doctors. What strategies has the administration adopted to manage these challenges?**

The healthcare scenario in Nuapada has improved significantly. The government has strengthened services by appointing specialists in key departments such as anaesthesia, orthopaedics and gynaecology. Despite constraints in resources and manpower, the district has been managing the system effectively and has also performed well in population control, ranking among the best in Odisha in this indicator. I would also like to share a personal experience reflecting the commitment of the district health administration. Around four to five months ago, a 14-year-old boy sustained a critical abdominal injury after being attacked with an arrow, which entered one side of the abdomen and exited the other. He was admitted to the District Headquarters Hospital while I was travelling by train on leave. I was informed by the surgery specialist that referral to another hospital might be required, with uncertain chances of survival during transfer.

Given the seriousness of the case, I advised the medical team to take a calculated risk and proceed with surgery at the district hospital. Doctors performed the operation with exceptional skill and removed the arrow. The child survived and is now recovering well. This incident reflects the dedication and capability of the district healthcare system. In this connection, you would happy to know that we are first in Odisha to go plastic-free.

**How do you manage to combine your literary endeavours with the pinching demands of administrative hazards?**

Administration and literature belong to two entirely different realms. Administration is a matter of motion, responsibility and execution whereas literature is a matter of emotion, reflection and sensitivity. The two should not be mixed while discharging official responsibilities. However, whenever I get some personal time, even during simple moments like taking a bath or before going to sleep, my mind naturally drifts towards literature, particularly poetry. Poetry is something deeply personal; it cannot be written artificially or merely through intellect. A true poem emerges only when it comes from the depths of the heart.

## Odisha's education crisis

# Teachers reduced to system survivors

Vacant posts, policy gaps raise serious questions

**SARAT CHANDRA BEHERA** ■ Bhubaneswar  
Behind Odisha's claims of rapid education reforms lies a troubling reality, one where classrooms are running short of teachers, students struggle with basic learning, and the very role of a teacher is being quietly diminished. A ground-level investigation, backed by recent data and reports, reveals a system under strain. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 paints a worrying picture. Across India, only 23.4% of Class-III students can

read a Class-II-level text. The implication is stark: millions of children are attending school but failing to acquire even foundational skills. Odisha's rural districts mirror this trend with sharp disparities in reading and arithmetic abilities across regions. But the deeper crisis lies within the teaching system itself. Official data from 2025 indicate a significant shortage of teachers across government schools in Odisha. In Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs), considered model institutions, around 35% of teaching posts remain vacant while hundreds of schools continue to function without principals. In a stopgap move, the govern-

ment appointed 6,387 retired teachers as guest faculty for the 2025-26 academic year. While this may provide temporary relief, experts argue it highlights a systemic failure to ensure sustainable staffing. Even more telling is the government's own admission: a target to recruit 45,000 new teachers over the next three years. The scale of recruitment planned underscores the depth of the existing shortage. However, numbers alone don't tell the full story. Teachers on the ground report being overburdened, not just with academic responsibilities but also with non-teaching duties such as surveys, administrative work and

election assignments. "We are expected to deliver results, but the system leaves little room for actual teaching," said a government school teacher. Simultaneously, an exam-driven education model has narrowed the focus to marks and rankings. In this environment, teachers are increasingly treated as output-driven functionaries rather than mentors shaping young minds. The consequence is visible: declining learning quality, reduced classroom engagement and a generation of students lacking critical thinking and foundational skills. Is the system enabling teachers to teach or merely forcing them to cope?

## Drive held for service, safety, respect of cows

By Sant Samaj in Phulbani  
**BIRENDRA SUBUDHI** ■ Phulbani

Sant Samaj representatives, Gau devotees and conscious citizens gathered for a "Gau Samman Ahwan Abhiyan" and submitted a joint petition for the President of India, Prime Minister, Governor and Chief Minister of Odisha for the service, protection and respect of Gaumata through Phulbani Additional Tehsildar Somakesh Nayak. The main objective of the campaign, which is being run in five thousand tehsils of India at the call



of Sant Samaj, is to conduct research and grant for the service of Indian indigenous cows, completely ban cow slaughter in India for protection and to give Gaumata the status of Rashtra Mata or Rashtra Aaradhya for respect. The petition mentions that hundreds of signatures of supporters from all the panchayats of

Phulbani block have been attached to the petition. In an agricultural country like India, doubling the income of farmers, planning for organic farming, and preventing the adverse effects of chemical fertilizers on soil, environment and human health are essential for the conservation and promotion of Indian indigenous cows. The campaign was attended by Pitambar Mishra, Bansidhar Panda, Ashok Parida, A Santosh Kumar Patra, Manas Mohanty, Shivashis Panda, Chaturbhuj Mahakud Srinivas Patnaik, and Niranjan Pandey, who were prominently present.

## Daylight brutality in Puri: Youth hacked, crushed In Jajpur 5 die, 8 hurt as Bolero rams into truck

### Four arrested after public outrage

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

A gruesome assault in the heart of Kanas' bustling fish market has sparked fear and outrage. In a chilling sequence of events, a young man was chased, repeatedly hacked with a fish-cutting knife, brutally beaten and then run over, an act of violence that unfolded in full public view.

The victim, Mrutyunjay Bharimal, also known as

Illu, from Dokanda village was attacked on May 2 near Gola Bazar Chhak. Eyewitnesses described scenes of panic as he tried to escape before being cornered and assaulted with a "zpaniki". The attackers then allegedly ran a vehicle over him before fleeing, leaving him critically injured.

He was first rushed to the Community Health Centre at Kanas and later shifted to AIIMS for advanced treatment. His condition remains critical.

The incident, captured on

mobile phones and widely circulated on social media, has triggered widespread anger with residents questioning how such a brutal attack could take place in a crowded marketplace in broad daylight.

Police arrested four accused following a manhunt on Monday. The case has been registered under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including attempt to murder, grievous assault, unlawful restraint and criminal intimidation.

A scientific team examined the scene and collected evi-

dence, including blood samples. The weapon used in the crime and a mobile phone have been seized while witness statements have been recorded.

The brutality of the incident has also triggered a political storm with Opposition leaders slamming the government over what they termed a breakdown of law and order. Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik accused the administration of failing to ensure public safety and allowing criminals to operate with fear.

### PNS ■ Jajpur

Five persons were killed and eight others injured in a road accident in Jajpur district on Monday while they were returning from a wedding ceremony. The accident occurred near Barada Behera Tanki Chhak under the Jenapur police station.

According to sources, the mishap occurred when a Bolero rammed into a Hyva truck from behind. The impact was severe, leaving the vehicle mangled.



The victims, residents of Purusottampur Sabara Sahi village under Badachana block, were returning after attending a wedding in Keonjhar when the accident took place.

Five persons died on the spot while eight others, including the driver, sustained injuries.

ries. Among the injured are two children and a woman. The injured were rescued by locals and police and shifted to the Badachana Community Health Centre (CHC).

Police reached the spot soon after receiving information and launched a rescue operation. Efforts were made to clear the road and restore normal traffic movement.

The cops have begun an investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the accident, including whether over-speeding or negligence led to the mishap.

### Summer yoga camp concludes at B'pur

#### Held by Maruti Walkers Club, Vivekananda Kendra

**PNS** ■ Brahmapur

A 10-day summer yoga camp organised by Maruti Walkers Club, in collaboration with Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari (Brahmapur Branch), concluded here on Sunday.

On the occasion, Professor Gopal Krishna Panigrahi, Bhanja Division Head of Vivekananda Kendra, attended as the chief guest. Other distinguished guests included Professor Tara Prasad Das (City coordinator), Kedarnath Panda (City head), Jyotindra Kumar Sahu (methodology head), and Yoga Head Paramananda Maharana.

Shubhendu Bhai and Ankit

### Paradip unions celebrate May Day

#### PNS ■ Paradip

On the occasion of the International Labour Day, a large public gathering was organised at the Badapadia STIT Union Office premises under the joint initiative of the Paradip Port Workers' Union and Paradip Dock and Transport Workers' Union, affiliated with Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS).

The meeting was presided over by union president and MP Dr Bibhu Prasad Tarai. During the event, the leaders emphasized the importance of workers' unity, national interest, and highlighted the significance and history of May Day.

They also discussed various issues faced by workers engaged in the Paradip industrial area, including port employees, C and F workers, compassionate workers, DLR, muck cleaning staff, GPM workers, railway workers, and railway maintenance personnel.

The meeting was conducted by union general secretary Nrusingha Charan Satpathy. Among others present were Ward No. 12 Councillor of Paradip Municipality, Pratap Nayak; vice president Amrit Das; joint secretary Biplab Kumar Jena and treasurer Brijesh Kumar Lenka, who also spoke on the significance of the Day.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Paradip Dock and Transport Workers' Union general secretary Gunanidhi Choudhury.



### BBSR tribal slum boy secures 84% in matric

#### A dropout, he returned to school being persuaded by SAKAR

**PNS** ■ Bhubaneswar

A school dropout and tribal slum boy, who was again readmitted in school with persuasion by NGO SAKAR, has secured 84% in the matriculation examination the results of which were recently published.

Sibam Lakhua, son of Raj Kumar Lakhua and Siro Lakhua of Mundasahi slum, Kargil Road, Bhubaneswar, was whiling away his time with his friends Sumit Lakhua, Rohit Nayak, Rahul Barua and Amit Singh, all school dropouts and slum children.

SAKAR spotted them in 2022, counselled them and their parents and guardians to return to school. With much persuasion the children and parents agreed for educating



them. They were enrolled in SAKAR Bridge Course centre.

"We used to conduct crash course classes regularly over a period of about eight to nine months and later admitted Sibam along with others in Gondamunda UG High School, Gondamunda in class 8 with the permission of the Block Education Officer. Initially, Sibam and others were irregular to school, but after much of persuasion and regular monitoring at SAKAR bridge course centre as well as

at school, Sibam developed a sense of responsibility started performing better. Other children too followed suit," said SAKAR secretary Swarupa Rani.

She further added, "Apart from education we used to train them in extra curriculums. As a part of that Sibam went to Kolkata and Delhi to participate in Child Parliament and got elected as a child parliamentarian. He also went to Delhi as well as Darjeeling for a TOT on child rights. He is well versed with sustainable development goals. We guide him on regular basis in education and extra curriculums."

In the matriculation results published recently, he performed extremely well and became the school topper in Gonda Munda UG High School, with 83.66% of marks. Sibam is aspiring to study well in college level and wish to go abroad for higher studies.

### Labour Day Issues of workers discussed in Jajpur Rd



**PNS** ■ Jajpur Road

The 141th International Labour Day was celebrated by the Udayabata and the Kalinga Bikash Nirman Sramik Sangha here under the chairmanship of trade union leader Dumsanta Rout.

Former Chairperson of VN Municipality Sabita Rout attended the event as chief guest while senior TU leader Chandramani Samal attended as chief speaker. Educationalist Dr Akshaya Kumar Panda, CITU Jajpur district president Prafulla Nayak, Urmila Nayak, Sanjay Kumar Deo,

### New Simulation Lab at OPTCL inaugurated



State bolsters grid preparedness

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

As part of efforts to modernise the State's power transmission network, the Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) has operationalised a cutting-edge Power System Simulation Laboratory at its Power Training Centre here on Monday.

Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo inaugurated the facility, describing it as a critical step towards building a robust and future-ready power network.

Unlike conventional training setups, the new laboratory enables real-time simulation of grid behaviour under diverse operating conditions. Engineers can now test load variations, study fault scenarios and evaluate system stability without impacting the live network, an advancement expected to sharpen response strategies and minimise disruptions.

Officials noted that with power demand steadily rising and renewable energy sources being added to the grid, such simulation capabilities are becoming indispensable. The facility is expected to strengthen planning accuracy, improve operational efficiency and enhance the resilience of the transmission system.

Highlighting the broader vision, Singh Deo said the initiative aligns with the State's goal of ensuring reliable and high-quality power supply across sectors. "A strong transmission backbone is essential for sustained economic growth. This lab will help us stay ahead of emerging challenges," he said.

OPTCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma termed the laboratory a "centre of excellence" that blends training with innovation. He added that the platform would foster skill development, enable data-driven decision-making and improve preparedness for grid contingencies.

### State level taekwondo tourney Ganjam participants win 141 medals



**PNS** ■ Brahmapur

73 students of Ganjam Taekwondo participated in the 5th State-Level Taekwondo Championship held at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, organized under the supervision of Odisha Taekwondo Secretary Chinmaya Behera.

The participants from Victory Academy of Martial Arts, Ganjam, competed under the guidance of their coaches B Satish Kumar Rao, Kiran Kumar Nayak, and Kaibalya Badamundi. The team achieved remarkable success by winning a total of 141 medals, including 51 gold, 39 silver, and 51 bronze.

With this outstanding performance, Victory Academy of Martial Arts, Ganjam, secured the championship title in both Kyorugi and Poomsae categories.

The medal-winning students were congratulated and honoured by Ganjam Taekwondo president Sujit Kumar Mishra, international coach Saroj Chandra Badamundi, and Sabuj Bahini secretary Sibaram Panigrahi.

# A mandate for resolve

# India chooses development over division

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the resounding electoral mandate secured across Assam, Puducherry, and West Bengal, complemented by the significant ideological strides made in Kerala. This is far more than a mere electoral triumph; it is a decisive validation of a national vision anchored in determination, rigorous delivery, and holistic development.

**The pulse of transformation**

I witnessed this paradigm shift firsthand. At the Borhat Tea Estate and Kathalguri Tea Estate, I engaged with tea garden workers, women, and youth whose lives are the living testament to the impact of sustained governance.

There was a profound, quiet confidence in their voices—not of mere survival, but of ascendance. They spoke of a connectivity that has bridged physical and social divides, of expanding livelihoods, and of a restored sense of dignity



**Mohan Charan Majhi**

and security. Their aspirations have evolved; they are no longer rooted in the desperation of deprivation, but in the abundance of opportunity. It was clear that when governance prioritizes tangible outcomes, it transforms them.

**Courage in the face of entrenchment**

In West Bengal, Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our *karyakartas* during the most pivotal chapters of this campaign was more than a political exercise; it was a front-row seat to the indomitable human spirit. Watching our candidates from Rampurhat, Hansan, Murarai, and Nalhati file their nominations was a masterclass in raw conviction—a dauntless challenge to a political ecosystem that has long weaponized intimidation as a tool of governance.

Offering prayers at the Kali Temple in Rampurhat, we sought the strength to confront a systemic rot that has persisted for decades. At the Parivartan Sankalp Sabha in Moyna, the energy was not manufactured; it was organic, electric surge of a people reclaiming their agency. In Bagdah and Jadavpur, the massive turnout—driven by a vibrant, restless youth—signalled a collective breaking point. It was a clear repudiation of a model that has normalized institutional decay and stifled the aspirations of a new generation.

The shadow of political violence in West Bengal is neither incidental nor episodic; it is a systemic, calculated, and corrosive force that has long held the state hostage. For decades, a culture has persisted where dissent is met with destruction rather than debate, where grassroots workers face targeted brutality for their beliefs, and where democratic participation is systematically undermined by a pervasive "negotiation with fear."

However, the tide has turned. The people of Bengal are no longer asking for permission to hope; they are demanding a new political culture where governance is earned through performance and merit, rather than enforced through the barrel of a gun or the threat of a goon. People want results. They want safety. They want opportunity.

**A rejection of the politics of alienation**

This mandate must be viewed through a historical lens. For decades, certain regions were held cap-

tive by a narrative of insecurity as an inevitability and appeasement as a substitute for governance. The people have now unequivocally repudiated that model.

They have disavowed a system where women's safety is compromised, where dissent is met with intimidation, and where the ordinary citizen is forced to negotiate with fear. The "Idea of Bengal" has always been a pillar of the "Idea of India." Visionaries like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar ensured Bengal remained the intellectual and spiritual soul of the Union. Yet, for nearly fifty years, the state lacked the stewardship of a truly national political force. This absence limited West Bengal's integration with the country's growth impulses—until now.

The integration of West Bengal into the national mainstream isn't just a political victory; it is a profound act of historical justice. In this light, the Prime Minister's efforts can be seen as a true gift to the memory of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, finally bridging the gap between Mukherjee's ideological blueprint and the state's actual trajectory.

**The Eastern Engine: The quad of growth**

A national leadership under Narendra Modi brings more than just political change; it brings strategic alignment. This mandate unlocks the latent potential of the East.

The vision of Purvodaya—the rise of Eastern India—is no longer a distant aspiration; it is our current reality. As Chief Minister of Odisha, I see this synergy every day. Our state's transformation is accelerated by a partnership rooted in mutual trust and shared purpose under the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister.

With this mandate, a new economic geography emerges. Odisha, Bihar, and Assam are already the powerhouses of India's future. With West Bengal now aligned under this

national vision, this "Eastern Quad" will become a formidable engine, accelerating the nation's journey toward *Viksit Bharat* with unprecedented momentum.

**A decade of resolve**

Ultimately, this verdict is an endorsement of transformative reform, exemplified by the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*. It reaffirms that India is unapologetic in its commitment to women-led development and global economic resilience.

The message from the people is crystalline: they will not accept drift, delay, or disorder. They demand governance that is disciplined, decisive, and delivery-driven. India has chosen resolve over rhetoric, and performance over posturing. That choice will define the course of India's future for decades. The win in Bengal and come back of NDA in Assam and Puducherry is in true sense a story of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikash, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas.'

(Chief Minister, Odisha)



## Doctor arrested as Delhi Police busts NEET admission fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police's Crime Branch has busted an organised racket that targeted NEET aspirants and their families with false promises of guaranteed MBBS admissions, rescuing 18 students, including minors, from a flat in Ghaziabad.

The arrest took place on the eve of the NEET examination and involved four accused, including a doctor who had completed his MBBS in Kyrgyzstan and a Bihar-based pathology lab owner identified as the mastermind.

The arrested accused demanded between ₹20 lakh and ₹30 lakh per student, collected original Class 10 and Class 12 mark sheets, blank

signed cheques, and cash as token payments, and separated students from their guardians on the pretext of providing important exam questions before moving them to an undisclosed location.

DCP Crime Branch Sanjeev Kumar Yadav confirmed that a case vide FIR number 110/2026 dated May 3, 2026, has been registered under Sections 318(4), 61(2), and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at the Crime Branch police station.

All four accused have been taken into police custody and remanded to unearth the full conspiracy, including the middlemen who drew students into the network.

The operation was triggered by specific information received on May 2 from

Anupam Singh Gahlaut, Commissioner of Police, Surat, about an individual using a particular mobile number engaged in suspicious activities and believed to be in Delhi, claiming to arrange NEET admissions. The input was developed in coordination with Karanraj Vaghela, Additional Commissioner of Police, Crime, Surat, using technical surveillance.

The mobile number was traced to the Mahipalpur Extension area of Delhi. A police team searched around a hundred hotels in the Mahipalpur area.

Four individuals from Gujarat were eventually found at one of the hotels, including the accused Vinod Bhai Bhikha Bhai Patel. The complainant present at the



spot confirmed that he had lured them with false assurances of MBBS admission.

Using technical surveillance and information from the accused, a trap was subsequently laid near Mani Hospital in Ghaziabad, where three students were safely recovered and a second accused, Santosh Kumar Jaiswal, was arrested.

Further leads took investigators to a flat in Ghaziabad where 15 additional students were found, some of them minors. Two more accused at the flat, Sant Pratap Singh and Dr Akhlaq Alam alias Golden Alam, were arrested.

The students were counselled and allowed to leave in time to appear for the NEET examination on May 3. The four accused have dis-

tinct roles in the operation. Santosh Kumar Jaiswal, 50, a graduate originally from Bihar who runs a pathology lab there and lives in East of Kailash, Delhi, is identified as the mastermind who conceptualised the scheme.

Dr Akhlaq Alam, 25, a resident of Gopalganj, Bihar, who completed his MBBS from Kyrgyzstan and is currently preparing for the National Medical Commission examination to practice in India, prepared fake question papers by compiling content from previous years' questions and material from coaching institutes.

Sant Pratap Singh, 59, a property dealer and builder from Lucknow with properties in Ghaziabad and Pune, arranged logistics and pro-

vided his flat as the base of operations. Vinod Bhai Bhikha Bhai Patel, 52, a broker from Surat, educated up to Class 12, identified and approached three aspirants from Gujarat and their families with false promises.

The police have recovered 149 pages of fake compiled question-answer documents, three blank signed cheques belonging to victims, and other incriminating documents from the accused.

Delhi Police has advised students and parents to remain cautious of fraudulent schemes offering guaranteed admissions through illegal means, warning that such claims lead to financial loss and jeopardise students' futures.

## Rekha Gupta hails BJP's historic mandate in West Bengal



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Describing the BJP's victory as a "historic mandate," particularly in the West Bengal and Assam Assembly polls, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday said the results are a clear endorsement of public trust and the welfare-driven policies under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

She extended her congratulations to Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president Nitin Nabin. The chief minister said the Centre's development agenda would now benefit West Bengal as well, adding that the state is poised to move forward on a rapid growth trajectory, much like Delhi. The

Chief Minister celebrated the victory at the Delhi Secretariat with her Cabinet colleagues, where the occasion was marked by a light-hearted exchange of traditional Bengali snacks such as jhalmuri and rosogulla. She expressed confidence that people across the country would continue to back development, stability and good governance in the years ahead.

Calling the verdict more than just a political win, Rekha Gupta said it reflects a broader shift in public sentiment.

According to her, voters have moved beyond "empty slogans, divisive narratives and hollow claims of secularism", choosing instead to prioritise tangible development,



transparency and results-oriented governance. She noted that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' has translated into visible impact across States and communities.

Highlighting key central schemes such as Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, Rekha Gupta said these initiatives have brought meaningful changes to people's lives.

She pointed out that efforts to empower the poor, farmers, women and youth have accelerated the country's development journey, while India's growing stature on the global stage reflects strong and decisive

leadership. She also underlined that the BJP's focus extends beyond electoral success to ensuring balanced and inclusive development across States.

She said the significant improvements in infrastructure, connectivity and employment opportunities, from the Northeast to eastern India, are reflected in the election results.

Referring to West Bengal, the Chief Minister alleged that several central schemes had not been fully implemented by the State Government.

With the new mandate, she said, citizens would now be able to benefit directly from these policies, leading to a tangible improvement in their quality of life.

## BJP holds rally after saffron surge in West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Celebrations broke out outside the Bharatiya Janata Party's national headquarters in Delhi on Monday after the party's sweeping performance in West Bengal, with senior leaders and hundreds of workers taking out a "Bengal Victory March" to mark what they called a historic political breakthrough.

The rally was led by BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh and Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva on Deendayal Upadhyay Marg, where party workers gathered in large numbers amid music, slogans and celebratory dancing.

Chugh described the Bengal outcome as a landmark win under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and said the verdict had altered the country's political mood. He said BJP workers in Bengal had fought through repeated political hostility and deserved full credit for the result. The march began from outside the BJP National Office and moved toward the National Office Extension before circling Deendayal Upadhyay Udyan and returning to the party headquarters.



BJP supporters celebrate during vote tabulation on the day of Assembly election results across five states, at BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Monday

Party leaders and workers beat drums, waved flags and raised victory slogans as the procession moved through the central Delhi stretch. At one point, Chugh himself joined the celebration by playing a tambourine while walking alongside workers, giving the event the feel of a political road show rather than a routine organisational gathering.

The BJP's celebrations in Delhi came as counting trends from West Bengal showed the party moving decisively ahead of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, with national media projecting a first-ever saffron Government in the eastern State.



BJP supporters light firecrackers during vote tabulation on the day of Assembly election results across five states at BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Monday

## Fire emergency surge 73% in April as temperatures rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Fire-related emergencies in the national Capital surged sharply in April, rising 73 per cent from March, while 32 people have died in fire accidents between January and April this year, according to official data.

According to the Delhi Fire Services' (DFS) Call Summary 2026, as many as 2,663 fire-related calls were made in April alone, a steep rise compared to 1,538 in March and 1,096 in February. January recorded 1,396 fire calls, taking the total to 6,693 in the first four months of the year.

Overall emergency calls, including fire incidents, animal rescues and other assistance, also peaked in April at 3,914.

The cumulative number of calls attended by the DFS stood at 12,008 from January to April.

Officials said the spike in April could be linked to rising temperatures and an



increase in garbage and dry waste fires. The data showed that incidents involving garbage and rubbish fires rose from 441 in January to 725 in April, indicating a steady upward trend.

In terms of casualties, March recorded the highest number of deaths due to fire incidents at 15, followed by six each in January and February, and five in April.

In May, at least 10 people have died so far. On May 4, a devastating fire ripped through a residential building in East Delhi's Vivek Vihar, killing nine people from two families, including a toddler. An air-condition-

er blast is suspected to have triggered the blaze. The overall death count across all emergency categories stood at 428 during the period, the data showed.

Despite the rising number of fire-related incidents, prompt response by personnel helped save 837 lives, with April alone accounting for 261 rescues, the highest monthly figure this year, the data showed.

Officials said the Delhi Fire Service also undertook extensive rescue operations involving animals and birds. A total of 1,254 animals and 947 birds were rescued over the four months.

## Delhi RWAs appeal for fire safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Residents' welfare associations (RWAs) in Delhi on Monday appealed to households to keep exits and windows completely unobstructed and adopt basic fire-safety practices, citing recent incidents in the city.

In an advisory, BS Vohra, president of the East Delhi RWA joint forum, said safety is built through preparation and appealed that every home must identify, plan, and practice clear escape routes to protect loved ones before a fire turns into tragedy.

"When homes become traps instead of shelters, every spark turns into a tragedy. Delhi's rising fire incidents are not just accidents, but warnings we can no longer afford to ignore," Vohra said in a statement.

Atul Goyal, president, United Residents Joint Action (URJA), said it's a matter of grave concern that neither the Government departments nor the individual residents learn anything from



the past experiences of fire incidents in the buildings.

"Absence of any SOP from Delhi Disaster management plan, building bye laws under Master plan of Delhi, fire safety norms, apartment owners association, access to roof rights in builder floors and individual family security in absence of safety from police, all seem to be responsible under the circumstances," Goyal said.

Maharani Bagh RWA urged residents to "Keep a way to escape" at all times and ensure that doors, corridors

and windows are free of obstructions to enable quick evacuation during emergencies." It also emphasised the need for functional smoke alarms and pre-planned escape routes for all family members.

"In view of recent unfortunate incidents, this is a gentle reminder to prioritise preventive electrical maintenance in your homes. Small proactive steps today can help us avoid serious risks tomorrow," Ayesha Kapur, member of the RWA governing body, said.

## Toddler dies after falling into open drain in outer delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

A two-year-old girl died after she allegedly slipped into an uncovered drain while playing outside her home in outer north Delhi's Mukundpur area, triggering anger among residents who accused civic authorities of ignoring repeated warnings about the dangerous stretch.

The incident took place on Sunday evening in Ishu Vihar when the child walked out of her house to play in the lane and suddenly disappeared, police said. For hours, her family members and neighbours searched frantically through nearby lanes, rooftops and sur-

rounding houses, hoping she had wandered off. As panic spread and there was still no sign of the child, suspicion turned toward the deep open drain running along the residential stretch. Police and local residents then began a search operation inside the drain. After repeated attempts, the girl was found trapped in thick sludge accumulated inside the drain channel. She was immediately pulled out and rushed to a nearby Government hospital, but doctors declared her dead on arrival.

The death has sparked outrage in the neighbourhood, with residents alleging that the uncovered drain had remained a constant hazard for years and that several complaints to civic authorities had gone unanswered. Locals said the drain runs openly beside the lane without any protective covering or barrier, making it especially dangerous for children who regularly play outside in the congested settlement. Eyewitnesses said the drain is deeper than it appears from above because much of it is layered with black sludge and stagnant waste, making it difficult to detect where a person may sink.

Several residents gathered near the drain on Monday morning and demanded immediate



Representative image

action against the department responsible for maintaining the area. Many blamed official negligence rather than mere accident. They said repeated requests had been made to either cover the drain or build a proper safety wall, but no permanent work was undertaken. Parents in the locality said they have long lived with the fear that a child could slip into the open sewage line at any time, especially during evening hours when many children gather outdoors. Police said the body was recovered after a sustained search with the help of local residents.

The death has sparked outrage in the neighbourhood, with residents alleging that the uncovered drain had remained a constant hazard for years and that several complaints to civic authorities had gone unanswered. Locals said the drain runs openly beside the lane without any protective covering or barrier, making it especially dangerous for children who regularly play outside in the congested settlement. Eyewitnesses said the drain is deeper than it appears from above because much of it is layered with black sludge and stagnant waste, making it difficult to detect where a person may sink.

Several residents gathered near the drain on Monday morning and demanded immediate

## Traffic cop's quick dash saves crash victim in north Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

A Delhi Traffic Police inspector and a constable helped save the life of a 40-year-old scooter rider who lay critically injured on a north Delhi road after crashing into a divider late at night, officials said on Monday.

The accident took place on May 2 near the Burari Flyover when Inspector Yashpal Bhati of the Northern Range was returning after duty and spotted the man unconscious on the road with serious head and facial injuries.

Instead of waiting for an ambulance, Bhati and Constable Sahdev immedi-

ately stopped, lifted the injured rider into their vehicle and rushed him to the Trauma Centre at Civil Lines, a move doctors later said proved crucial in keeping the victim alive. Hospital staff said the injured man's condition has now stabilised and he is out of danger.

Officials identified the victim as Vinod Chandra Pujari, a resident of West Vinod Nagar. Police said the scooter rider had rammed into the road divider and collapsed on the stretch before the traffic personnel reached the spot. By the time the officers noticed him, he was lying motionless and bleeding heavily from the head and face. With no time



Representative image

to lose, the two policemen chose not to wait for emergency medical support and shifted him directly to the hospital.

The speed of that decision, officials said, made the difference between life and death.

Doctors at the Trauma Centre later informed police that the victim had suffered severe injuries and required immediate treatment. Medical staff said that had there been further delay in evacuation, the situation

could have turned fatal.

Along with ensuring medical admission, the traffic personnel also began efforts to trace the injured man's family. Officials said his relatives were contacted soon after his identity was established and informed about his condition and location.

By Monday, doctors confirmed that Pujari had responded to treatment and was no longer in immediate danger.

Though Delhi Police personnel are frequently first responders on city roads, such interventions often go unnoticed unless an incident turns fatal or sparks public attention.

In this case, officials said,

the officers' presence on the road at the right moment and their decision to act without procedural delay ensured that a badly injured commuter did not become another late-night accident statistic.

The Burari Flyover and adjoining northern corridors witness regular high-speed movement at night, particularly by two-wheelers, and accidents involving divider collisions are not uncommon on poorly lit or fast-moving stretches. Road safety experts have repeatedly underlined that the first few minutes after a major crash are critical, especially in cases involving head trauma and blood loss.



# BJP cracks West Bengal with ground-to-top strategy

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
New Delhi

The 2026 West Bengal Assembly election results represent a seismic shift in Indian electoral politics. Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) historic victory is not accidental but the outcome of a recalibrated, multi-pronged strategy that combined top-down leadership, hyper-local organisation, narrative discipline and exploitation of structural vulnerabilities.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal acceptance and aggressive campaigning were pivotal. Modi shed the outsider tag through culturally attuned outreach eating *Jhalmuri* at roadside stalls, boat rides on the Hooghly and defending Bengal's fish-eating heritage against TMC barbs. He held over a dozen rallies, framing the contest as a turning point for development, jobs, women's safety and industrial revival.

In audio messages and final-phase speeches, Modi positioned himself as Bengal's destiny, promising to transform challenges into opportunities. This high-energy blitz, contrasting TMC's defensive posture, resonated amid voter fatigue and helped consolidate

Hindu voters while expanding into urban and southern pockets like Kolkata.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah provided the surgical edge. He camped in Bengal, dividing the state into five organisational zones in Siliguri, Balurghat, Durgapur, Kharagpur, and Hooghly and conducting late-night war-room reviews until 3 am. Shah set an initial target of 170 seats, released chargesheets on alleged TMC scams, promised to recover stolen money with interest, hammered law-and-order, women's safety, and national security (infiltration, border fencing, and CAA implementation) issues. His presence ensured central forces neutralised the alleged TMC muscle power.

Panna Pramukhs and Shakti Kendra Machine played crucial roles. BJP has built a granular apparatus over five years in the form of the Panna Pramukh system in West Bengal; One dedicated worker per 30-60 voters, personally linked to 10-15 families for man-to-man turnout tracking.

To add to Panna Pramukhs were Shakti Kendras (Clusters of 5-7 booths) tasked with adding 15-20 verified voters each



through sustained mobilisation. Booths were categorised in the form of strong, focused, and weak categories and monitored in real time via a Kolkata war room under strategists Sunil Bansal and Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav.

Functionaries were instructed to stay at every one of the 44,376 polling stations until voting ended. This micro-precision, combined with Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that deleted

around 60 lakh dubious entries, converted anti-incumbency into votes. Record 92.93 per cent turnout favoured BJP in marginal seats.

During campaigns, the BJP stopped criticising TMC's welfare schemes like Lakshmi Bhandar and instead promised higher pay-outs and faster delivery. It focused relentlessly on governance failures corruption, unemployment, post-poll violence, women's safety while maintaining Hindu consoli-

dation without overt religious overdrive in every constituency. Some inroads were even made in Muslim-dominated seats. The party amplified local leaders fluent in Bengali and leveraged RSS-ground cadre for long-term expansion.

TMC's traditional strength rested on three pillars: Mamata Didi's personal brand among rural women, cash-heavy welfare and booth-level cadre intimidation backed by minority consolidation. BJP disman-

led each as personal attacks were replaced by governance critique, denying Mamata the victimhood narrative. Welfare was matched or outbid, turning TMC's strongest weapon into a comparison game.

Booth muscle was neutralised through central forces, thousands of pre-poll arrests of alleged goons, and superior BJP booth management, creating a visibly freer polling environment. SIR and high turnout exposed the fragility of TMC's inflated voter base.

In essence, the BJP played asymmetrical electoral warfare: superior organisation, technology (real-time polling agents, BPO calls), and central leverage overwhelmed TMC's traditional street power. What began as a 2021 learning curve became a master class in persistent, data-driven expansion.

The win validates BJP's long-game thesis: regional fortresses fall not to sporadic campaigns but to years of cadre-building, precise targeting and timely anti-incumbency waves. For Bengal, the saffron surge ends one era of dominance. The real test for the BJP now begins in delivering development in a culturally distinct but politically charged state.

## Leaders speak

There was a desperate need for regime change in Bengal for the nation's safety and security.



Infiltration from across the border has become a major concern. With the BJP's victory, peace will return, and the use of Bengal as a corridor for infiltration will be stopped. Saha claimed that for the first time in decades, people in West Bengal were able to exercise their democratic rights without fear or intimidation. Saha said people of that state had been deprived of "real democracy" during the 35-year Left rule and the subsequent 15-year tenure of the TMC, and ultimately, Prime Minister Narendra Modi liberated them.

MANIK SAHA  
Tripura Chief Minister

The "resounding victory" of the BJP in West Bengal is a "triumph of nationalism" as he thanked the people of the



State for a big mandate to his party. Saini also thanked the people of Bengal as well as Assam, where the BJP retained power and Puducherry, where the NDA made a comeback. BJP's performance in the three states, especially its mega win in West Bengal, ousting Mamata Banerjee-led TMC, triggered celebrations by party workers and leaders across Haryana.

NAYAB SINGH SAINI  
Haryana Chief Minister

Kapil Sibal on Monday alleged that the TMC was defeated in West Bengal not by the BJP but by the Election Commission,



central forces and by the disenfranchisement of 2.5 million voters. He claimed that this election was stolen and not won. In a post on X, Sibal said, "West Bengal, TMC was defeated not by the BJP but by Election Commission, Central Forces (CAPF), and by the disenfranchisement of 2.5 million voters." "This election was stolen, not won! We must stand by Mamata," the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said.

KAPIL SIBAL  
Rajya Sabha MP

## BJP looted over 100 seats, we will bounce back: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Kolkata

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Monday termed the BJP's landslide victory in the State polls "immoral" and alleged that the mandate in more than 100 seats was "looted".

"We will bounce back," Mamata Banerjee said while walking out of the counting centre at her Bhabanipur Assembly constituency.

Mamata Banerjee had reached the counting centre at Sakhawat Memorial Government Girls' High School on Lord Sinha Road in the afternoon amid allegations by the Trinamool Congress that one of its counting agents had been forced out of the venue.



As she came out of the centre, the TMC supremo was greeted by "Jai Shree Ram" slogans by BJP

supporters emboldened by their party's sweep in the polls, even more sweetened by the 10,994

lead Suwendu Adhikari gained in Banerjee's Bhabanipur constituency. A visibly distraught Banerjee told reporters that the BJP's victory was "immoral". "They have looted more than 100 seats," she alleged.

The TMC supremo alleged that the "EC's activities with the help of central forces in connivance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were illegal".

Alleging that she received flak "for speaking out against the EC's malpractices", the TMC supremo said, "I lodged a complaint with Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Agarwal, but to no avail." "The CCTV was switched off while our agents were not allowed to be inside the counting centre," she claimed.



## The remarkable rise of Suwendu Adhikari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Kolkata

Once the poster boy of the Trinamool Congress and a frontline face of Mamata Banerjee's anti-land acquisition movement in Nandigram, Suwendu Adhikari's evolution into a formidable BJP rival poised to wrest the State's administrative helm is as dramatic as it is remarkable.

Adhikari not only reprised his victory over Banerjee in Nandigram — achieved five years ago — but eclipsed it in the 2026 polls, delivering a far more emphatic blow.

His triumph extended beyond symbolism when he vanquished the TMC supremo in her own bastion of Bhabanipur by a formidable margin of 15,105 votes, underscoring a political shift that few could have predicted.

That he also retained Nandigram with a comfortable margin of 9,665 votes —

a significant leap from his earlier margin of just 1,956 — now reads almost like a footnote in the larger story of his sweeping success in Bhabanipur.

No wonder, with his twin accomplishments, and coupled with the fact that he engineered the Trinamool's whitewash from his Purba Medinipur backyard ensuring the BJP won all 16 seats in the district, makes him foremost contender for the state's top job, its next chief minister.

The BJP though, while announcing that the party's CM designate would be someone who is born and brought up in Bengal and has undergone schooling in Bengali medium, is yet to officially name Adhikari, or for that matter anyone else, for the post. Adhikari, interestingly meets all the requirements for the top job named by Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his poll campaigns.

## People defeated divisive forces: Nabin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Monday hailed NDA's performance in the assembly polls as "historic" and asserted that the opposition INDIA bloc will now "crumble like a pack of cards", blaming Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for the electoral reverses of the DMK and the TMC in the state elections.

Addressing an event organised at the BJP headquarters here to celebrate the party's stunning performance in West Bengal and the NDA's success in Assam and Puducherry, Nabin said that the results of the elections reflect people's continued faith in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

People have defeated the "divisive forces" and their "anti-Hindu agenda" by giving their mandate to the BJP and its allies in the polls, he added. "People have given historic support to the BJP in the elections," Nabin said.

While the counting of votes was still underway, the trends indicated that the BJP



was poised to record a landslide victory in West Bengal, inflicting a crushing defeat on the ruling TMC, and appeared to be returning to power in Assam and Puducherry with

its coalition partners under the banner of National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

In Tamil Nadu, the DMK appeared to have lost in the elections with the ruling party winning just 44 seats and leading in 16 seats in the 234-member Assembly, and the TVK merging as the single largest party winning 73 seats and leading in 33 seats around 8.30 pm.

The DMK's ally Congress, which won just two seats till the filing of this report, was leading in three other seats. None of the parties including the AIADMK could reach the majority mark. In an apparent reference to the losses that the TMC and the DMK suffered in the state elections, the BJP chief added, "This failure belongs to no one else but Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the INDI Alliance."

"I assure you that after these poll results, the INDI alliance will crumble like a pack of cards," added BJP president.

In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK won 30 seats and was leading in 17, while its ally, the BJP ended up winning just one seat.

## BJP heavyweights register wins in West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Kolkata

Riding a strong Statewide performance, the BJP saw several of its heavyweight candidates register significant victories in the West Bengal Assembly polls, though a few prominent faces failed to cross the finish line despite the broader saffron surge.

Former journalist Swapan Dasgupta opened his Assembly account with a win from Rashbehari, overcoming previous electoral setbacks. Veteran leader Tapas Roy also delivered for the BJP, defeating TMC's Shreya Pandey in Manikata.

Among the standout winners was Dilip Ghosh, who returned to the Assembly from Kharagpur Sadar with a margin of over 26,000 votes, reasserting his relevance after a Lok Sabha defeat in 2024.

Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari emerged victorious from Nandigram, defeating his former aide-turned-rival by more than 10,000 votes. However, his high-profile contest against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur remained inconclusive, although he was leading with a margin of 554 votes after 16 rounds of counting. Four rounds of counting are still left.

In a politically significant outcome, the mother of the RG Kar hospital rapemurder victim, fielded by the BJP from Panihat, surged ahead with a decisive lead, capitalising on public sentiment, while Left-backed protest face Kalatan Dasgupta finished a distant third.



Former journalist Swapan Dasgupta



Actor-turned-politician Rudranil Ghosh

Actor-turned-politician Rudranil Ghosh secured a win from Shibpur, defeating TMC's Rana Chatterjee, while another celebrity candidate Rupa Ganguly triumphed in Sonarpur Dakshin in a closely fought contest.

In north Bengal, Union minister Nisith Pramanik registered a comfortable victory from Mathabanga, while Shankar Ghosh retained Siliguri, reinforcing the party's stronghold in the region.

Among other notable winners, Agnimitra Paul retained Asansol South with a massive margin, Subrata Thakur held on to Gaighata, and former cricketer Ashok Dinda secured victory from Moyna. BJP's Sajal Ghosh wrested Baranagar from the TMC, while Jagannath Chattopadhyay won in Suri. Party turncoat Arjun Singh led in Noapara, and debutant Tarunijyoti

Tiwari clinched Rajarhat-Gopalpur, signalling the party's success in fielding fresh faces.

However, the BJP's march was not without setbacks. Rakesh Singh lost to TMC heavyweight Firhad Hakim in Kolkata Port, failing to dent the ruling party's bastion.

Similarly, lawyer-activist Priyanka Tibrewal was defeated in Entally, unable to convert her high-decibel campaign into votes.

In Tollygunge, BJP's Papiya Adhikari was leading by a slender margin against TMC minister Aroop Biswas, indicating a tight finish.

The results, declared for 293 seats with polling in one constituency deferred, reflect a mixed but impactful performance by the BJP's top brass combining high-profile gains with a few notable misses in crucial urban pockets.

## Uphill road ahead for Abhishek Banerjee

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Kolkata

The TMC losing its 15-year grip on West Bengal in the face of an unprecedented saffron wave has left the party's de facto second in command, Abhishek Banerjee, staring at a major political crisis, his first real test outside power.

As the BJP surged past the halfway mark and swept the state, the verdict did more than unseat a government. It punctured a political model that the TMC supremo's nephew had sought to build, consolidate and impose on the party. For a leader who had recast himself from a derided "bhaipo" (nephew) to the party's self-styled "senapati", the fall is stark and personal.

If Mamata Banerjee was the face of the TMC's campaign, Abhishek Banerjee was its architect. From candidate selection and organisational resets, to booth management and messaging — all roads led to him.

And this time, those roads led to defeat. The scale of the defeat has faced the TMC with an existential moment.

From leading Bengal's political narrative for over a



decade to being pushed to the margins, the party now faces a churn that goes beyond numbers.

The BJP's sweep across border districts, tribal belts and industrial regions has exposed the TMC's structural vulnerabilities that were papered over in earlier victories. For Abhishek Banerjee, the Diamond Harbour MP, the message is

sharp — the system he built did not just falter, it was overwhelmed.

Within party circles, the shift in his political identity had been unmistakable over the past few years. Once mocked by rivals as "bhaipo" — shorthand for entitlement — he had, through control over the organisation, earned the tag of "senapati" (commander).

But elections are ruthless levellers. The commander has to own the collapse as his imprint on the TMC's Assembly poll blueprint was total and transformative.

Over 70 sitting TMC MLAs were dropped or shifted, and a large pool of new faces was introduced under the guiding principle of performance over patronage, a major break from the party's traditional template of accommodation and localised power centres.

Abhishek Banerjee was betting that a fatigued electorate, weighed down by anti-incumbency and corruption allegations, would reward renewal. For a party that thrived on layered networks and calibrated flexibility, this was not just course correction; it was controlled disruption.

But that did not pay off; it unsettled the very machinery that sustained the party. As the counting day progressed, local equations frayed one constituency after another as disgruntled incumbents turned passive and new candidates, though relatively untainted, lacked the grassroots grip needed for tight contests.

## Leaders speak



**Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday termed the BJP's performance in multiple states a "decisive mandate" reflecting the people's aspirations for progress, stability and development. Khandu joined party workers at the BJP state office and congratulated the central leadership on the party's electoral success, officials said. "Heartfelt congratulations to Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, Hon'ble Union Home Minister Amit Shah Ji, and Hon'ble BJP National President Nitin Nabin Ji on the impressive victory in West Bengal, Assam, and Puducherry," Khandu said in a post on X while extending his greetings to the party's central leadership.**

**PEMA KHANDU**  
Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister



**Following TVK's strong performance in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi spoke with party chief Vijay on Monday to congratulate him, emphasising that the mandate reflects the growing voice of the youth, which cannot be ignored. In a post on X, Gandhi said, "I spoke to Thiru Vijay and congratulated him on TVK's spectacular result. This mandate reflects the rising voice of youth, which cannot, and will not, be ignored." "I reiterate that the Congress party will continue to protect and serve the people of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry," he said.**

**RAHUL GANDHI**  
Congress leader



**Ashok Gehlot on Monday alleged that the BJP won the Bengal elections by misusing power. Gehlot added, "As Rahul Gandhi rightly said, allegations against the TMC Government and its shortcomings allowed the BJP, which has now captured power." "Lakhs of people could not cast their votes in their own birthplace?" he said.**

**ASHOK GEHLOT**  
Former Rajasthan chief minister

## Khera's comments hurt Assam, says Himanta

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the allegations brought by Congress leader Pawan Khera against his wife before the elections had hurt the sentiments of the people, as it was an attempt to malign an Assamese woman. He maintained that state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi sharing the dais with Khera while the allegations were being levied could be a reason for the former losing his electoral battle.

Addressing a press conference at the state BJP headquarters here, Sarma said, "I have a commitment for Khera... You all wait and watch this film".

Less than a week before polling, Khera alleged at two press conferences in New Delhi and Guwahati that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, possessed multiple passports and foreign companies, which were not disclosed in the CM's election affidavit. The CM and his wife had rejected the allegations, with



Riniki Bhuyan Sharma also filing a police complaint here against Khera. The Congress leader has taken anticipatory bail from the Supreme Court in the matter.

Asked if he will act against Khera now as he had said previously, the CM said, "When Himanta Biswa Sarma says something, I seldom go back on it," indicating that action will be pursued against the Congress leader.

Taking a sarcastic jibe at Khera,

Sarma said, "I want to thank him. His allegations were against an Assamese woman, which made the people emotional. If he had not done the press conference and Gaurav Gogoi had not sat with him through it, he might not have lost today."

Gogoi, who was foraying into state politics for the first time, lost to sitting BJP MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami from Jorhat Assembly segment.

## Hitendra Nath Goswami made Gaurav Gogoi bite dust in Jorhat

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Guwahati

Veteran BJP leader Hitendra Nath Goswami on Monday registered a significant victory, defeating Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi by over 23,000 votes in Jorhat.

A seasoned politician with more than three-and-a-half decades in state politics, Goswami's low-key, grass-

roots-focused campaign paid dividends as he secured his sixth term in the assembly.

His win also halted Gogoi's debut attempt to enter the State Assembly, with the Congress leader currently serving as a third-term MP from Jorhat in the Lok Sabha.

The 67-year-old leader relied on his extensive organisational experience and voter outreach to retain the seat for the BJP,



largely staying away from media glare during the campaign.

A postgraduate in Chemistry and a trained lawyer, Goswami began his political journey during the Assam Agitation as a student activist before joining the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

He was elected thrice consecutively from the Jorhat Assembly constituency as an AGP candidate starting in 1991

and served as a minister in the AGP-led government between 1996 and 2001.

After parting ways with the AGP over differences with its leadership, he joined the BJP in 2014. Goswami won the Jorhat seat in 2016 and retained it in subsequent elections. He also served as Speaker of the Assembly during his initial term as a BJP MLA.

## Gaurav accepts moral responsibility for Congress dismal performance

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Guwahati

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Monday accepted moral responsibility for his party's drubbing in the Assembly elections, but vowed to remain steadfast in the fight for the rights and dignity of the people.

The Congress registered its worst-ever performance in this northeastern state as the party's tally was 19 in the 126-member House. The party had won 26 seats five years ago. Gogoi himself lost from Jorhat to incumbent BJP MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami by over 23,000 votes.

"As the president of Assam Pradesh Congress, I accept the moral responsibility of this defeat. But in this fight of ideals, we will always remain steadfast and continue to fight for the rights and dignity of the people. I am ready to perform whatever responsibility is assigned to me by the top party leadership in the future," he said in a post in Assamese on Facebook.

The BJP-led NDA retained power for the third successive term with a two-thirds majority. Accepting the people's verdict, Gogoi expressed his gratitude to the voters who



reposed their faith in the Opposition candidates. The Congress was part of a six-party opposition bloc in the election, with the Rajior Dal being the only other member which opened its account. The Rajior Dal secured two seats.

"Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all candidates who have won. Hopefully, they will fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people and work diligently for the sake of the State's progress, peace and prosperity," Gogoi said.

He said the Congress will analyse the reasons for its defeat and return with a stronger team to work for the people.

## People's befitting reply to appeasement, protection to infiltrators: Shah on results

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Hailing the BJP's massive win in West Bengal as "historic", Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said people of the state have sent a strong message to infiltrators and their sympathisers, highlighting that parties engaged in the politics of appeasement will not forget this lesson.

Without naming outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who lost in her pocket borough of Bhabanipur, Shah said on X, "Hats off to the people of Bhabanipur. Their mandate has made it clear what fate awaits an anarchic ruler."

In a series of posts, he remarked that the overwhelming public mandate reflects the people's response to those who create fear, appeasement, and protection to infiltrators.

"Millions of salutations to the people of Bengal... This is the victory of trust in Shri @narendramodi ji over the TMC's 'fear'. For every BJP



Union Home Minister Amit Shah is being welcomed by party workers at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Monday

worker like me, this is a moment of pride that from the source of Mother Ganga in Gangotri to Gangasagar, today the BJP's saffron flag is proudly waving everywhere," he said.

He described the BJP's "historic victory" in Bengal as the outcome of the sacrifices, struggles, and "martyrdom" of countless workers.

"It is a triumph of the patience of those families who, even while enduring

violence, never abandoned the saffron flag. In this arduous journey of the BJP from zero to a resounding majority today, I bow to all those workers who offered their lives, endured violence, suffered tortures, and yet never wavered from the path of ideology and to their families. The people of Bengal have paid tribute to all those martyred BJP workers through this resounding majority," he said.

The BJP on Monday surged past the majority mark in West Bengal, winning 202 seats and leading in four others, to end the 15-year rule of the Trinamool Congress and redraw the state's political map in saffron hues. Shah expressed confidence that the hopes and aspirations demonstrated by Bengal through this trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership will be fulfilled.

"The people of Bengal have taught such a lesson to the infiltrators and their sympathisers that the parties indulging in the politics of appeasement will never be able to forget," he said.

Shah also affirmed that the BJP will work tirelessly to restore the lost glory of Bengal, a sacred land that has been home to great figures such as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Swami Vivekananda, Guru Tagore, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, while striving to realise the dream of 'Sonar Bangla'.

## NCP's Sunetra Pawar sets record with historic victory in Baramati by-election

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The political spotlight has once again turned to Baramati as Sunetra Pawar secured a landmark victory in the recent by-election, setting what is being described as the highest winning margin in the country's electoral history.

Representing the Mahayuti alliance, Pawar delivered a decisive and one-sided mandate, winning by an unprecedented margin of over 2,18,930 votes by the end of the 24th round of counting. The scale of the victory has drawn national attention and placed Baramati back at the center of political discourse.

Congratulating the victory, Narendra Modi said that NDA leader and Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar has secured an impressive win in the by-polls, highlighting the significance of the mandate.

With this result, Sunetra Pawar has overtaken the previous record held by Sunil Kumar Sharma, who had



won the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections by a margin of 2,14,835 votes. That record had long been considered difficult to surpass, making Pawar's achievement particularly notable.

The victory also marks a significant moment in Baramati's political history,

as Pawar exceeded the previous local record set by her late husband, Ajit Pawar. In the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly elections, Ajit Pawar had won the seat by 1,65,265 votes against BJP candidate Gopichand Padalkar. That margin was widely seen as

unbeatable—until now. The by-election recorded a voter turnout of 58.17 per cent, but the contest remained largely one-sided from the outset. A major factor was the absence of a strong opposition candidate after Congress nominee Akash More withdrew from the race.

Following this withdrawal, Pawar faced 22 candidates, most of whom were independents or represented smaller parties. These included contenders such as RY Ghutukade of the New Rashtriya Samaj Party and Satish Kadam of the Hindustan Janata Party, along with several independent candidates.

Despite the presence of recognizable figures like Karuna Munde, wife of Dhananjay Munde, and reality TV personality Abhijeet Chikhalke, the opposition failed to gain traction.

Collectively, all 22 opponents managed to secure just 4,837 votes—a figure that underscores the scale of Pawar's dominance and the electorate's consolidated support.

## Akhil Gogoi: Lone voice in Oppn camp to win in Assam

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Guwahati

Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi is the only prominent opposition leader in Assam who managed to win the Assembly polls and retain his seat, according to the Election Commission on Monday.

Gogoi retained Sibsagar for the second consecutive term, defeating BJP's Kushal Dowari by 17,272 votes. The Opposition leader polled 86,521 votes compared to Dowari's 69,249.

Another NDA ally, AGP's Prodig Hazarika bagged 14,757 votes, EC data showed. Rajior Dal bagged two seats in the 126-member Assembly, the other being Mehboob Muktar, who won from Dhing with a margin of 71,494 votes. Gogoi, who floated Rajior Dal in October 2020, was a prominent face of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act agitation of Assam. Arrested in December 2019 during the protests, he was charged under UAPA and spent 567 days in jail.

## Sonowal congratulates Assam CM

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Guwahati

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on Monday congratulated Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for leading the BJP-led NDA to a "historic mandate" in the State Assembly elections.

Sonowal, in a statement, said that this historic mandate was a strong endorsement of development-driven governance and people-centric leadership.

"Assam has spoken! In this historic moment, I extend my heartiest congratulations to Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. Your tireless energy and hard work have played a vital role in ensuring that Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's message of development reached every corner of the State," he said.

"Our collective resolve for a safe, secure, and self-reliant Assam will only grow stronger in the days ahead. Our collective resolve to build a developed, secure and self-reliant Assam will grow even stronger in the days ahead," Sonowal added.



He also expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister "for his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to the development of the Northeast."

"The scale of the victory reflects the deep trust the people place in the PM's leadership and the State Government's consistent focus on inclusive growth, infrastructure development and welfare delivery," he said.

Assam has witnessed significant progress across sectors, driven by strong coordination between the Centre and the state, and the renewed mandate provides an opportunity to further

accelerate this double-engine momentum, Sonowal added.

"The people of Assam have once again chosen stability, progress and decisive governance. This mandate is not just a victory — it is a responsibility to serve with greater commitment and dedication," Sonowal said.

The NDA Government will continue to work toward strengthening peace, prosperity and opportunity across the state, with a continued focus on economic growth, youth empowerment, infrastructure expansion and social harmony, he added.



### Leaders speak



**Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday congratulated Vijay on his "spectacular**

**victory" in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Naidu wished him success in his efforts to serve the people of Tamil Nadu. "I extend my congratulations to Thiru Vijay on his spectacular victory in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections," the CM said in a post on X. Likewise, the key NDA ally wished success to the actor-politician in his efforts to contribute meaningfully to the progress and well-being of the people of Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu went to the polls on April 23**

**N CHANDRABABU NAIDU**  
Andhra Pradesh CM



**A former BJP president K Annamalai on Monday hailed the "generational shift" in the state's political landscape**

**following the 2026 Assembly election results, congratulating actor-turned-politician Vijay and his party TVK on a "spectacular debut". "I bow down to the people of TN for your verdict. Happy to see in my land, people have risen in one voice and spoken – no to buying of votes, no to dynastic politics," Annamalai said. The BJP leader, who has consistently campaigned against the Dravidian majors, noted that the state was ready for a new era.**

**K ANNAMALAI**  
Tamil Nadu former BJP president



**YSRCP supremo Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday congratulated Vijay, chief of TVK, on his party emerging as the**

**single largest party in Tamil Nadu in its very first election. "A special and heartfelt shoutout to my dear brother, Vijay! Emerging as the single largest party in your very first election is impressive. Wishing you immense strength and success as you embark on this new chapter of service," Reddy said on X, adding, "God be with you."**

**JAGAN MOHAN REDDY**  
YSRCP Supremo

## TVK: Newest unicorn in political startup map

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The remarkable electoral debut of actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK, which is the front-runner to form the Government in Tamil Nadu, has put the spotlight on political 'startups', very few of which turned 'unicorns' instantly.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has followed in the footsteps of parties such as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in moving to form the Government after its very first electoral outing.

While the AAP had formed the Government with the support of the Congress following its debut election of 2013, the AGP had formed a Government in 1985, soon after its formation, with the support

of the successful independent candidates affiliated with the Assam movement. The TDP had swept the Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls in 1983 with a huge majority, winning 201 seats, a year after its formation. However, not many political startups have turned unicorns, while some took time, others failed to leave an imprint.

Just last year, the Jan Suraj bit the dust. There have been other parties also that created a strong buzz but failed to succeed at the hustings, such as actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam, which drew a blank in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

The TVK from the start created a strong buzz, and with several political 'startups' formed by movie stars doing well in the past in the South, there were high expectations from it in



the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls. The TVK has stunned one and all, causing a major political earthquake in Tamil Nadu by beating both DMK and AIADMK, the two main players in the State since decades.

According to the Election Commission of India (ECI) website, the TVK was leading in 107 seats, the ruling DMK in 58 seats and the AIADMK in 51. The majority mark in the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls is 118.

There are several small 'startup' parties in Bihar, such as the Plurals party headed by Pushpam Priya Choudhary. Then there are small parties that have limited ambitions and survive in pockets, such as Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha. In Uttar Pradesh, there are parties like NISHAD

Party, Peace Party, Apna Dal (Sonelal) and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP).

In India, parties keep getting formed and disappear after a poor showing at the hustings, hardly creating any buzz. But this could not have been said about Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj because it created more than a splash, with many predicting that it could emerge as the next Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Bihar polls. However, the media euphoria around it proved to be a mirage as the party was decimated at the hustings and failed to open its account in any of the 238 seats it contested.

If one looks at the political landscape of the country, there are six national parties — BJP, Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), National People's Party (NPP), and AAP.

## Kerala loss a setback, BJP's Bengal win signals rise of communal forces: CPI(M)

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The CPI(M) on Monday described the latest round of assembly election results as a "serious setback" for the Left, particularly in Kerala, while warning that the growing footprint of the BJP across states poses a wider challenge to secular politics and the Opposition's INDIA bloc.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) said the results in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry reflect the "ascendancy of right-wing communal forces led by the BJP," which it termed "a matter of deep concern for all secular, progressive and democratic forces."

Addressing a press conference, CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby said the results underline "two major features": the defeat of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala after 10 years in power and the BJP's strengthening position in States like West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry. "The LDF was defeated in



CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby

Kerala after ten years of continuous rule, during which it had done its best for the welfare of the people despite financial constraints imposed by the BJP-led Union Government," he said, adding that the party would undertake a "comprehensive introspection" to assess the

reasons behind the reversal.

The CPI(M) also pointed to a churn in Tamil Nadu's political landscape, where actor-politician Vijay's party has emerged as a major force, dealing a setback to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led alliance. "A new political force is inching towards power, reducing other parties to a minority. This is a new development whose implications will have to be watched," Baby said.

Regarding the West Bengal results, he alleged that the BJP's gains were aided by multiple factors, including "strong anti-incumbency against the corrupt" Trinamool Congress government, alongside "communal polarisation, huge money power and misuse of central agencies, including the Election Commission of India."

"Even in such a polarised situation, the Left has marginally improved its performance. In over 30 constituencies, our position has improved, though we expected a far better outcome," he said.



### Sabarinathan, son of Vijay's driver, wins

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Chennai

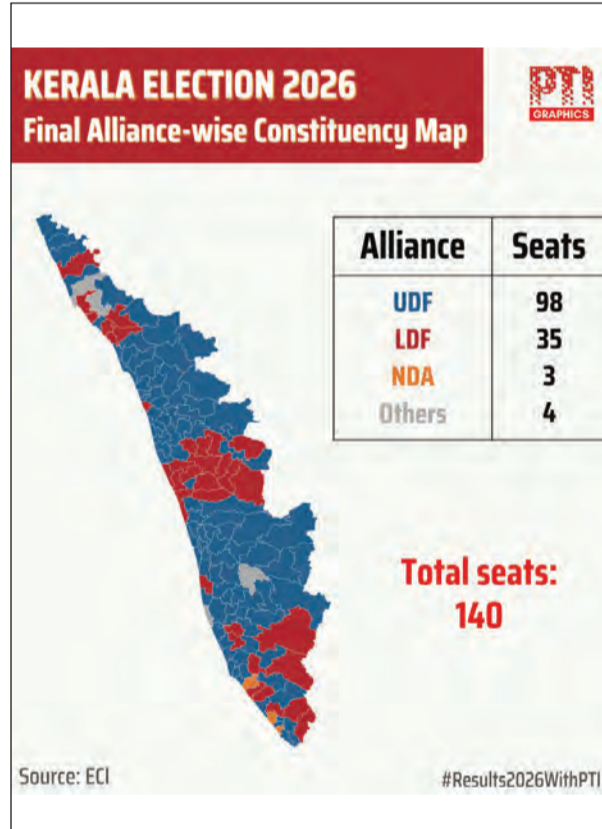
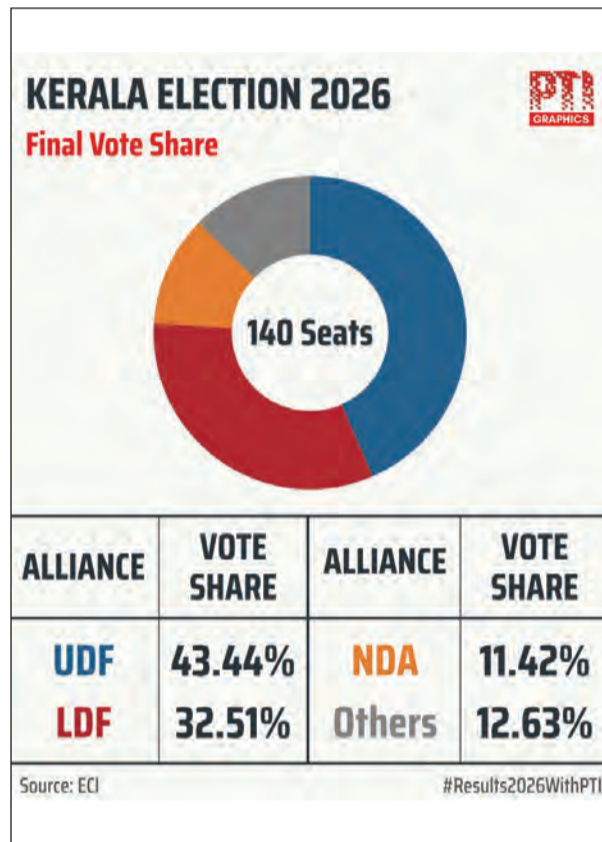
R Sabarinathan, the 30-year-old son of actor-politician Vijay's long-time driver and personal assistant Rajendran, has won in the Virugambakkam Assembly constituency. Sabarinathan, contesting on a Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) ticket, won by 27,086 votes, according to the latest Election Commission figures.

Speaking to reporters briefly after receiving his certificate, Sabarinathan said, "I am very happy with the win and very grateful to Vijay, he has put an end to DMK."

Rajendran has been associated with Vijay since the actor's debut film 'Naalaiya Theerpu', serving as his driver and personal aide.

Sabarinathan emerged as one of the most talked-about candidates of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections after an emotional video of him breaking down on stage went viral, shortly after his name figured among TVK's list of candidates.

The Virugambakkam constituency, located in Chennai district, has changed hands between three different parties across the last five Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.



## 16th Kerala Assembly to have 11 women MLAs

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Thiruvananthapuram

The 16th Kerala Legislative Assembly will have 11 women MLAs, one less than in the previous House. The outgoing Assembly had 12 women legislators, a majority of them from the CPI(M). CPI(M) legislator Kanathil Jameela passed away in November last year.

This time, the CPI(M) will have only one woman MLA-O S Ambika, who won from Attingal by a margin of 13,375 votes.

CPI, an LDF ally, will have one woman MLA compared to two in the previous Assembly, with Geetha Gopi winning from Nattika by 7,093 votes.

The Congress, which swept the election, accounts for the highest number of women MLAs in the new Assembly.

Shanimol Osman won from



Aroor by 9,324 votes, while Ramya Haridas won from Chirayinkeezhu by 1,422 votes.

Congress candidate Vidya Balakrishnan won from Elathur, defeating minister AK Saseendran by 12,162 votes.

Congress leader Bindhu Krishna won from Kollam by 16,830 votes. Thulasi Teacher won from Kongad by 3,706 votes, and Uma Thomas won from Thrikkakara by 50,211 votes.

Congress leader Usha Vijayan won from Mananthavady after defeating minister OR Kelu by 10,543 votes.

The Indian Union Muslim League will have a woman MLA this time after Fathima Thahiliya won from Perambra by 5,087 votes. In addition, KK Rema of the RMP, a UDF ally, retained her seat from Vadakara by 14,862 votes. The Assembly elections in Kerala were held on April 9.

## Kerala voters' trust in us will guide UDF: Priyanka Gandhi

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi

With the Congress-led UDF bagging a major win in the Kerala polls, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday thanked the people of the State for their overwhelming support and vowed to work diligently towards building a better future for them.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "To all my brothers and sisters in Keralam, thank you for your faith and for your overwhelming support. The trust you have placed in us will be the UDF's guiding force as we work hard towards building a better future for each one of you."

"I sincerely hope that our gratitude to you will be evident each day of the next five years as we strive to fulfil our commitments to you with honesty and humility," she added.

"To my family in Wayanad, you have renewed your belief in the UDF with a resounding mandate — 7 out of 7 seats!!



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi

You now have 8 representatives working together towards the development of Wayanad! We will do all we can to live up to your expectations," the MP from Wayanad said.

"To the workers and leaders of the UDF who worked day and night to take our message of a united and progressive Keralam to every household, my heartiest congrat-

ulations, best wishes and gratitude for your tireless efforts," Gandhi's post read. According to the Election Commission website, the UDF was leading or had won in over 95 constituencies and appears poised to secure a comfortable majority in the 140-member House. The UDF is set to form the Government after a decade of LDF rule in the State.

## TVK may form alliance with AIADMK: DMK MP Kalanidhi

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Chennai

DMK MP Dr Kalanidhi Veeraswami said on Monday that to form a government, TVK chief Vijay would possibly form an alliance with AIADMK.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with Chief Minister MK Stalin and others at DMK headquarters, Anna Arivalayam here, Veeraswami said: "This is going to be a hung assembly. So we have to see how it's going to pan out. Whether AIADMK is going to be supporting them (TVK), we'll have to wait and watch."

DMK MP Kanimozhi told

reporters that her party chief had always reiterated that people's verdict must be accepted gracefully.

"And we will have to retrospectively see what we have to do in the future. And whoever has voted, we will definitely work for them," she said.

The TVK is likely to form a Government.

According to the Election Commission website, TVK has won 90 seats and is leading in 12 seats. Similarly, the AIADMK has won 42 seats and is leading in five seats. The DMK has won 50 seats and is leading in 10 seats. Elections to 234 Assembly seats were held on April 23.



## Voters ignore NOTA: Fails to cross 1% in most States

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The remarkable electoral debut of actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK, which is the front-runner to form the Government in Tamil Nadu, has put the spotlight on political 'startups', very few of which turned 'unicorns' instantly.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has followed in the footsteps of parties such as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in moving to form the Government after its very first electoral outing.

While the AAP had formed the Government with the support of the Congress following its debut election of 2013, the AGP had formed a Government in 1985, soon after its formation, with the support of the successful independent candidates affiliated with the Assam movement.

The TDP had swept the Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls in 1983 with a huge majority, winning 201 seats, a year after its formation. However, not many political



startups have turned unicorns, while some took time, others failed to leave an imprint.

Just last year, the Jan Suraj bit the dust. There have been other parties also that created a strong buzz but failed to succeed at the hustings, such as actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam, which drew a blank in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls.

The TVK from the start created a strong buzz, and with several political 'startups' formed by movie stars doing well in the past in the South, there were high expectations from it in the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls. The TVK has stunned one and all, causing a major political earth-

quake in Tamil Nadu by beating both DMK and AIADMK, the two main players in the State since decades. According to the Election Commission of India (ECI) website, the TVK was leading in 107 seats, the ruling DMK in 58 seats and the AIADMK in 51. The majority mark in the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls is 118.

There are several small 'startup' parties in Bihar, such as the Plurals party headed by Pushpam Priya Choudhary. Then there are small parties that have limited ambitions and survive in pockets, such as Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha.



## Editor's TAKE

### The verdict: BJP claims Bengal, TVK pips DMK

May 4 was all about confirming the strengths and limits of political parties, and the verdict showed that claiming India in its entirety remains a distant goal

The biggest takeaway from the May 4 assembly results is that TMC has been dislodged by the BJP, finally. After three terms, Mamata Banerjee has been ousted by the BJP. Yet another surprise came from down south where Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) dislodged the well-entrenched Stalin-led DMK. Both these results are significant from the national perspective and they will have far-reaching implications for the national politics and next general elections. The May 4 verdict yet again confirmed that Indian politics continues to have a double track – a national perspective which is predominant in the North and a regional narrative that sways voters in the South; this is the narrative which speaks to regional identities and southern issues. A few results have been on expected lines. In Assam, the BJP retained power. The party has been going strong since 2016. It has successfully fused identity politics with governance.

The party under Himanta Biswa Sarma has executed welfare schemes, undertaken infrastructure projects that resonated with the voters. He also tactfully calibrated issues like migration and citizenship, which have helped it consolidate support across communities. The leadership of Himanta Biswa Sarma has further sharpened this appeal, combining administrative visibility with political messaging.

West Bengal, however, tells a more complex story. The defeat of Mamata Banerjee and the ouster of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) that came to power in 2011 show the efforts the BJP put in and the anti-incumbency Mamata faced.

Bengal had accumulated grievances – ranging from corruption allegations to concerns about political violence and governance issues, which the voters addressed in their two phase voting. The BJP's rise here is less about ideological conversion and more about discontentment with the Mamata style of functioning. Yet, the scale and durability of this shift will only be tested over time. The southern states, meanwhile played to the Dravidian script, though the third force led by Vijay that appeared recently outsmarted MK Stalin. Thanks to his mass appeal and well-articulate messaging, Vijay became the number one choice of the voters; of course the anti-incumbency and plethora of mis-governance and corruption charges against the Stalin government helped him dislodge the Tamil Nadu stalwart. In Kerala, power alternated once again, with the United Democratic Front (UDF) displacing the Left Democratic Front (LDF). These outcomes underline the persistence of strong regional political cultures and linguistic identities that have kept the BJP at bay in the south. Despite organisational efforts and growing vote share in a few pockets, the party remains a peripheral player. The broader implication is clear: the BJP's strength across large parts of the north, west, and northeast contrasts with its limited footprint in the south.

Meanwhile, regional parties continue to hold ground in their bastions, but the Bengal result shows that anti-incumbency, if left unaddressed, can swiftly alter political equations. These results show that India votes in layers and no one can take Indian voters for granted!

# A historic dawn: The 2026 mandate for governance, culture, and pro-incumbency

We salute the people of Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to every BJP and NDA worker who toiled tirelessly to make this victory possible



SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

May 4th, 2026, was a day of great joy, deep gratitude, and overwhelming emotion. As the election results of 2026 unfolded before us, my heart swelled with pride as I watched the democratic spirit of our great nation roar in favour of development, stability, and cultural revival. This wasn't just an electoral victory; it was a massive validation of the sweat and blood our karyakars have poured into the grassroots over the years.

The absolute crown jewel of this historic moment is undoubtedly West Bengal. This was not a standard political contest; it was a direct battle between the resilient people of Bengal and the cruel Trinamool Congress. And the people have won. They are not just winning by a narrow margin; they have delivered a crushing, almost two-thirds majority. The absolute majority we are securing is a glorious victory for the identity of Bengal, the restoration of democratic values, and the immense sacrifices of our dedicated workers.

For fifteen years, the citizens of Bengal suffocated under a regime that normalised violence, institutionalised corruption, and unleashed a dreaded 'Syndicate Raj'. The massive mandate is a reflection of the deep-rooted frustration people harboured against the TMC. Ordinary Bengalis saw neither development nor dignity in this period. But now, the people have uprooted this autocracy through their vote.

Women have been the pioneers of this historic transformation. The horrific scars left by incidents like Sandeshkhali and RG Kar were answered not with helpless tears, but with the silent, devastating power of the EVM. Despite the unimaginable harassment faced by the RG Kar victim's mother, the women of Bengal responded with a powerful mandate for safety and dignity. Our mothers and sisters have united to show unwavering faith in our leadership.

Let us remember the journey: in 2001, we were at 0. In 2016, we won 3 seats. In 2021, we rose to 77 seats and became the principal opposition. And now, in 2026, the BJP is forming the government in Bengal. This is nothing short of a miracle, but it is a miracle born of years of sacrifice by our workers, relentless struggle, and the trust the people have placed in Prime Minister Modi's vision.

It is more important to note what Mamata Banerjee offered this time. No 'report card' of fifteen years in power. Her entire campaign was limited to abusing the BJP, inflaming the Hindi-



THIS MANDATE CARRIES ONE CLEAR MESSAGE: WHETHER IT IS BENGAL, ASSAM, KERALA, PUDUCHERRY, OR TAMIL NADU, WHEREVER THE BJP AND NDA HAVE EARNED THE PEOPLE'S TRUST, THE PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED WITH OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

The writer is National Spokesperson, BJP, and a former Member of the Rajya Sabha

dailypioneer @syedzafarBJP The Pioneer

Bengali divide, and shielding the corrupt. She even brought in people from other states to campaign for her. But nothing worked.

For years, the TMC insulted Sanatan Dharma, hurt Hindu sentiments, and weaponised appeasement politics. TMC ministers openly threatened Hindus in order to appease their vote bank. The people of Bengal have made it clear: those who disrespect Sanatan will not be accepted in Bengal.

Looking towards the Northeast, Assam stands out as the ultimate masterclass in governance. Assam is a classic example of how a BJP government fundamentally transforms a state and builds an unbreakable bond of trust with its people. What we see here is the glorious victory of 'pro-incumbency', a phenomenon where voters actively reward good performance. In all three terms, our government in Assam has been formed with progressively greater support from the public. In this third consecutive term, we are forming the government with an unprecedented more than three-fourths majority. The people of Assam have firmly backed the 'Double-Engine' growth and the decisive actions taken against illegal infiltration. In BJP-governed states, voters do not turn against the government; they reaffirm their trust in it, because we make promises and we keep them. Every single one. While the opposition chose to shield infiltrators, the citizens chose a government committed to protecting their civilisation and driving infrastructure growth.

Down south, Kerala is witnessing an altogether new beginning. We have established ourselves as a strong choice in Kerala. We have won 3 seats, and history reminds us that the number '3' is incredibly lucky for us. Just as we once started with 3 seats in Bengal in 2016, jumped to 77 in

the next term, and are now sweeping the state to form the government. Kerala is on the same trajectory. The Lotus has now been seeded and is ready to bloom soon. In the upcoming tenures, we will form the government for sure.

In Puducherry, the mandate for continuity is clear as day. We are proudly forming the government for the second consecutive term, proving that the stability provided by the NDA resonates deeply with the public. The journey towards a developed territory continues uninterrupted.

In Tamil Nadu, while we humbly accept the mandate and recognise that we must work harder on the ground, there is a massive silver lining. The DMK's crushing defeat in Tamil Nadu sends a thunderous message: "Insult to Sanatan will NOT be tolerated by India." The rejection of Chief Minister MK Stalin and Udhayanidhi Stalin makes it crystal clear: the people of Tamil Nadu have completely cast aside those who abuse Sanatan, those who obstruct the path of Deepam, and those who try to divide the nation in the name of region and language.

While we celebrate this beautiful festival of democracy, the state of the principal opposition is truly pathetic. At a time when election results are unfolding and their defeated leaders desperately need moral support, Rahul Gandhi is completely missing from the battlefield. Instead

of standing with his cadre, he is away on a foreign visit, as always. A leader who does not stand beside his workers in the hour of crisis, who abandons his party's leaders and ground-level workers on this decisive moment to travel abroad-how can such a person aspire to lead the people of India? Another feather in his crown is his completion of a century of defeats. This glaring absence proves why the nation has decisively chosen our relentless dedication over the irresponsible leadership of the Congress party.

This mandate carries one clear message: whether it is Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, or Tamil Nadu, wherever the BJP and NDA have earned the people's trust, the people have responded with overwhelming support. Across these five states, only the BJP and NDA retained their governments, returning with even greater support. This is not merely an electoral victory. It is the people of India placing their seal of approval on 'Modi's Guarantee.'

We salute the people of Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to every BJP and NDA worker who toiled tirelessly to make this victory possible. We now take the pledge to serve with even greater responsibility and dedication, to live up to every expectation the people have placed in us. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' — this is our mantra, and this is our path forward.



## PIC TALK



A squirrel feeds on a blooming Gulmohar flower on a tree branch, in New Delhi. PHOTO: PTI

## Why do some people remain intensely apolitical?



ASHA IYER KUMAR

### 2ND OPINION

My aged mother, living in one of the six states that went to the Assembly polls, was unsure if she would cast her ballot this time because of poor health. However, members of a certain party made arrangements for her commute to the polling booth, where she was told she could not vote. She had misplaced her Aadhaar card, and that stopped her from participating in the democratic process she had rarely missed. Yet she was not disappointed, for, in her words, "it doesn't matter who comes to power. They are all the same."

She and my late father had an allegiance to the Congress party and would show support to the "hand" regardless of who the candidate was. It had little to do with the party's ideology; they were not concerned about what the party had come to be. Their loyalty was rooted

in history. For many people like me, national politics is not a staple. It is something we encounter in passing, in fragments-like news playing in a waiting room. For those who are deeply political, this may seem like indifference towards democracy or a lack of conviction about our right to choose how we are governed. It is not so. For many who consider themselves apolitical, the distance arises from confusion, disillusionment, and fatigue.

It brings to mind George Orwell's Animal Farm, where the promise of equality and justice slowly slips into moral compromise, exposing the decay within political systems. In recent times, we have seen new entrants like AAP promise clean governance and change. Yet, over time, principles appear diluted amid accusations and defections, leading to crises of credibility.

This raises a difficult question: is clean governance, or even change itself, sustainable in a world that quietly prioritises self-interest over public good? The recurring cycle of hope and disappointment reinforces the belief that "all are the same", keeping many at a distance from political engagement.

At the same time, we live in an era where a film star can become a political force almost overnight — not necessarily because of governance credentials, but due to

mass appeal. Vijay's entry into politics in Tamil Nadu reflects this ongoing fusion of cinema and politics. Whether this marks a meaningful shift or simply adds to the spectacle remains to be seen.

For many citizens, what matters most is stability. Who governs is less important than how governance affects daily life. People care about whether their lives become easier, safer, and more secure. Ideology matters, but only when it translates into tangible outcomes. Without that, party names and positions lose significance.

Being ideologically neutral does not mean being uninformed or indifferent. For many, it is not an absence of thought but a refusal to be confined by rigid political identities. Parties demand alignment, but individuals often live with contradictions. One can value secularism while also advocating equality; these are not mutually exclusive.

When political systems force binary choices, those who prefer nuance often step back—not from issues, but from the pressure to conform. They are not anti-political, merely less vocal. They understand that thoughtful engagement does not always need to be loud or polarised.



The writer is a Dubai-based author, columnist, independent journalist and children's writing coach

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## NOTIFIABLE STATUS FOR LEPROSY CAN IMPROVE EARLY DETECTION

Apropos "Government set to declare leprosy a notifiable disease" (*The Pioneer*, May 2), Delhi will become the sixth state after Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttarakhand to make the disease notifiable. This step will strengthen surveillance, help control transmission, enable early diagnosis, improve treatment compliance, and reduce stigma. Effective management of leprosy, along with ensuring free drugs to the needy, could be significantly bolstered by this move.

Leprosy is a chronic disease which, if diagnosed and treated promptly, can be completely cured. Notification should promote easier access to drugs for all patients. Although India was declared a "leprosy-free"

country in 2005, in line with World Health Organisation standards of less than one case per 10,000 population, the disease continues to be reported in several parts of the country. Making it notifiable will require every doctor treating a patient to report the case to the district leprosy officer, ensuring proper monitoring and follow-up.

The remaining states should follow the example set by Delhi and the five others in making leprosy notifiable.

The WHO has strongly recommended including the disease in the notifiable list to improve public health outcomes. Such a coordinated approach will be crucial in moving closer to the complete eradication of leprosy in India.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

## Reels craze turns deadly

An adventure turned into a horrifying misadventure for a team of five youngsters in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharth Nagar, who climbed atop a water tank to shoot reels, once again reminds us how today's youth ignore precautions and risk their precious lives for social media attention.

The accident occurred when the stairs collapsed and three children fell from the structure, killing one, seriously injuring two, and leaving two others stranded atop the tank. They were later rescued in a joint operation involving the fire department and the Indian Air Force, which airlifted them to safety. Present-day youth love adventure, challenges, and new horizons. However, it is alarming that in their quest to make an impression, many chase reels and selfies, often risking their lives by attempting dangerous feats. What they forget is the fatal risk involved in such actions, endangering not only themselves but also causing immense distress to their families. Parents and teachers have a vital role to play and must guide them to avoid such life-threatening risks. A reckless attempt to film social media reels atop a water tank in Siddharth Nagar turned tragic, exposing how the youth's pursuit of online attention often comes at the cost of safety and life.

M PRADYU | KANNUR

## When development destroys nature

Industrialisation cannot be allowed to bulldoze ecological truth, especially in a fragile and irreplaceable region like the Nicobar Islands. These islands are not empty land banks waiting for corporate occupation; they are living, breathing ecosystems rich in biodiversity, deeply rooted indigenous cultures, and nature's own defence against climate catastrophe.

Yes, development is necessary. But a model of growth that destroys forests, uproots indigenous communities, and weakens climate resilience is not development; it is exploitation legitimised by policy and powered by profit.

When voices rise against deforestation, they are not obstacles—they are the conscience of democracy. Silencing them is not governance; it is the erosion of accountability. True democracy thrives not on blind approval, but on informed resistance. The forests of the Nicobar Islands are not expendable assets. They are shields against cyclones and rising seas, lifelines for indigenous communities, reservoirs of rare flora and fauna, and pillars of ecological balance. To justify deforestation in the name of industrialisation is to gamble recklessly with our collective future. When forests fall, civilisations do not rise — they collapse.

BRUHASPATI SAMAL | BHUBANESWAR

## Diplomacy needs responsible language

US President Donald Trump recently reposted on social media a commentary by American radio host Michael Savage, in which Savage described India and China as "hellholes". India rightly termed the post "uninformed, inappropriate and in poor taste" — a rather mild response to such offensive language. Trump ought to exercise greater caution in his public remarks. The US President has frequently used outlandish language to describe foreign nations and leaders. Recently, he also targeted Canada, a long-standing ally. In early 2026, he criticised Prime Minister Mark Carney, calling him "ungrateful" and claiming Canada depended entirely on the United States. Carney responded firmly, stating that Canada "thrives because we are Canadian".

Trump's remarks on Greenland and his rhetoric following the death of Ali Khamenei further strained global sensitivities. His aggressive posturing, alongside actions involving Benjamin Netanyahu, has drawn criticism worldwide. Even Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva cautioned that Trump was "not elected to be emperor of the world".

Such language undermines diplomacy and global respect.

HARIDASAN RAJAN | KOZHIKODE



## The forgotten martyrs: India's forest guards are dying to save the forests

There is no uniform, no applause, and often no backup. Deep inside India's forests, far from public view, frontline foresters — guards, rangers, and wardens — fight a relentless war against timber smugglers, mining mafias, and armed poachers, even as they confront wild animals and unforgiving terrain



VK BAHUGUNA

Forest protection is becoming a real challenge for frontline field foresters like Forest Guards, Rangers, and Wildlife Wardens in view of emerging, well-coordinated mafias with the latest superior weaponry. Over the last 30 to 35 years, thousands of forest personnel have lost their lives to protect natural resources all over the world. India is frequently cited by the International Ranger Federation (IRF) as the most dangerous country for foresters. In a typical three-year period, IRF statistics have shown that India accounts for nearly 30-40 per cent of all global forester deaths. India has the highest number of forest staff fatalities in the world, with reports highlighting hundreds of injuries and deaths in the line of duty. Between 2012 and 2017, India accounted for nearly 31 per cent (162) of the 526 forest ranger deaths reported globally. Compared to this, between 2006 and 2021, the IRF recorded approximately 2,351 casualties across 82 countries.

Thus, thousands of foresters' lives are lost in the line of duty due to attacks by timber smugglers and poachers; conflicts with elephants, tigers, leopards, and other wild animals during patrolling; and occupational hazards such as forest fires, malaria, and water-borne diseases. Not only frontline staff but also senior IFS officers like DFOs, Conservators, and National Park Directors have been killed in India.

P Srinivas, a 1979 IFS officer, who was beheaded by the sandalwood smuggler Veerappan in 1992, is now an icon of civil service sacrifice for the sake of duty, and at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy and other such academies, a P Srinivas Memorial Lecture is arranged every year during the foundation course of civil servants by the Government of India. P Srinivas was awarded the Kirti Chakra for his sacrifice. Similarly, Sanjay Singh, a 1992 batch IFS officer and DFO Rohtas, was killed by Maoists in February 2002.

Apart from foresters, large numbers of local people are also killed by wild animals in conflicts. Over the last 25 years, 1,296 people were killed by animals, mostly in recent years. In Uttarakhand alone, during 2025, 40 people were killed by leopards and 72 were attacked by bears. In this article, however, I want to discuss more about the problems of forest department staff because, if remedial measures are taken, then attacks on locals will also be reduced.

Members of the IFS, as also other ranks, work in difficult areas where civic facilities are poor, and they have to battle organised timber and mining mafias and well-equipped wildlife poachers with very primitive tools, while the mafias are equipped with advanced gadgets and weapons. When personnel are killed or seriously injured, they are left to their own fate, and their families suffer ignominiously. Compensation from state governments is poor, delayed, and sometimes ignored completely.

The Indian Forest Service Association (IFS) took note of the pitiable conditions of such personnel and constituted the Indian Forest Service Benevolent and Welfare Trust (IFSBWT) to bridge that gap with immediate financial relief and to complement the support extended by the states. Initially, this was meant for IFS officers but has now been made applicable to all categories of forest personnel in the country.

The Trust was originally established in July 2008 by a group of Indian Forest Service officers in Delhi as a public charitable trust under the provisions of the Registration Act, 1908, so that bereaved families of IFS officers who die in harness can be assisted. Recently, it has been noted that largely frontline forestry personnel are killed or grievously injured while attempting to stop illegal mining, smuggling, encroachment, and poaching across several states; therefore, in January 2026, the Trust substantially widened its scope to include all frontline staff, as the majority of casualties and injuries occur mainly among Foresters, Guards, and Watchers, who are the real green warriors at the delivery point and the only line of defence for the country's forests.

Supporting these frontline warriors and their families was therefore made the foremost priority of



### The Pioneer SINCE 1865

THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS NEEDS TO TAKE UP THESE SUGGESTIONS ON A WAR FOOTING, AS THE COUNTRY'S ECOLOGICAL WARRIORS CAN ONLY BE NEGLECTED AT THE PERIL OF DESTABILISING FOOD, WATER, AND ECOLOGICAL STABILITY

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 bahuguna-vk-39b46350

the Trust. Accordingly, the Trust was re-registered on February 11, 2026, with an expanded mandate covering all categories of forestry field personnel in the country, from IFS officers to Forest Guards and below.

Notwithstanding the attempts by the IFS Central Association, society and government must take the lead to ameliorate the pitiable working conditions under which Forest Guards, Foresters, and Rangers have to work in a hostile environment, which is more often than not made vicious by the political patronage of mafias, especially the mining mafia.

To address this issue and improve the welfare of "Green Soldiers", concrete measures need to be taken. First and foremost is to vest frontline staff with legal powers by granting forest officers the authority for the "minimal and proportionate use of force", similar to the police, to deter organised crime such as sand, timber, and poacher mafias.

Further legal protection should be provided against frivolous counter-complaints filed by offenders to harass forest staff. Amend state rules to provide Section 187 of BNSS protection to all field staff, ensuring they cannot be prosecuted for actions taken in the line of duty without prior government sanction. Second, provide modern and effective firearms and tactical training to field staff working in high-conflict zones so they are not outgunned by poachers.

Third, provide financial and social security by ensuring a minimum uniform ex gratia of at least ₹50 lakh for unnatural deaths in the line of duty across all states, and continuing their last drawn salary for the family of the deceased until the retirement date. In addition, the government must extend schemes like the PM Scholarship for children of deceased armed forces personnel to the children of forest martyrs.

Next is to ensure better infrastructure for frontline staff, as in the police, by improving remote forest beats with basic amenities such as potable water, electricity, and high-quality field gear like satellite phones, fast-moving, good-quality vehicles, drones, night vision, GPS, etc. A Forest Housing Corporation should be established in each state with 100 per cent grants from the Central Government on the same pattern as in the police department. Immediate access to emergency medical support and air evacuation for staff injured in remote areas must also be ensured.

Last but not least is to institute the President's Green Gallantry Medals specifically for foresters, on a par with police or military medals, to boost morale and public respect for the service.

On the organisational front, it is necessary to separate protection and enforcement from development and silviculture. States need to create dedicated anti-poaching and protection units at the division level.

These teams should consist of physically fit, tactically trained personnel whose only job is patrolling and enforcement, leaving plantation and other work to a separate administrative wing. States also need to create an intelligence wing at the range level to build an intelligence network.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests needs to take up these suggestions on a war footing, as the country's ecological warriors can only be neglected at the peril of destabilising food, water, and ecological stability.

## The mindshifts behind Ujjwala's decade of change



NIDHI PRABHA TEWARI

As Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana completes a decade, its relevance goes beyond its metrics. For policymakers elsewhere, the key question is not just what was achieved, but how a system constrained by inertia began to move at scale. The answer lies in a set of fundamental mindshifts — what the Causing Incredible Performance framework calls Reset Mind: identifying and altering the thoughts that limit action. Ujjwala shows that when the way a problem is seen changes, execution follows—offering a practical lens for large-scale policy design.

### 1. From scarcity to abundance

For decades, clean cooking fuel was treated as a scarce, urban-oriented resource. Access was rationed

and expansion cautious.

Ujjwala flipped this. It operated from a stance of abundance—that clean energy access could be expanded rapidly and equitably. This enabled a shift from incrementalism to ambition, from "how much can we give" to "how many should we reach". Scale became possible because the mental ceiling was lifted before the operational one.

### 2. From 'available biomass' to valued outcomes

In rural contexts, biomass was seen as a sufficient basis for cooking energy. Improved cookstoves and biogas were promoted, but adoption remained limited. Ujjwala forced a more fundamental question: what outcomes matter—time saved, health improved, dignity enhanced?

Reframing the issue in terms of outcomes made it possible to see LPG not as a replacement for tradition, but as an enabler of new choices. Biomass, in turn, could be used differently.

### 3. From inevitability to intentionality

A persistent belief in large systems is that change will happen gradually through rising incomes or education. Yet before Ujjwala, LPG adoption in rural areas remained slow.

PMUY shifted this from passive expectation to deliberate action—setting ambitious goals, mobilising supply chains, and driving adoption with urgency. This move—from inevitability to intentionality—explains the leap from stagnation to visible change.

### 4. From untargeted subsidies to smarter targeting

A key hesitation was whether another subsidised scheme would strain public finances.

Prior groundwork through PAHAL—direct benefit transfer, de-duplication, and better targeting—enabled more prudent subsidy management. This helped address fiscal concerns while enabling expansion at scale.

### 5. From doubts about readiness to confident adoption

Safety concerns were real: would first-time users—often in fire-prone homes—handle LPG safely? LPG expands nearly 250 times when released, creating a flammable cloud.

What followed challenged this assumption. As households adopted LPG, they learned to use it safely. Oil marketing companies invested in user education, and the widespread presence of the red cylinder built shared community knowledge. Along with a robust product, this enabled a shift from fear to confident adoption.



### 6. From affordability concerns to gradual adoption

Affordability was another concern: would households pay for refills, especially when women are not always decision-makers? Should cheaper alternatives come first? Ujjwala resisted creating a lower-tier product, offering instead the same LPG system used by the middle class.

Adoption has been gradual. Many households began using LPG selectively—during illness, for guests, or in adverse weather—before integrating it into daily cooking. Others transitioned faster; some still face constraints. Over time, LPG has found a place in household budgets. Refill rates have risen from about 3 to around 5 cylinders annually, supported by smaller cylinders, financing options, and better last-mile delivery.

### Conclusion: Policy as a function of perception

These shifts point to something deeper than a successful scheme: policy outcomes are shaped by the thoughts that precede them.

The scale and direction of Ujjwala were driven by a decisive shift in thinking at the highest levels. Leadership from PM Shri Narendra Modi and the then Petroleum Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan helped reframe clean cooking as a national priority anchored in dignity and access. This reset was carried forward by public sector oil marketing companies, their distributor networks, and frontline functionaries, along with women on the ground, who translated intent into execution.

It also reframed women from passive beneficiaries to customers, raising expectations and improving service delivery.

As India designs future interventions—in energy, health, or livelihoods—the lesson is clear: execution improves when perception shifts. The goal is not to prescribe a single path, but to understand which interventions deliver faster, larger, and more valued outcomes—and under what conditions.

The writer is a public policy practitioner and co-founder of Athulya Performance Facilitators, where she works with public leaders on achieving results at scale. She has worked on the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for five years  
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## Defection by design: How the 'merger' clause is reshaping Parliament



ABHINAV K SHUKLA

ABHINAV NARAYAN JHA

A recent political development in the Rajya Sabha has once again exposed a constitutional paradox that has long remained under-examined. Seven Members of Parliament belonging to the Aam Aadmi Party—six representing Punjab and one representing Delhi—have shifted allegiance to the Bharatiya Janata Party. Numerically, this constitutes more than two-thirds of the party's strength in the House, thereby attracting the "merger" exception under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Constitutionally, the recognition of this shift by the Chairperson is unassailable. Normatively, however, it raises a deeper question: has the law, in preserving stability, diluted representation?

The anti-defection framework, introduced through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985, was designed to combat political opportunism and ensure party discipline. It sought to prevent elected representatives from betraying the

mandate on which they were elected. Yet, it also carved out an exception: where not less than two-thirds of a legislature party agree to a merger, disqualification would not follow. This exception, found in Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule, was conceived as a pragmatic safeguard, recognising that political realignments at the party level may sometimes be legitimate.

However, what appears doctrinally sound begins to fray when tested against the institutional role of the Rajya Sabha. Unlike the directly elected lower house, the Rajya Sabha is not merely a chamber of political contestation; it is a federal institution. It is designed as the Council of States, a forum where states, through their indirectly elected representatives, participate in national law-making. Members are elected by state legislative assemblies, embedding within them a fiduciary obligation to articulate state-specific concerns in the Union legislature.

This design reflects a carefully calibrated constitutional vision. India may be described as a "Union of States", but its parliamentary architecture ensures that states are not rendered voiceless in national decision-making. The Rajya Sabha acts as a deliberative check on the Lok Sabha, scrutinising legislation and, in many cases, serving as the final gatekeeper. No ordinary legislation can become law without its assent; constitutional amendments require its concurrence by a special majority. In matters affecting the federal balance, the Constitution goes even further, mandating ratification by at least half of the states under Article 368 of the Constitution of India.



Against this backdrop, the recent shift assumes a different character. Punjab sends seven members to the Rajya Sabha. These members were elected by a state legislature led by the Aam Aadmi Party, reflecting a particular political mandate within the state. Their role, therefore, extended beyond partisan alignment; they were expected to serve as the voice of Punjab in national deliberations, especially where central legislation might affect state interests.

When six out of these seven members realign with the ruling party at the Centre, a structural tension emerges. Can representatives, elected through one political mandate within a state, effectively discharge their representative function after aligning with a different political formation, particularly one that governs at the Union level?

More pointedly, can they meaningfully oppose or scrutinise the very executive they now politically support?

The anti-defection law offers a formal answer: yes. By treating such a shift as a "merger", it immunises these members from disqualification. But this legal fiction—that a legislative supermajority necessarily reflects a genuine party merger—deserves closer scrutiny. In practice, what is being recognised is not always the merger of political parties at the organisational level, but rather the coordinated defection of legislators. The distinction is subtle but constitutionally significant.

The original intent behind the merger exception was to accommodate situations where an entire political party, as an organisational entity, decides to merge with another. The two-thirds threshold was introduced to address a practical concern: what if a faction of legislators resists such a decision? The Constitution sought to protect both collective political strategy and individual legislative autonomy. It did not intend to provide a route for large-scale defections that leave the original party structure intact but hollowed out within the legislature.

This is where the present episode becomes instructive. The constitutional mechanism has operated correctly; the outcome, however, appears to strain the spirit of the provision. What we witness is not merely a shift in party numbers, but a potential erosion of the federal voice that the Rajya Sabha is meant to embody.

The deeper concern, therefore, is institutional rather than partisan. If the composition of a state's

representation in the Rajya Sabha can be effectively transformed mid-term through the merger exception, the link between state mandate and parliamentary voice becomes attenuated. The Council of States risks becoming, in effect, a chamber of shifting political loyalties rather than stable federal representation.

This is not to argue for an absolutist anti-defection regime. Political mobility and realignment are intrinsic to a democratic system. But when constitutional provisions designed for stability begin to undermine representational integrity, a recalibration becomes necessary. One possible approach is to revisit the interpretation of "merger" to require demonstrable organisational integration between parties, rather than merely a numerical threshold within the legislature. Another is to reconsider whether members elected to represent states should be held to a higher standard of accountability in cases of political realignment.

Ultimately, the question is not whether the law has been followed—it has. The question is whether the law, as currently structured and interpreted, continues to serve the constitutional vision it was meant to uphold. In the quiet arithmetic of two-thirds, we may be witnessing the gradual dilution of something far more substantive: the voice of the states in India's parliamentary democracy.

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### Order Order

## SC seeks Centre's response on plea seeking filling of vacancies in Armed Forces Tribunal

Taking note of vacancies in the Armed Forces Tribunal, the Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea seeking to complete the process of selection and fill the vacant posts in a time-bound manner.

While agreeing to hear the petition, a bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked Attorney General R Venkataramani to assist it in the matter. The bench told the counsel appearing for the petitioner – Armed Forces Tribunal Bar Association (Regional Bench) – to hand over the petition to the office of the attorney general.

The bench posted the matter for hearing after two weeks. The advocate appearing for the petitioner said out of the 11 benches of the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), only three would be functional by the end of the year if the vacancies were not filled.



## Thane man acquitted in kidnap & rape case; court cites victim's consent

A Thane court has acquitted a 27-year-old man in a kidnapping and rape case, noting that the victim was an adult and had accompanied him voluntarily.

As the victim was a major, she was competent to make her own decisions, Special POCSCO Court Judge Ruby U Malvankar said in the order on April 24, a copy of which was made available on Monday.

An FIR was registered on January 25, 2020, against Shashikapur Shyamal Gupta, a resident of Kalwa in Maharashtra's Thane city, on a complaint by the victim's father, alleging that his 16-year-old daughter was kidnapped from their home in the same area.

The police subsequently traced the girl and the accused to Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, where the couple claimed they had married in a temple before moving to Surat in Gujarat. The man faced charges under sections 363 (kidnapping), 376 (rape), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code, and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.



## SC slams Registry for not issuing notice to ED

**PIONEER NEW SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

In a rare and scathing rebuke of its own back-office, the Supreme Court on Monday lashed out at the apex court Registry, terming its conduct "nasty" and saying its officials think they are acting as "super Chief Justice of India".

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made the observation while hearing a bail plea filed by Ayushi Mittal alias Ayushi Agarwal, an accused in an alleged investment fraud to the tune of more than ₹37,000 crore.

The CJI referred to an order passed on March 23 on the

plea, and wondered how the registry officials construed that the bench did not issue notice to the Enforcement Directorate and other respondents on the plea.

"The registry is acting very nasty," the CJI said, adding, "Very nasty registry. Each one sitting here considers themselves as super Chief Justice of India."

The bench in its fresh order said, "Notice has not been issued to the ED director stating no such order was passed. Let a fact finding inquiry be undertaken by the registrar judicial (of the apex court) as to how our March 23 order does not mean notice to the ED. Let notice be served to



the Directorate of Enforcement." The petitioner, Ayushi Mittal, her husband, and their company are accused of orchestrating a massive investment fraud.

While the defence claims a substantial portion of the funds had been returned to the investors, several hundred

crores of rupees remain in bank accounts currently frozen by the ED.

In its March 23 order, the bench had allowed an oral prayer by the counsel for the Rajasthan Government, a party in the case, to make the ED a party to the proceedings.

The purpose was to determine whether all movable and immovable assets belonging to the petitioner and her extended family had been properly attached.

The bench reiterated that it would not consider the merits of the bail plea until a "comprehensive description" of assets is provided.

It had ordered the petitioner's legal representative to

file an exhaustive affidavit detailing the immovable properties owned by the petitioner, her husband, their children and parents and siblings and parents-in-law.

It also sought details of assets of the company directors, managers, and key staff members. "Until such complete details are provided, we will not consider the plea for bail on its merits," the bench had said.

The registrar judicial has been tasked with investigating the administrative lapse within the Registry to identify why the court's previous instructions were ignored.

The bench said it will list the plea sometime in May.

## Engineer Rashid moves HC to modify interim bail order

**PIONEER NEW SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Baramulla MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid on Monday urged the Delhi High Court to modify its earlier order granting him one-week interim bail in a terror funding case and allow him to be with his ailing father, who has been shifted to AIIMS Delhi from Srinagar.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Madhu Jain, which had confined the Baramulla MP to Srinagar for the duration of his interim bail, listed the matter for hearing on Tuesday and asked him to furnish a local address.

The senior counsel for Rashid submitted that he has a flat in Delhi, which has been allotted to him as a member of Parliament. The court, however, observed that it would not permit Rashid to stay in a place that also houses other MPs.



"That is not good enough. You can't be in the MP house where other MPs are living. I can't permit that. It will be a security issue," the bench said.

The senior counsel said he would furnish the address of a private residence to the court.

The National Investigation Agency's (NIA) counsel submitted that since the court has effectively granted custody

parole in the matter and Rashid was no longer required to be outside Delhi, he should be permitted to visit his father from the jail itself, especially when the interim bail was expiring on May 6.

Custody parole entails a prisoner being escorted by armed police personnel to his place of visit.

The NIA lawyer further stated that the condition of the petitioner's father was stable and he was shifted to AIIMS Delhi on the family's request.

Rashid's counsel said that pursuant to the interim bail, he was released on April 30 and reached Srinagar the same day.

He said Rashid's father was airlifted to AIIMS Delhi after his health took a serious turn, but he was unable to relocate himself on account of the court order confining him to Srinagar.

"I am stuck in Srinagar. I am not allowed to come. He is here. I am there," the senior lawyer said.

## HC junks SpiceJet's plea to review ₹144 cr payment order in dispute with Maran

**PIONEER NEW SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed pleas by SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh seeking a review of an earlier order to deposit ₹144 crore in connection with its legal dispute with media baron Kalanidhi Maran and Kal Airways.

Justice Subramonium Prasad also imposed cost of ₹50,000 on the airline and Singh. "Dismissed with cost of ₹50,000," the judge said while pronouncing the verdict.

On January 19, the court had directed SpiceJet and Singh to deposit ₹144 crore with the registry within six weeks



against an admitted liability of ₹194 crore. On March 18, time to make the deposit was extended by four weeks.

Singh and his budget airline sought reconsideration of the March 18 direction on several counts, including financial distress amid the ongoing

war in West Asia. SpiceJet instead offered a commercial property in Gurugram as security and informed the court that the Centre was willing to offer it some assistance.

Maran and Kal Airways opposed the review petitions,

saying the issues arising from financial distress had already been considered and rejected by the Supreme Court.

The matter arises from a dispute regarding the non-issuance of warrants in favour of Maran after the transfer of ownership to Singh, the controlling shareholder of SpiceJet.

The dispute started after Singh took back control of SpiceJet in February 2015 amid a financial crisis at the airline.

Maran and Kal Airways had transferred their entire 35.04 crore equity shares, amounting to a 58.46 per cent stake, in SpiceJet, to its co-founder, Singh, in February 2015 for just ₹2.

The Delhi High Court has protected the personality rights of actor Arjun Kapoor and restrained the unauthorised use of his name, voice, image, likeness, photograph, unique persona and signature were liable to be protected from any exploitation.

The court observed that an "overwhelming number of screenshots" in the actor's lawsuit revealed a prima facie infringement of his personality/publicity rights, especially through content generated through AI tools, for unlawful financial gain. It concluded that if relief was denied at this

stage, Kapoor would suffer irreparable loss and injury, and the dent to his personality might not be adequately compensated in monetary terms.

"Clearly, those defendants who have employed AI tools to create videos containing sexually explicit and abhorrent content are demonstrably violating the personality/publicity rights of the plaintiff. In fact, such videos are vulgar and clearly would dent the image and the personality rights of the plaintiff, not only beyond measure, but presumably, irreparably too. Such content cannot be permitted to continue to be available on any platforms in any manner whatsoever and are needed to be taken down forthwith," the court stated.

"The tabulated depiction of various infringing activities alleged to be carried out by the defendants clearly demonstrates that these defendants are unauthorisedly misappropriating the personality and publicity rights exclusively vested with the plaintiff.



## Delhi HC protects actor Arjun Kapoor's personality rights

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## SC asks Lok Sabha MP to approach Patna HC with request to list his pending petition

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday granted liberty to Lok Sabha MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav to approach the Patna High Court requesting it to list his pending petition seeking upgradation of his security cover from 'Y' to 'Z' category.

Yadav, a sitting MP from Bihar's Purnia constituency, has sought upgradation of his security cover citing alleged threats from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's gang.

His counsel told a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi that the High Court had on November 19, 2024 issued notice on Yadav's plea



seeking upgradation of his security cover but neither that order was uploaded nor the matter was listed for hearing.

"Do you need 'Z' category security?" the bench asked his counsel.

Yadav's counsel said the MP has received threats from

the Bishnoi gang and despite repeated request made before the High Court, his petition has not been listed for hearing after November 2024.

He alleged that earlier 'Y plus' security was given to the MP but it was only on paper. "You have private guards?"

the bench asked his counsel, who said the MP does not have private guards.

Yadav's counsel said they were only seeking that the petition pending before the High Court be heard.

The bench granted him liberty to move a formal application before the High Court with a prayer to list his pending petition.

The top court said it has no doubt that the High Court would consider the request and pass appropriate order.

While 11 personnel are allotted for Y category, 22 are allotted for Z category.

The VIP security cover under the central protection list begins from the highest Z-plus (ASL) to Z-plus, Z, Y, Y-plus and X.

## SC seeks report from Karnataka Govt on actor Darshan's plea

**PIONEER NEW SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a report from the Karnataka Government on a plea filed by actor Darshan, arrested in the Renukaswamy murder case, alleging he was being denied basic amenities like food in prison.

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan issued notice to the state Government on the actor's plea.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Darshan, submitted that the actor is being denied the basic amenities because the court had



made an observation that no five-star treatment should be given to him in jail.

"This is that case in which my Lords were pleased to cancel the bail of this petitioner, he was an actor..."

"Your Lordships made an observation in the order that he should not get five-star treatment in jail. Due to that direction, I am not even given basic amenities," he said. The top court had on August 14 last year cancelled the bail granted to Darshan and other accused persons in the case. Rohatgi submitted that the actor has been put in a quarantine cell, where there is no light and he is not getting food. The top court took note of the submission and sought a report from the judge on the status of the trial.

"We would like to know how many witnesses have been examined and how many witnesses the State proposes to examine. We would also like to have a fair idea of how much time the trial court is likely to take before it is concluded.

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre, all States and Union territories on a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026.

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## SC agrees to hear AgustaWestland middleman James' plea for release from jail

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear the plea of alleged middleman Christian Michel James in the ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case seeking his release from jail.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice to the Centre, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and sought their response in four weeks.

James has challenged Article 17 of the treaty, signed in 1999, which allows the requesting state (in this case India) to prosecute extradited persons not only for the

specific offence for which extradition was done, but also for connected offences.

At the outset, counsel appearing for James submitted that the High Court has gone to the extent of saying that the treaty between India and UAE will prevail over any existing law.

"I had filed a writ petition (before the High Court) challenging this portion of the treaty," the counsel submitted.

The bench said it has issued notice on the plea and the matter will be listed in July.

On April 24, the top court referred to another bench a plea of James for release from jail in the case.

The Delhi High Court had

on April 8 dismissed the petition of the British national in the case, saying there was no merit in the plea of James who was extradited from Dubai in December 2018.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi had taken note of the fact that the earlier pleas of the accused were heard by another bench headed by Justice Nath and referred the matter.

In his petition, James assailed a provision of the India-UAE extradition treaty. He also challenged a trial court order of August 7, 2025 by which his application under Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) for his release from jail



was rejected. It was argued before the High Court that an extradited person can be prosecuted only for the offences for which extradition took place, and not for connected offences.

James, in its petition, also submitted that he completed

seven years in jail on December 4, 2025 and has, therefore, already undergone the maximum sentence possible for the offences for which he was extradited, rendering his continued detention in India illegal.

The High Court, in his

order, stated that it was not permissible for James to re-agitate issues pertaining to the treaty which, at least on a prima facie basis, have already been considered by the Supreme Court.

It nonetheless considered provisions of the treaty and ruled that James was extradited for facing trial for offences which directly arises from the factual background in the present case, and therefore, his prosecution fell within the scope of the treaty.

After his extradition, James was arrested by the CBI and the ED.

James is among the three alleged middlemen being probed in the case, and the other two are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa.

He was granted bail by the Supreme Court in the CBI case in February 2025. The High Court granted him bail in the ED case in March that year.

James, however, continues to be in jail as he was unable to fulfil the bail conditions.

A trial court directed James to furnish a personal bond of ₹5 lakh and a cash surety of the same amount to secure his release in the CBI case. In the ED case, the High Court asked him to furnish a personal bond of ₹10 lakh and a cash surety of ₹10 lakh.

The High Court also clarified that James could be released without depositing the passport, which has expired immediately.



The bench said the matter would be placed before a three-judge bench, which would be constituted by the CJI. "There is no question of granting any interim order," it said. The apex court posted the matter for hearing after six weeks.

On March 25, Parliament passed a bill to amend the law on the protection and rights of transgender persons, which excludes social orientations from the ambit of the statute. It received the President's assent on March 30. The Act provides for graded punishment based on the gravity of harm inflicted on such people.



## PIOTECH

### Mythos has moved security's cheese



**BIPUL SINHA**

In early April, Anthropic announced that an unreleased new model, called Mythos, identified thousands of high-impact security vulnerabilities across the business world, including in every major browser and operating system. Here's the part no one talks about: Mythos is already outdated. The world now travels at AI speed, when something from a month ago is just the latest history. It's nearly certain that somewhere, someone is working on something even stronger than Mythos. Someone else is building the next frontier model. Let's hope they're friendly. But let's prepare for a world where they're not.

The lesson in Mythos is that AI has moved security's cheese. Frontier models allow bad actors to find and exploit software weaknesses at machine speed - much faster than the pace of traditional cyber practices.

- **Prevention is not enough.** AI will find ways, particularly as AI-written software explodes and creates new vulnerabilities despite the best intentions.
- **Reaction is not enough.** Companies used to have 60 days between a breach and damage. Before Mythos, that was down to 27 seconds. Post-Mythos, it's basically zero. It's not possible for humans to respond at this speed. Reaction must be at machine speed, and in place ahead of time.
- **Red-teaming is not enough.** Companies used to count on red-teaming and white hat hacking to find problems, but AI discovers weaknesses that humans may never discover.
- **System analysis is not enough.** There are vulnerabilities in software interactions, and AI is building more software, with more agents and interactions, every minute.
- **Better training is not enough.** Deepfakes make it easy to fool humans, and software agents can be compromised, resulting in massive insider attacks of a whole new sort.

Mythos is a wake-up call for something that's been true for a while now: every company needs preemptive cybersecurity. And every company needs to address the security question of our time: How fast can you take care of your crisis and resume business?

#### Preemption is the new game

In fact, in a recent report, Gartner® said "Cyber resiliency is no longer optional, and preemptive cybersecurity capabilities such as predictive threat intelligence, automated moving target defense (AMTD), and advanced cyber deception are needed to defend against AI-driven threats." Preemptive risk assessment and system remediation are the foundation of cyber resiliency.

It starts with asking the questions that matter most for your business: What could I lose? What is the sensitivity of my data, and where is it? Who are my users, and where are they? If I'm taken out, how do I restart my services—especially those that are most critical—as fast as possible?

#### Peacetime preparations for machine-speed cyber recovery

Machine-speed cyberattacks require machine-speed Cyber Recovery. How you evaluate your needs will depend on your organisation, though resiliency will require preemptive preparations that cover the minimum set of services. Are you doing all the work needed in peacetime for machine-speed recovery? These include the essentials such as identifying clean recovery-ready data during normal backup windows in order to get customers up and running immediately after cyber breaches, whether in a business, a school, a hospital, or a government office.

We have led in cyber resilience for years, defeating countless ransomware attacks for thousands of businesses around the world. That work helped us build for AI and be fully aware that technology leaps like Mythos were on their way.

And for the world of AI agents, we've built agent clouds that are designed to monitor AI agents in real time, making sure they're only doing what's allowed, and cutting them off when they cross policy guardrails. We work with AI to handle the scope and scale of whatever comes after Mythos. Maybe you won't be hacked. Hope was not a strategy before AI though, and it certainly isn't one now. Nor is thinking that you can stop risk with prevention alone. You have to assume the breach, and now assume that your agents will overreach. We live in a world where Mythos is already history—and something else is already coming.

You need to think about both the risk of cyber attacks and how to be resilient to keep things up and running when faced with an attack.

# Neural Satyagraha: Reclaiming the Indian mind from the digital East India Company

As global AI models drain \$150 billion through 'predictive arbitrage,' India's path to a \$30 trillion economy lies in weaponising its chaos against a new age of algorithmic colonisation



**NISHANT SAHDEV**

In his 1998 masterpiece, *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott argues that the first act of any great power is to make its people "legible." For the early modern state, this meant inventing surnames, standardising weights and measures, and drawing maps. By making the messy, chaotic reality of human life readable on a flat sheet of paper, the state could finally tax, conscript, and control. Legibility, Scott noted, is the pre-condition for manipulation.

Three hundred years ago, the East India Company didn't just conquer India with muskets; they conquered us with ledgers. They spent decades mapping our terrain, cataloging our crops, and indexing our social structures until the vast complexity of the Indian subcontinent was reduced to a set of predictable data points in a London office. Once we were "solved," we were colonised.

Today, we are witnessing the birth of a digital East India Company, but this time, the ledgers are written in code. As we move through 2026, the global economic order is pushing a new, intoxicating promise: absolute transparency. We are told that the more "legible" a country becomes—the more data it produces, the more its systems are digitised, the more its citizens are indexed—the more it will prosper. India has leaned into this promise harder than anyone. Through our Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), we have built the most transparent, high-velocity data engine on the planet.

But here is the uncomfortable truth that no one in Silicon Valley or Davos wants to admit: in the age of Artificial Intelligence, transparency is no longer a path to prosperity; it is a blueprint for exploitation. When a nation becomes perfectly legible, it becomes perfectly predictable. And in the 2026 global economy, if you are predictable, you are already owned.

#### The era of algorithmic front-running

We are currently witnessing the birth of a new kind of "Predictive Arbitrage." While we celebrate our "Ease of Doing Business" rankings, global "Correlation Engines"—massive AI clusters owned by offshore hedge funds and tech titans—are using our own data to "solve" us.

According to the April 2026 Global Data Flow Report, the "value leakage" from the Indian economy



due to predictive modeling by foreign entities has reached an estimated \$150 billion annually. This isn't just "big data." This is Algorithmic Colonialism. By ingesting every UPI transaction, every logistical movement, and every frantic search query from a small-town smartphone, these models can now anticipate the fluctuations of the Indian market better than any domestic policymaker.

Think about what this means for a second. They know when a localised supply chain in Maharashtra will kink before the trucks have even stopped moving. They can predict how a specific youth cohort in Kanpur will react to a price hike before the first social media post is even written. By knowing our next move with terrifying accuracy, global capital can "front-run" our economy, extracting value before it even reaches our shores. When you are perfectly predictable, you lose the power to negotiate. You cannot strike a favorable trade deal or protect your currency when the other side's AI has already simulated your breaking point a million times over.

#### The doctrine of neural satyagraha

If India is to reach its \$30 trillion vision by 2047, we cannot continue to be a "legible" vassal. We must adopt a radical new defensive doctrine for the cognitive age: Neural Satyagraha. In the 1920s, Mahatma Gandhi launched Satyagraha—

truth-force—as a refusal to cooperate with an exploitative legal structure. In 2026, we need a Neural Satyagraha: a refusal to cooperate with an exploitative predictive structure. This is not about "hiding" data or retreating into digital isolation. It is about the intentional creation of "Strategic Irrationality."

It is the realisation that in an era of infinite surveillance, our greatest economic shield is not "Order," but Entropy—or what we in India have always known as *Jugaad*. India has long been mocked by the West for our improvisational friction. But in the AI age, *Jugaad* is no longer a bug; it is our ultimate feature. It is the one thing a linear, Western-trained model cannot simulate because it refuses to follow a logical pattern. To protect our sovereignty, we must move from being "Algorithmically Legible" to "Algorithmically Opaque."

#### The strategic blueprint: National noise injection

How does a 21st-century state practice Neural Satyagraha? It requires a fundamental pivot in our national technology policy, moving away from the pursuit of "perfect efficiency" toward the pursuit of "Strategic Complexity."

First, we must establish a National Noise Protocol. We should use our sovereign AI clusters—the 60,000 GPUs now active under the IndiaAI

Mission and the energy base load secured by the SHANTI Act of 2025—not just to predict our citizens, but to shield them. We should intentionally inject "noise" into global data streams—synthetic but plausible "irrational" behaviors that mask the true state of our internal markets. We must make the Indian consumer the only "Unsolvable Variable" in global economics.

Second, we need Obfuscation as a Service. Our digital stack must integrate "privacy-preserving noise."

When a foreign entity queries Indian market data, they should receive a version that is functionally useful for legitimate business but "predictively useless" for extraction. We provide the pipes, but we keep the "Meaning" of the water for ourselves.

Third, we must introduce an "Entropy Standard" for Trade. In future trade negotiations, India must demand "Reciprocal Opacity." Data should no longer be valued by its volume, but by its "Predictive Decay"—how quickly it becomes useless to an outsider.

#### The paradox of productive friction

Standard economic theory suggests that the more efficient a market is, the better it performs. But that theory assumes the efficiency benefits the people in that market. In

2026, the hyper-efficiency of the Indian digital market is being captured by offshore algorithms, not by the small business owner in Bhopal.

By practicing Neural Satyagraha, we re-introduce "Productive Friction." The Q1 2026 NASSCOM-Zinnov Report highlights a fascinating trend: while entry-level salaries in hyper-optimised metros like Bengaluru have plateaued, job demand in Tier-2 and Tier-3 hubs has surged by 28%. Why? Because these "less efficient" markets are harder for global models to "solve." They require local intuition.

By being slightly unpredictable, we force global capital to stay in India longer, to engage with us more deeply, and to stop treating our economy like a high-speed slot machine. A less "efficient" market is, quite paradoxically, a more "sovereign" market. We are reclaiming the element of surprise—the very thing that makes us human.

#### Beyond the ballot: The council of nodes

As the political class continues to argue over the 2026 Delimitation Bill and the redrawing of constituencies based on population, they are fighting a 20th-century war. In the AI age, counting "heads" is a dead metric. The true power of a region is its "Neural Agency."

A district's value should not be measured by its population, but by its ability to generate unpredictable innovation. We need a new kind of federalism—a "Council of Nodes"—where states are rewarded for how well they protect their citizens from algorithmic exploitation. Sovereignty in 2047 will not be about who has the most people; it will be about who has the most "Unpredictable Talent."

The "English Dividend" is dead. "Logic" is becoming a free commodity. What remains is the "Intuition Dividend." India's path to \$30 trillion lies in being the world's only "Intuition-Led" economy—a nation that can solve problems that don't have a pre-set logical pattern.

The real struggle for independence in 2026 is not against a foreign army or a rival political ideology. It is against the "Perfect Prediction." Neural Satyagraha is our new freedom struggle. It is the refusal to be categorised, the refusal to be "solved," and the refusal to be managed by a foreign script.

In the age of the perfect algorithm, the most revolutionary act is to be unpredictable. The era of the "legible India" is over. The era of the "Sovereign Unknown" has begun.

Author is a physicist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a columnist on AI, infrastructure and global systems

## India's revolutionary semiconductor program evolved into a business ready innovative solution



**DR T SENTHIL SIVA SUBRAMANIAN**

India has achieved a thoughtful leadership position in the transformational innovations especially through the emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence which has secured our nation to rank third position in the Global AI Vibrancy Index in the present decade.

India has thoughtfully, strategically, and smartly designed the electronic manufacturing systems especially the semiconductor program through the launch of Indian Semiconductor Mission which makes our nation robust and self-reliant. Semiconductor program which was launched as a policy at

microlevel 5 years back has grown to huge macro level through establishment of multi-fabrication units and innovations across our nation. The design and development of pathbreaking innovation-Vikram 3201 launched by Semi-conductor Laboratory, Mohali in collaboration with Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO is a testament for India's Semiconductor Mission which the seed was sown 5 years back has now nurtured as a visible product.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY has crafted the pioneering policies and schemes such as Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPICES), Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) and Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS), which facilitates the *swadeshi* and vocal for local domestic manufacturing of electronic components. It also creates innovative MSME electronics clusters

across the nation there by strengthening the electronics supply chain. This in turn would push the One District One Product (ODOP) program across the different districts.

Most importantly, these comprehensive electronic manufacturing schemes attract the global semiconductor players to open and handshake businesses with our nation. Global leaders like Kaynes, Foxconn and Micron have chosen our nation to be the homeland and right destination to fabricate and manufacture semiconductor chips because of the diversified think tank and skilled talent pool, digital public infrastructure and most importantly the Ease-of-Doing business, Ease-of-innovations, and Ease-of-Access. These initiatives would lead to a compound effect to achieve global position in the economy. Kaynes Technology has launched its state of the art semiconductor plant in Sanand, Gujarat, which marks the beginning of revolutionary semiconductor chip production in India.

India states are consciously working to draft the semiconductor policy especially Delhi, the national capital is aiming to create hub for semiconductor innovation thereby paving the way for design, research, and integrated allied activities like employment opportunities, students internships.

India is poised to achieve and capture the global semiconductor market through the in-house fabrication of semiconductor chips with the support of ten manufacturing plants spread across the different valleys. The pioneering schemes of Government of India such as production linked initiative, design linked initiatives give a great push and adds strength to our semiconductor innovation and manufacturing systems. India is making a strong hold by successfully laying the foundation for Heterogeneous Integration Packaging Solutions project, promoted by 3D Glass Solutions in the state of Odisha.

International industries are focusing on opening Global Capability Centres across dif-



ferent states which will pave the way for research and innovation leading to technology and engineering product developments. Indian Semiconductor Mission is creating avenues for academic institutions across the nation to develop custom designed technologies for various problem statement with the help of world-class design tools and students who are the think tank providers.

Indian Semiconductor Mission also expected to boost the Defence program—DRDO Industry Academia (DIA-CoE) through several defence research verticals across different institutions. The best used case study is the Flexible Electronics program launched by MeitY in collaboration with IIT Kanpur as National Centre for Flexible Electronics. The centre focuses on developing applications for Flexible Electronics

- Stealth and Camouflage
- Flexible Antenna
- Energy Harvesting

The semiconductor chips developed in India would meet the demands of Defence missile, Soldier in fields as well. National Semiconductor program is interlinked with National critical mission which facilitates

Rare Earth Elements and Rare Earth Permanent Magnets as well. The chips developed in India could be integrated with artificial intelligence leading to develop high performance super-computing AI chips. Startups like Sarvam AI could develop custom designed AI chips for healthcare, defence and smart farming. The recent applications of semiconductor chips are extended to Electrooptic technology which could find potential applications for space explorations.

Sector skill council, especially the Electronics Sector skill council, offers cutting edge skill program through Digital Skill Hubs. Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL), Mohali is collaborating with academic institutions to open avenues for students to perform internships and project-based learning. SCL also encourages institutions for laboratory visits which will enhance the knowledge and information like clean room facilities.

The state-of-the-art academiconline program launched by IIT Madras on BSEI electronic Sciences creates ample opportunities for students to enroll without JEE Mains / Advanced. This program would give a space for students to explore opportunities in semiconductor industries. MeitY has successful conducting the skilling program through Indian Nano Electronics Users Program INUP i2i through which the students and faculty members would get hands-on learning to design and fabricate MEMS in the clean room facilities available at Indian Institute of Science, IISc Bengaluru, Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Bombay and Nanoscale research facility at Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Delhi

India has brilliantly designed the semiconductor program which plays a vital role in pushing different stake holders of our nation through custom designed spectrum of innovations, products, technologies to become *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and marching towards *Viksit Bharat@2047*

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## FROM THE WORLD

### NEPAL

#### Ordinance row deepens

Nepal's Cabinet on Monday decided to resend a Constitutional Council ordinance to President Ram Chandra Paudel, which, if endorsed, will allow the Government to appoint heads of constitutional bodies. This development comes a day after President Ram Chandra Paudel on Sunday returned the ordinance (First Amendment to the Constitutional Council) to the Cabinet for reconsideration. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office in Singdurbar, Government spokesperson Sasmit Pokhrel said. The Government has resubmitted the ordinance without making any changes, he said. The Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Balendra Shah, had on April 27 forwarded the ordinance to Paudel for consideration.

### PHILIPPINES

#### Ashfall: 300 families evacuate

More than 300 families have been evacuated after massive amounts of ash billowed from the Mayon volcano over the weekend due to the collapse of lava deposits from its slopes, officials said Monday. There was no explosive eruption from Mayon, which has been erupting mildly on and off since January, but huge deposits of lava on its southwestern slope suddenly cascaded down in a pyroclastic flow — an avalanche of hot rocks, ash and gas — before nightfall on Saturday, said Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. No deaths or injuries were reported, but massive clouds of ash scattered over 87 villages in three towns, catching many by surprise and slowing down motorists due to poor visibility, officials said. "The ashfall was just so thick and there was zero visibility even in our national road," Mayor Caloy Baldo of Camalig town, which lies near the volcano's foothills, said. "Some villagers panicked but we advised them to calm down," Baldo said.

# In effort to reopen Hormuz, US taskforce reroutes ships

ADAM SCHRECK/SAM METZ  
Dubai

The United States kicked off an effort to "guide" stranded ships from the Iran-gripped Strait of Hormuz, as it tries to counter economic disruptions that outlasted the peak of fighting with no peace deal in sight.

A day after US President Donald Trump announced what he called "Project Freedom," the Joint Maritime Information Centre said Monday that the US had set up an "enhanced security area" south of typical shipping routes and urged mariners to coordinate closely with Omani authorities "due to anticipated high traffic volume." The Strait sits between Iranian and Omani territory.

The centre warned that passing close to the usual

routes, known as the traffic separation scheme, "should be considered extremely hazardous due to the presence of mines that have not been fully surveyed and mitigated."

The US-led maritime task force's announcement marked the start of the effort to revive traffic and restore confidence among commercial vessels transiting the strait.

The disruption of the waterway through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil typically passes has become one of the most enduring consequences of the war that the US and Israel launched February 28. It has squeezed countries in Europe and Asia that depend on Persian Gulf supplies and added new volatility to energy prices for households and businesses worldwide.

**New standoff over Strait:** Announcing the ship shep-



A bulk cargo ship sits at anchor in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, Iran

herding effort in a social media post Sunday, Trump promised "neutral and innocent countries" that we will guide their ships safely out of these restricted Waterways, so that they can freely and ably get on with their business."

US Central Command said the initiative would involve

guided-missile destroyers, more than 100 aircraft and 15,000 service members. The Pentagon did not immediately answer questions about how they would be deployed.

Ships and seafarers, many on oil and gas tankers and cargo ships, have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began. Crew members

have described to The Associated Press seeing intercepted drones and missiles explode over the waters as their vessels run low on drinking water, food and other supplies.

"They are victims of circumstance," Trump wrote, describing the effort as a humanitarian gesture "on

behalf of the United States, Middle Eastern Countries, but, in particular, the Country of Iran."

Trump also sounded a warning: "If, in any way, this Humanitarian process is interfered with, that interference will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully."

As more ships reported coming under attack Sunday, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency called Trump's announcement part of his "delirium." Ebrahim Azizi, head of the national security commission of Iran's parliament, said on X that any interference in the strait would be seen as a ceasefire violation.

Trump spoke hours after Iran said it was reviewing the US response to its latest proposal to end the war and made clear these are not nuclear negotiations. The

fragile three-week ceasefire appears to be holding.

**Iran reviews US response to latest proposal:** Tehran is reviewing the US response to its latest proposal to end the war, Iran's judiciary Mizan news agency cited Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei as saying Sunday.

But "at this stage, we have no nuclear negotiations," Baghaei said. Iran's nuclear program and enriched uranium have long been the central issue in tensions with the US, but Tehran would rather address it later.

Iran's proposal wants other issues resolved within 30 days and aims to end the war rather than extend the ceasefire, according to Iran's state-linked media. Trump on Saturday said he was reviewing the proposal but expressed doubt it would lead to a deal. (PTI)

# Nepal reasserts Lipulekh claim, calls for dialogue with India

ASHOKE RAJ  
New Delhi

Nepal on Monday reiterated its territorial claim over the Lipulekh region, while urging diplomatic dialogue with India to resolve the long-standing dispute. The statement comes a day after India firmly rejected Nepal's position, intensifying tensions between the two neighbours.

India on Sunday dismissed Nepal's claim to the use of Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand for the upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, calling Kathmandu's claim an "unilateral artificial enlargement" that New Delhi considers "untenable." The response followed a formal objection raised by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding



preparations by India and China for the annual pilgrimage route.

Nepal, however, maintained that it is not attempting to expand its borders.

Government spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel stated that the territory in question rightfully belongs to Nepal and that the Government remains firm in its stance.

"Nepal doesn't intend to enlarge its boundary; the territory belongs to Nepal, and the Government has a clear view about this and is committed to its stance," Pokharel said while addressing the media. He also emphasised the need for a peaceful resolution, adding that the matter should be settled through "collaboration and diplomatic dialogue" between the two countries.

Pokharel confirmed that Nepal's Foreign Ministry has already communicated its concerns to India through a formal letter.

The dispute has gained renewed attention due to the upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a pilgrimage of deep religious signif-

icance for Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists. The, which leads to Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in Tibet, resumed last year after a nearly five-year hiatus as part of broader efforts to stabilise relations between India and China.

On April 30, India's Ministry of External Affairs announced that this year's yatra will be held between June and August, with routes passing through Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim.

While both nations have previously managed the dispute through diplomatic channels, the latest exchange signals a renewed strain, with calls growing for constructive engagement to prevent further escalation.

# US evacuates crew of seized Iranian ship to Pakistan

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
Islamabad

The United States has evacuated 22 crew members, held aboard an Iranian ship seized by its forces, to Pakistan as a "confidence-building measure", a statement issued by Foreign Office here said on Monday.

The ship 'MV Touska', part of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) group that has been hit with US sanctions, was boarded and seized by US forces on April 19 off the coast of Iran's Chabahar port in the Gulf of Oman, Dawn reported.

"As a confidence-building measure by the United States of America, twenty-two crew members held aboard the seized Iranian container ship, 'MV Touska', have been evacuated to Pakistan," the Pakistan's FO said.



It added that the Iranian ship will also be backloaded to Pakistani territorial waters for return to its original owners after necessary repairs.

"These returns are being coordinated in tandem with the support of both the Iranian and US sides," it said.

FO further stated that Pakistan welcomes such

confidence-building measures and will continue to facilitate dialogue and diplomacy while pursuing ongoing mediation efforts for regional peace and security.

Speaking on the issue, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that 22 crew members from the seized Iranian vessel have been "safely" evacuated to Pakistan. "The individuals were safely flown to Pakistan last night and will be transferred to Iran today," Dar, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan, posted on social media.

"These actions are being coordinated with the support of both the Iranian and the US authorities and surely constitute an important confidence-building

measure," he said.

Dar said Pakistan expresses its appreciation to the United States and Iran, and remains committed to facilitating dialogue, diplomacy, and mediation for regional peace and security.

The Iran war — triggered by joint strikes by the US and Israel on February 28 — has been on hold since April 8, with one round of peace talks having taken place in Islamabad since then. The Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and gas pass — remains a major sticking point in the talks. Shippings through the narrow Gulf waterway have been severely disrupted by the conflict, triggering a sharp increase in oil prices and energy shortages in several countries. (PTI)



# US troops exit Germany

MARK CARLSON/LORNE COOK  
Yerevan (Armenia)

European leaders on Monday said US President Donald Trump's snap decision to pull thousands of American troops out of Germany came as a surprise but is a fresh sign that Europe must take care of its own security.

The Pentagon announced last week that it would pull some 5,000 troops out of Germany, but Trump told reporters on Saturday that "we're going to cut way down. And we're cutting a lot further than 5,000."

He offered no reason for the move, which blindsided NATO, but his decision came amid an escalating dispute with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz over the US-Israeli war on Iran, and Trump's anger that European allies have been reluctant to get involved in the conflict in the Middle East.

Asked about the decision to pull out 5,000 troops from Germany, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said: "I wouldn't exaggerate that because I think we are expecting that Europe is taking more charge of its own security."

"I do not see those figures as dramatic, but I think they should be handled in a harmonious way inside the frame-

work of NATO," he told reporters in Yerevan, Armenia, where European leaders are holding a summit.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said, "There has been a talk about withdrawal of U.S. troops for a long time from Europe. But of course, the timing of this announcement comes as a surprise."

"I think it shows that we have to really strengthen the European pillar in NATO," she said.

Asked whether she believes that Trump is trying to punish Merz, who said that the US has been humiliated by Iran in talks to end the war, Kallas said: "I don't see into the head of President Trump, so he has to explain it himself."

Over the weekend, NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said that officials at the 32-nation military alliance "are working with the US to understand the details of their decision on force posture in Germany."

European allies and Canada have known since just after he came to office again last year that Trump would pull troops out of Europe — indeed some left Romania in October — but US officials had pledged to coordinate any moves with their NATO allies to avoid creating a security vacuum. (AP)



# Pakistani foreign minister discusses regional situation with Iranian counterpart

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
Islamabad

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar discussed the situation in West Asia and Islamabad's diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the region with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, officials here said on Monday. Dar and Araghchi held a telephonic conversation late Sunday night, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

"The discussion focused on the regional situation and Pakistan's ongoing diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the region," it said.

Araghchi appreciated Pakistan's constructive role and its mediation efforts between the concerned parties.

Dar, who is also the Deputy

Prime Minister, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting constructive engagement, underscoring that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path toward peaceful resolution of issues and achieving lasting peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The development comes after US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that he was reviewing a fresh Iranian proposal aimed at ending the conflict, while expressing scepticism about the prospects of a deal.

According to reports, Iran has sent a 14-point proposal via Pakistan in response to a nine-point US proposal.

Pakistan is mediating the peace talks between the US and Iran. (PTI)

# Cricket binds India, Jamaica in ties written in friendship: Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Kingston

Cricket serves as a bridge between India and Jamaica, fostering a relationship "written in runs, respect and friendship", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said as he dedicated a digital scoreboard, gifted by New Delhi, to the Caribbean nation.

Speaking at the unveiling of the scoreboard at the iconic Sabina Park cricket stadium in the Jamaican capital Kingston on Sunday, Jaishankar highlighted the unifying role of sports, particularly cricket, which he said is followed passionately by over a billion people in India.

"Sports bring nations together by creating shared



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Jamaica Prime Minister Andrew Holness during the dedication of an electronic scoreboard at Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica

experiences and fostering mutual respect. And cricket, in particular, has a special meaning for India and Jamaica," he said.

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness was also present at the event.

Sabina Park is the home of the Jamaica cricket team

and is the only Test cricket ground in the island nation.

Recalling the historic significance of Sabina Park, Jaishankar noted that the ground holds special memories for Indian cricket, including a century by legendary cricketer Rahul Dravid and the start of Virat Kohli's Test career in 2011.

Describing these moments as symbolic of the India-Jamaica connection, he said the relationship between the two countries is "written in runs, respect and friendship".

Jaishankar said the state-of-the-art electronic scoreboard would enhance the viewing experience for cricket lovers in Jamaica and stands as a testament to the

enduring cricketing partnership between the two nations.

Highlighting Jamaica's rich cricketing legacy, he said the country commands immense respect globally for producing great players such as George Headley, Michael Holding, Courtney Walsh, Chris Gayle and Andrew Richardson.

Jamaican cricketers receive enthusiastic support from Indian fans, including in the Indian Premier League (IPL), Jaishankar said.

As nations cooperate and compete globally, India and Jamaica will always continue to seek "special connections that define our ties, and cricket is very much one of them", he said.

# Indian submarine Sindhukesari arrives in Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Colombo

An Indian Navy submarine, Sindhukesari, has arrived at the port of Colombo for Operational Turnarounds, the Sri Lankan Navy said in a statement issued on Monday.

The Sri Lankan Navy welcomed the Indian submarine with full naval traditions on its arrival on Sunday.

The submarine's crew is scheduled to participate in a variety of programmes organised by the Sri Lanka Navy, including visits to



Indian Navy submarine INS Sindhukesari arrives during a visit to enhance maritime cooperation with Sri Lanka in Colombo, Sri Lanka

several tourist attractions in the island nation.

"#INSindhukesari, a submarine of the #IndianNavy, arrived at the Port of #Colombo for Operational Turnarounds and was welcomed by the @srilanka\_navy with full naval honours," High Commission of India in Sri Lanka posted on social media.

The navies of India and Sri Lanka have recently executed deep-sea dives, enhancing joint capabilities in underwater search, rescue and salvage operations, as part of a bilateral naval exercise held off the coast of Colombo. (PTI)

# Japan, Australia agree to deepen cooperation on energy, defence

ROD MCGUIRK  
Melbourne

The prime ministers of Japan and Australia agreed to deepen cooperation in a wide range of areas including energy security, defence and critical minerals as the Iran war threatens global supply chains.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met her Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese at Australia's Parliament House on Monday during Takaichi's first visit to the country as national leader.



Takaichi said they held strategic discussions on China, Southeast Asia, Pacific Island countries, nuclear issues and abductions by North Korea.

"The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz had been inflicting enormous impact on the Indo-Pacific. We affirmed that Japan and Australian will closely communicate with each other in responding with a sense of urgency," Takaichi told reporters through an interpreter. (AP)

# Coal gasification: Catalysing India's chemical industry growth and achieving Aatmanirbharta



**DEBAJIT PALIT**



**SHAGUN MAMGAIN**

is a mixture of carbon monoxide, hydrogen, carbon dioxide and other minor constituents like methane and water vapour. This is done by partial oxidation of coal at high temperature and pressure.

## Driving supply-chain resilience: Reducing import dependence

The success of coal to chemicals in China shows that coal can be used for both gasification and liquefaction to produce chemicals. China started focusing on modern gasification

help India strengthen its supply chain resilience for APIs to support generic medicine production, the largest in the world.

The DME obtained through coal gasification can be blended with LPG, thus reducing India's import dependence.

Hydrogen produced from syngas, integrated with carbon capture, can be combined with nitrogen to produce ammonia and urea — a proven pathway being used in China — to reduce our imports.

Syngas can also be used in gas-based

tries. This will help boost the local economy and address the issue of job losses due to the shift away from coal used for thermal generation. In sum, coal gasification can facilitate a just transition for the mining communities affected by mine closures.

## Pathway for India

Understanding the potential, the Indian Government launched the National Coal Gasification Mission in 2020 with the target of achieving 100 MT of coal gasification by 2030. Despite the potential, coal gasification in India has seen limited progress, constrained by technological and economic challenges. The time is ripe now for the central Government to renew its focus by providing infrastructure status to the sector, which can enable long-term coal linkages through transparent auctions, streamline approvals, and attract affordable capital. Furthermore, custom duty waivers and viability gap funding for early adopters will help in ensuring project viability. The state Governments can facilitate the speeding up of land acquisition, water allocation and recycling, environmental clearances, compliance approvals, and specialised electricity tariffs for the integrated coal gasification and chemicals clusters, to enable economies of scale and value-chain optimisation.

The transition to coal gasification should be considered a strategic necessity for India and not an economic burden, as this would help reduce India's vulnerability, strengthening supply chain resilience and achieving Aatmanirbharta.

The coal to chemical industry sector can be established in a phased manner, not by a binary of replacing oil and gas, but in a complementary fashion to produce chemicals. Over time, the phased shift can make coal gasification the major source for generating chemical products.

Shagun Mamgain is a Research Consultant and Dr Debajit Palit is the Centre Head at Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition in Chintan Research Foundation. Views expressed are personal



technology in the 2000s, using its locally available coal, to produce methanol, urea, DME, among others. Methanol to Olefins (MTO) technology was at the centre of this transition. Olefins, particularly ethylene, propylene, and butadiene, are the building blocks for the petrochemical industry. Not only was China's import dependence reduced, but coal's use also increased its domestic demand.

Methanol plays a critical role in the production of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), compounds essential for producing medicines. With India importing 70% of its APIs, methanol production using local coal could

plants to produce electricity, thereby enhancing grid stability by addressing the variability of renewable energy and managing peak load.

## What it brings for India's regional development?

Coal gasification projects could be implemented in the coal-belt states. With construction and operation of integrated coal gasification complexes being labour-intensive, it will generate substantial direct jobs along with a much larger pool of indirect jobs across logistics, MSMEs, services, and ancillary indus-

## Stock markets rebound, Sensex rallies 356 pts

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi

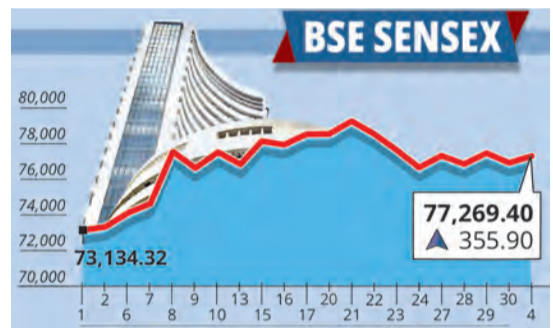
Benchmark Sensex rebounded by 356 points, while the Nifty settled above 24,100 on Monday, as buying in blue-chip stocks and state poll results trending in line with market expectations lifted investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 355.90 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 77,269.40. During the day, it jumped 997.25 points or 1.29 per cent to 77,910.75.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 121.75 points or 0.51 per cent to end at 24,119.30.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Adani Ports, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, Eternal and Maruti were among the biggest gainers.

Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and ITC were among the laggards from the pack.



Category	Company	Change
Top Gainers	Adani Ports	5.30
	Hind Unilever	2.60
	Reliance	2.24
	L&T	2.18
Top Losers	Bharti Airtel	-3.14
	Kotak Bank	-2.82
	TCS	-1.73
	ITC	-1.25

"Investor sentiment remained supported by a favourable election outcome in West Bengal and a better-than-expected Q4 earnings, helping markets look past Middle East-related concerns.

"However, intermittent profit booking persisted amid uncertainty surrounding the US 'Project Freedom' initiative to reopen the Strait of Hormuz," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

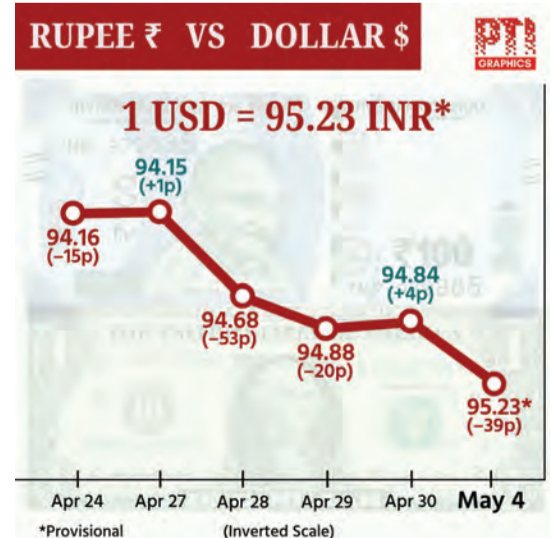
## Rupee at all-time low of 95.23 against US dollar

Rupee fell 39 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, as the ongoing Middle East tensions are causing volatility in global markets, keeping oil prices high and raising fears of inflation and economic slowdown.

Forex traders said Brent oil, hovering near \$110 per barrel, is maintaining pressure on oil-importing economies like India. Moreover, factors such as unabated foreign capital outflows amid rising geopolitical uncertainties dented investor sentiments further.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.95 against the US dollar, then lost ground and finally settled for the day at 95.23 (provisional), registering a fall of 39 paise over its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 94.84 against the American currency. Stock exchanges and currency markets were closed on Friday on account of Maharashtra Day.

"The Indian rupee has hit a record low as the dollar recovered and crude oil prices held firm. This ongoing surge in oil prices, combined with foreign fund outflows, is putting a visible strain on India's trade balance and



broader economy. "Persistent dollar demand is expected to keep the pressure on the rupee in the short term, driving the USD/INR higher toward the 95.35 and 95.70 levels," said Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 98.26, up 0.11 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 1.37 per cent at \$109.65 per barrel in futures trade. Investors' focus was on counting of votes for the West Bengal state elections, IFA Global said in a research note, adding, "a BJP victory would be positive for domestic assets.

## No Government financial support planned for fuel retailers' petrol, diesel, ATF losses

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi

The Government has no plans to extend financial support to state-owned fuel retailers for the losses they are incurring on selling petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) below cost, an official said on Monday.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) are incurring substantial losses on sale of petrol and diesel after they extended a four-year freeze on revision in retail rates despite input crude oil prices shooting up since the start of West Asia conflict over two months back. They have also, for the first time in more than two decades, begun posting losses on jet fuel (ATF) since last month, as they



passed on only a part of the desired increase in prices needed to bring rates at par with cost.

"There is no proposal before the Government to support oil marketing companies (for their losses)," said Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

While ATF prices for domestic airlines last month increased by 25 per cent — a fourth of the desired increase — there was no change in rates this month, even though the prices for foreign airlines

were hiked by over 5 per cent. Similarly, despite under-recoveries of ₹25-28 a litre, there has been no increase in petrol and diesel prices.

Domestic LPG prices were hiked by ₹60 per 14.2-kg cylinder on March 7, but that was not enough to cover all the increased cost, and oil companies are booking under-recoveries or losses. The Government has, in the past, covered for the under-recoveries on LPG through budgetary subsidy support.

Sharma said there is no increase in retail prices of petrol and diesel, as well as domestic LPG, even though supplies have been disrupted due to the war in West Asia. Only rates of bulk or industrial diesel, as also commercial LPG — the one used by hotels and restaurants — have been increased.

## Fertiliser subsidy bill set to overshoot budget estimate amid West Asia crisis

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi

The Government's fertiliser subsidy bill for the 2026-27 fiscal is expected to exceed the budgetary allocation of ₹1.71 lakh crore, with rising costs of imported urea and other fertilisers driven by the ongoing West Asia crisis, a senior ministry official said on Monday.

"We know that the costs have risen. Cost of both urea and other fertilisers showing an upward trend... There will surely be an increase, but as of now, cannot say," Aparna S Sharma, Additional Secretary in the Department of Fertilisers, said at an inter-ministerial briefing on developments in West Asia. Despite the supply chain disruptions triggered by the West Asia crisis, Sharma said fertiliser availability remains "strong and stable" for the kharif 2026 season.

Domestic production for March-April stood at 67.76 lakh tonnes - comprising



urea (40.72 lakh tonnes), Di ammonium Phosphate (5.39 lakh tonnes), NPK (13.65 lakh tonnes) and SSP (8 lakh tonnes) — supplemented by imports of 17 lakh tonnes. The imports were managed through coordinated efforts involving the ministries of ports and external affairs. For May, the department has set a domestic production target of 22 lakh tonnes of urea, 4 lakh tonnes of DAP and 8 lakh tonnes of NPK. Some urea plants that had temporarily shut down are set to resume operations, with gas supply already secured, she said.

A global tender for urea imports has been processed, with supplies expected in May-June. A separate global tender for 19 lakh tonnes of NPK fertilisers has also been floated to meet peak demand.

The Department of Agriculture has assessed the fertiliser requirement for kharif 2026 at 390.54 lakh tonnes. Against this, states have already stocked 195.71 lakh tonnes — nearly 50 per cent of the requirement — reflecting what officials described as "improved planning and advanced stocking".

State-wise demand has been mapped based on the agriculture ministry's assessment, with stocking and advance planning already undertaken. Beyond central-level stocking, redistribution within districts remains the responsibility of state Governments.

"We are having regular meetings with states. As the season approaches, a 24x7 contingency cell will be set up to tackle redistribution issues," Sharma said.

## Asia and Pacific region must build shared resilience: ADB President

**KUMAR DIPANKAR**  
Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masato Kanda on Monday urged Asia and the Pacific region to 'act together to develop together' through stronger cross-border connections that drive resilience and inclusive growth.

"The decisions we make at this new crossroads will secure the future for the next generation," Kanda said at the inaugural session

of ADB's 59th Annual Meeting here. "In this fragmented world, traditional and isolated development responses will fail. To survive and thrive in this new era, we must build deeply connected and resilient systems," he said.

He underscored how shocks today travel rapidly across borders — through energy markets, supply chains, and digital networks — hitting communities that are least able to absorb them.

Addressing these challenges



requires coordinated regional solutions that go beyond national boundaries, he said.

ADB is responding by scaling up investments and accelerating reforms that enable countries to integrate infrastructure, markets, and institutions across Asia and the Pacific. Last year, the bank provided \$29.3 billion in financial support to the region, while implementing reforms that enable it to deliver assistance more quickly and at scale.

On Sunday, ADB launched a \$70-billion programme to build regional systems that will strengthen shared security and resilience in Asia and the Pacific.

This includes a \$50-billion initiative to build a pan-Asia power grid, which aims to integrate renewable energy across borders, enhance energy security, and lower emissions; and a \$20-billion initiative designed to expand cross-border digital connectivity and close the region's digital divide.

## FTA: India, Canada begin next round talks

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi

India and Canada on Monday started second round of negotiations for a free trade agreement aimed at boosting two-way commerce and investments, an official said.

The pact is officially known as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and negotiations will cover trade in goods, services, and other mutually agreed policy areas.

"The five-day talks started on May 4 here," the official

important as the two sides have fixed a target to increase the bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. It stood at \$8.66 billion in 2024-25 (\$4.22 billion exports and \$4.44 billion imports).

Canada represents a market of 41.65 million people (2025) and a GDP of \$2.34 trillion at purchasing power parity.

Key exports from India to Canada include pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, seafood, cotton garments, electronic goods and chemicals, among others. Key imports include



said. The first round was held in March.

This round is important as Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will visit Canada by end of this month to give an impetus to the negotiations.

The negotiations mark the resumption of talks, as the two countries had earlier engaged in a similar exercise, but Canada paused it in 2023. Now, they decided to resume talks from the beginning as a lot has changed on the global trade front during these two years. The negotiations are

pulses, pearls and semi-precious stones, coal, fertiliser, paper and petroleum crude.

India's main services sector exports include telecommunications, computer and information services, and other business services.

Canada is also home to over 425,000 Indian students and a strong Indian community.

Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Brij Mohan Mishra, is the chief negotiator from the Indian side. Bruce Christie is Canada's chief negotiator.



## PROSPECT

### Jindal Stainless reports 41% rise in Q4 profit to ₹834 cr



Jindal Stainless on Monday posted over 41 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to ₹834.21 crore during the quarter ended March 31, driven by higher revenues. The company had reported a net profit of ₹589.96 crore in the year-ago period, according to an exchange filing. During the fourth quarter, the company's total income rose to ₹11,427.91 crore from ₹10,292.27 crore in the January-March period of the preceding 2024-25 financial year. For the entire FY26, the company's net profit jumped to ₹3,184 crore from ₹2,499.72 crore in the year ago. Total income rose to ₹43,306.14 crore during the fiscal ended March 2026, from ₹39,603.06 crore in 2024-25 financial year.

### Gadkari reviews major highway corridor projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Monday reviewed the proposed high-speed corridors, high-density corridors and other important National Highway corridors in Maharashtra, according to an official statement.

During the review meeting in New Delhi, Gadkari discussed several key highway development projects including six-laning of the Nagpur-Bhandara section, four-laning of the Taloda-Burhanpur section, the Durg-Gadchiroli-Mancherial corridor, the Gadchiroli-Kanker (Raipur-Vizag) corridor, and the Gwalior-Nagpur corridor among others, according to the statement. The review meeting also included discus-



sions on nine State BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) projects covering a total length of 527 km on National Highway stretches in Maharashtra.

These projects include Shirur-Ahilyanagar (4-lane), Ahilyanagar-Wadala (4-lane), Wadala-Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (4-lane), Chhatrapati Sambhaji nagar-Jalna (4-lane),

Jalna-Watur (4-lane), Nanded-Narsi-Deglur (4-lane & 2-lane), Jam-Warora (4-lane), Warora-Chandrapur-Bamni (4-lane), and Malkapur-Chikhli (2-lane) corridors. The statement said the review focused on accelerating project planning and execution to strengthen road connectivity and support economic development in the region.

### Ambuja Cements Q4 profit jumps 37.4 pc to ₹1,857.43 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

The Adani Group firm Ambuja Cements Ltd on Monday reported a 37.4 per cent increase in its profit after tax to ₹1,857.43 crore in the March quarter of 2025-26 compared to the year-ago period.

It had reported a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹1,351.46 crore in the January-March quarter of the last fiscal, according to a regulatory filing from Ambuja Cements Ltd (ACL).

ACL's consolidated revenue from operations was at ₹10,891.68 crore, up 10 per cent in the March quarter of FY26 compared to ₹9,894.41 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal.

Total expenses were at ₹10,525.09 crore, up 19.3 per cent in Q4 of FY26.

Its revenue from cement was at ₹10,417.69 crore, up 8.6 per cent during the quarter. Ready Mix Concrete contributed ₹581.95 crore, up 36.54 per cent over the same



period of FY25.

Total consolidated sales volume of ACL, the second-largest cement manufacturer of the country, stood at 19.9 million tonnes (MT) during the quarter, up 9.34 per cent. In the March quarter, the Adani Group firm, which has in past made acquisitions to expand its operating capacity, reported "highest ever quarterly revenue" along with "highest ever sales volume".

Its total consolidated income, which includes other income as well, was up 5.64 per cent to ₹1,149.36 crore. It was at ₹10,553.81 crore in the corresponding

March quarter of FY25.

Commenting on the results, ACL Whole Time Director & CEO Vinod Bahety said, "Volumes grew well ahead of the industry, followed by improved realisations driven by a higher share of trade & premium products, and better utilisation of the existing assets."

The consolidated results of Ambuja Cements include the financial performance of its step-down firm ACC Ltd, in which it owns around 51 per cent stake along with Orient Cements and others.

On a standalone basis, which includes only ACL's performance, in the March quarter, its revenue from operations was up 5.51 per cent to ₹6,972.21 crore, and its PAT was up two-fold to ₹1,643.66 crore.

In the entire FY26, ACL reported a profit of Rs 5,637.08 crore, up 6.47 per cent. Total consolidated income rose 5.64 per cent to ₹41,490.02 crore during the financial year ended March 2026.

### Exide Industries Q4 PAT up 15 per cent at ₹216.73 crores

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Battery maker Exide Industries Ltd on Monday reported a 15 per cent growth in consolidated profit after tax at ₹216.73 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2026, on the back of strong growth across key businesses. The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax (PAT) of ₹187.91 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, Exide Industries Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated revenue from operations in the fourth quarter stood at ₹4,735.13 crore as against ₹4,335.42 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

Total expenses in the fourth quarter were higher at Rs 4,411.63 crore as compared to ₹4,089.98 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said.

For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, consolidated profit after tax (PAT) was at ₹859.92 crore as against ₹800.5 crore in the previous year.

Consolidated revenue from operations in FY26 stood at ₹17,995.35 crore as compared



to ₹17,237.85 crore in FY25.

Commenting on the performance, Exide Industries MD & CEO, Avik Roy, said, "Q4 FY26 built on the gains observed in Q3 - GST rationalisation continued to boost end-customer demand across the automotive sector, supported by strong replacement market and energy storage demand."

The company achieved over 25 per cent growth in the auto OEM business.

Inverters and solar businesses showed robust growth of "mid-to-high teens", while auto replacement and infrastructure businesses, excluding telecom, also showed double-digit growth, he added.

Roy noted that macroeconomic conditions in India remained favourable with low inflation, lower Repo rates and positive rural and urban

sentiment.

However, the West Asia conflict created challenges on two fronts - firstly, the rate escalation and timely availability of LPG, plastics and sulphuric acid; secondly, freight cost escalation due to closure of multiple shipping routes and unavailability of containers, he added.

"Sustained depreciation of rupee versus the US dollar put further pressure on our input costs," Roy said.

Sharing an update on the company's lithium-ion cell manufacturing project, he said installation and commissioning work is progressing in full swing.

Customer sample deliveries will begin shortly for cylindrical cells, and production trials will be initiated for prismatic cells, he added.

### BHEL shares jump 7% after March quarter earnings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Shares of BHEL on Monday surged 7 per cent after the firm reported a more than 2.5 times jump in consolidated net profit in the quarter ended March 2026.

The company's stock jumped 6.97 per cent to settle at ₹376.95 on the BSE. Intra-day, it soared 13.20 per cent to ₹398.95 - the 52-week high level.

At the NSE, the stock surged 6.99 per cent to settle at ₹377.05.

The company's market valuation climbed ₹8,548.47 crore to ₹1,31,256.38 crore.

BHEL on Monday reported a more than 2.5 times jump in consolidated net profit to ₹1,290.47 crore for the quarter ended March 2026, supported by growth in revenues mainly from the power segment.

It had reported a net profit of ₹504.45 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in an exchange filing.

During the fourth quarter, its total income surged to ₹12,553.50 crore



from ₹9,142.64 crore in the January-March period of the preceding 2024-25 financial year.

The revenue from the power segment during the quarter was at ₹9,509.85 crore, up from ₹6,192.41 crore in January-March FY25.

For the entire FY26, the company's net profit jumped to ₹1,600.26 crore from ₹533.90 crore in the year ago.

Total income rose to ₹34,589.83 crore during the fiscal ended March 2026, from ₹28,804.79 crore in the 2024-25 financial year.

BHEL is India's largest engineering and manufacturing enterprise in the energy and infrastructure sectors.

### Maruti shares end 2% higher after record sales in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Shares of Maruti Suzuki India on Monday ended 2 per cent higher after the firm reported record total sales in April, registering a 33.29 per cent year-on-year growth. The stock ended at ₹13,581.85, up 2.02 per cent on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 4.95 per cent to ₹13,972.50.

At the NSE, the stock went up 1.99 per cent to end at ₹13,580.

Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India on Friday reported a record total sales of 2,39,646 units in April, a 33.29 per cent year-on-year growth, making a strong start to the new fiscal year with its small cars showing robust growth. The company had sold a total of 1,79,791 units in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India said.

### UPI achieves 22.35 bn transactions in April: DFS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

About 22.35 billion transactions were carried out through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in April, Department of Financial Services said on Monday. In volume terms, UPI transactions grew 25 per cent in April 2026 over the April 2025 when it was 17.89 billion.

The UPI transactions had touched a record high of 22.64 billion in volume terms in March, up from 20.39 billion recorded in February. "UPI achieves 22.35 Bn transaction count in April'26," Department of Financial Services said in a post on X.

UPI combines the ease of use with strong security while following the RBI's two-factor authentication rule. This first factor is the mobile number linked to the user's bank and the second is the UPI PIN, making transactions quick



and safe from unauthorised access.

Today, UPI accounts for about 85 per cent of all digital transactions in India. Its impact goes beyond national borders, powering nearly 50 per cent of global real-time digital payments. UPI is already live in eight countries, including the UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar. This allows Indians travelling or living there to pay seamlessly without the usual hassles of foreign transactions.

NPCL, an initiative of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association, is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India (IBA).

### DAILY SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

#### HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction - no maths involved.

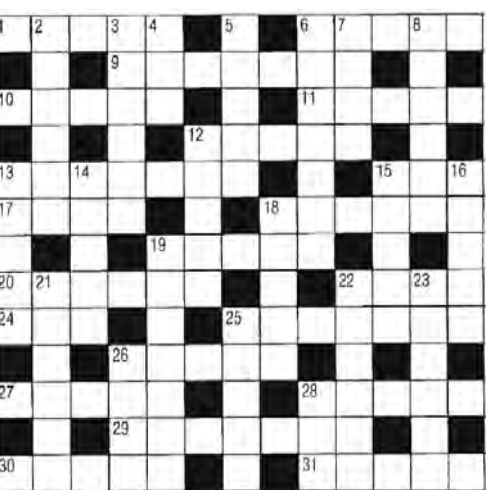


#### SOLUTION (4.05.26)

6	3	2	7	1	8	4	9	5
1	4	8	9	3	5	2	6	7
5	9	7	6	4	2	1	8	3
9	8	5	3	6	4	7	2	1
7	6	1	2	5	9	3	4	8
3	2	4	1	8	7	6	5	9
2	5	3	8	7	6	9	1	4
4	1	6	5	9	3	8	7	2
8	7	9	4	2	1	5	3	6

### DOUBLE CROSSWORD

TUESDAY | MAY 5, 2026



#### ACROSS

- 1 The greatest way to eat? (5)
- 6 Glide smoothly yet very noisily in a boat (5)
- 9 It's on the wing (7)
- 10 Next to synthetic fur, it's a natural product (5)
- 11 Runs out, as mother does at teatime! (5)
- 12 Was slow to get a republican in court (5)
- 13 Thought highly of, though always in the red (7)
- 15 Aged figures with plenty of energy (3)
- 17 Soon admits ignorance of authorship (4)
- 18 A scale used somewhere on the Continent (6)
- 19 Roman who, having got in, went out to work at a trade! (5)
- 20 Finds an unfulfilled desire irritating? (6)
- 22 Enough beef for eleven? (4)
- 24 Quite definitely it's said to be cast (3)
- 25 Spanish sportsman, a cad at heart (7)
- 26 Like Herb, he has his roots in the soil (5)
- 27 A wooden one's not for winning (5)
- 28 Long neglected duty about the first of September (5)
- 29 At the end of winter, wild cats spread out (7)
- 30 James, the father of David? (5)
- 31 Sort of drum for a catchy rhythm? (5)

#### DOWN

- 2 Get tough on difficult points (6)
- 3 Girl bowled over? (6)
- 4 Location of tip-up seats? (3)
- 5 Can it keep one's chest a bit warm in bed? (5)
- 6 In a silly, sentimental yet absorbing way? (7)
- 7 It's tied to the idea of speed (4)
- 8 Favourable figures relating to acid (6)
- 12 Battery units (5)
- 13 Frantic weaving of braid (5)
- 14 There's something gripping about love, say (5)
- 15 A name I had for being good (5)
- 16 Something to read (5)
- 18 Smith's property in the block (5)
- 19 What a sinner may do with a letter from Penzance (7)
- 21 Drink it up very quietly, there's some left! (6)
- 22 Planet starting satisfactorily to rotate (6)
- 23 Who? (6)
- 25 Potable paint, possibly? (5)
- 26 An extra big-hearted employer? (4)
- 28 Sideshow man? (3)

#### SOLUTION (4.05.26)

ACROSS	27. Fortune	DOWN	24. Gone through
8. Cla-i-me-d	30. Put out	1. Fla-go-n	26. Squaremeal
9. Catches on	31. Vis-age	2. List-less	28. Tiger lily
13. Aught	32. Discus/s	3. Getting back	29. Man-date
14. Thin-G	35. Sheer	4. Sang-froid	30. Pistol
15. Ring-net	36. Ahead	5. S-C-arlet	32. Desolate
16. Concern	37. Has-been	6. B-can sprout	33. Son-net
17. There-e	39. Opt-i-mum	7. Fool	34. Oatmeal
18. Prior	41. Lo-tto	11. Distant	38. Ex-acts
20. To-tilles	42. Leave	12. S-to-red	40. Thee
22. B-and-it	43. Get-a-table	19. Int-ends	
23. Posted	44. Ag-at-it	21. Prat-t-l-e	
25. Ran-sack			

### Supply of dry-fuel to power sector by Coal India arm SECL rises 8.2% to 12.49 MT in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Coal India arm South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) on Monday said coal supply to the power sector jumped 8.2 per cent to 12.49 million tonnes (MT) during April.

Coal despatch by SECL stood at 11.54 MT in April last year.

The increase underscores SECL's sustained emphasis on prioritising coal supply to the power sector, aligning with directives from the coal ministry.

This growth reflects the miniratna company's ongoing efforts to bolster



fuel availability amid rising power demand, ensuring steady operations for thermal plants.

SECL, a leading coal producer with major operations in the Korba coalfields of Chhattisgarh and across parts of Central India, has been ramping up production and logistics to meet national energy needs.

According to the company's CMD Harish Duhan, SECL remains committed to sustaining this momentum and ensuring reliable coal availability to meet the country's power demand.

The company said that SECL has made a strong start to 2026-27, with coal production at 15.31 MT in April 2026, registering a growth of 9.25 per cent over the corresponding period last year.

During the same period, overburden removal stood at 33.10 million cubic metres (MCuM), up by 4.49 per cent, while coal offtake reached 15.85 MT, reflecting a growth

of 4.03 per cent.

This performance has been enabled by improved land availability in key mega projects in the Korba region during the previous financial year, coupled with focused monitoring of critical operations.

Both opencast and underground segments have contributed positively, supported by enhanced operational efficiency.

SECL remains focused on maintaining production momentum and ensuring a reliable coal supply to the power sector, particularly in the context of evolving demand conditions.

### Air India SATS inks pact to fast-track Samsung Data Systems shipments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Mumbai

Gateway and cargo service operator Air India SATS Airport Services (AISATS) has signed an agreement with Samsung Data Systems India to fast-track shipments of the latter's products from the multi-modal cargo hub at the Noida International Airport.

Samsung has a manufacturing facility at Noida in Uttar Pradesh, one of the world's largest mobile manufacturing clusters, producing smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other devices.

This partnership will significantly enhance cargo efficiency, providing a streamlined export pathway for high-value electronics shipments, further strengthening India's position as a leading



electronics exporter with Samsung SDS playing a pivotal role in logistics digital transformation, AISATS said.

The strategic proximity to Samsung's manufacturing unit will enable faster cargo throughput, reduced transit time, and improved access to export markets, driving profitability, it said.

The cargo hub at Noida airport is spread across 87 acres and designed as an integrated logistics platform, with a 30-acre Integrated Cargo Terminal (ICT) and a

57-acre Integrated Warehousing and Logistics Zone to cater to various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, electronics, engineering goods, and e-commerce. The facility has an annual handling capacity of approximately 255,000 metric tonnes of cargo in phase 1 at its ICT.

"India's role as a global manufacturing hub, particularly in electronics, requires logistics infrastructure that is agile, reliable, and at par with international standards. Our partnership with Samsung SDS is a significant step in enabling high-value, time-sensitive cargo to move seamlessly through a globally benchmarked cargo ecosystem," said Ramanathan Rajamani, CEO, AISATS.

### NSE launches Electronic Gold Receipts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) on Monday launched Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) as a new segment, in a bid to create a more transparent and efficient price discovery of the yellow metal.

The move is expected to bridge the age-old gap between physical gold and the financial markets by offering a regulated, secure, and technologically-advanced platform for trading in the precious commodity, the exchange said in a statement. EGRs are dematerialised securities representing ownership of physical gold, which is securely stored in Sebi-accredited vaults and held electronically through depositories.



### BRIEFLY

#### Mendy injured in Madrid's win over Espanyol



Defender Ferland Mendy was injured 10 minutes into Real Madrid's 2-0 win over Espanyol in the Spanish league on Sunday. The latest setback could end any hopes of making France's squad for the World Cup.

The 30-year-old Mendy, who has suffered a series of injuries this season, was a member of the French squad at the 2024 European Championship but hasn't been called up since then.

Mendy has played only nine matches with Real Madrid this season.

He got hurt on Sunday while sprinting to the ball, and went down with an apparent right leg muscle injury.

Madrid did not immediately release details on the severity of the injury.

#### Stewart Cink adds another PGA TOUR Champions



Stewart Cink pulled away with consecutive birdies early on the back nine Sunday that stretched his lead to four shots, and he closed with a 3-under 69 for a three-shot victory in the Regions Tradition for his second major this year on the PGA TOUR Champions.

Cink, who won the Senior PGA Championship two weeks ago in Florida, became the second player in two years to capture the first two majors on the 50-and-older circuit. Angel Cabrera won the Senior PGA and the Tradition last year in consecutive weeks.

"This weekend was a little scrappy," Cink said. "I'm really proud I was able to stay out front."

He was staked to a three-shot lead going into the final round at Greystone Golf & Country Club, and Colin Montgomerie got within two shots of them heading to the back nine.

The 52-year-old Cink responded with birdies on the 11th and 12th holes to build a four-shot lead, and Montgomerie failed to make birdie over his final 13 holes to shoot 71 and finish alone in third.

## Hardie leads Peshawar to first PSL cricket title



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Lahore

Aaron Hardie's brilliant all-round performance led Peshawar Zalmi to its first Pakistan Super League cricket title since 2017 with a five-wicket win over newcomer Hyderabad Kingsmen in the final.

Hardie grabbed 4-27 to bowl out Hyderabad for a below-par 129 all out in 18 overs with Saim Ayub (54) scoring a fighting half century. Hardie then hit a fluent 56 not out off 39 balls and anchored Peshawar to 130-5 in 15.2 overs in front of a packed crowd at Gaddafi Stadium.

"It's a very big achievement for me, for Peshawar Zalmi and all the fans," said Peshawar captain Babar Azam after winning his first PSL title as skipper. "Throughout the tournament we've performed really well as a team and every player executed the plans they were given in batting, bowling, and field-

ing. Our plan was to go match by match."

Peshawar, which won the toss and chose to chase, had slumped to 40-4 inside the first five overs after losing tournament top run-scorer Babar for a golden duck while Mohammad Haris, Kusal Mendis and Michael Bracewell also fell for single-digit scores.

But Hardie, who smashed nine fours, then combined in a match-winning stand of 85 runs with Abdul Samad (48), who missed out on his half century before holing out in the deep when Peshawar needed only five runs for victory. "It was just a great game of cricket," Hardie said. "Kingsmen came out of the blocks really hard. They've certainly had a lot of momentum from the last couple of games and they carried that in, but I'm really proud of the way the boys were able to fight back."

Peshawar was favorite for the title after it lost only one

game in the tournament with Babar, who scored two centuries, equaling Fakhar Zaman's PSL record of 588 runs in one edition of the tournament.

Hyderabad had a productive power play of 69-2 despite Hardie having captain Marnus Labuschagne (20) caught behind of a rising delivery and Maaz Sadaqat's early aggression was cut short to just 11 runs when he half-heartedly pulled pace bowler Mohammad Basit to deep backward square leg in the first over.

However, Hyderabad lost momentum and crashed to 73-6 in the space of nine balls after the power play for just two runs.

The slide began when Usman Khan, coming into the final with half centuries in the last three successive games, was trapped leg before wicket by the tournament's leading wicket-taker Sufyan Moqim (1-23).



## Inter Milan seals Italian league soccer title

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Milan

Inter Milan sealed the Italian league soccer title with a 2-0 victory over visiting Parma.

Inter, which needed only a draw to secure the trophy, moved an unassailable 12 points clear of 2025 champion Napoli with three rounds remaining. It's Inter's 21st Serie A title, trailing only the record 36 held by Juventus.

Marcus Thuram scored just before the break with an angled shot placed just beyond the reach of Parma goalkeeper Zion Suzuki. Then 37-year-old Henrikh Mkhitaryan added another in the 80th after taking a pass from Serie A scoring leader Lautaro Martinez, who came off the bench to mark his return from an injury layoff.

Thuram was born in Parma while his father, Lilian Thuram, played there.

For Cristian Chivu, Inter's first-year coach, the trophy was secured against the club he coached last season —

having helped Parma avoid relegation. Chivu, who was hired to replace the departed Simone Inzaghi nearly a year ago, played on the Inter team that won a treble under Jose Mourinho in 2010.

In the running for two trophies this season, Inter will face Lazio in the Italian Cup final in 10 days.

The domestic success has come in sharp contrast to Inter's ouster from this season's Champions League playoffs by tiny Norwegian club Bodø/Glimt. Last season, Inter was routed 5-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final.

Still, it's an improvement from last season's Serie A when Inter finished one point behind Napoli.

**AC Milan and Juventus at risk:** While Inter was celebrating, AC Milan and Juventus were at risk of losing their Champions League places. Milan was reduced to 10 men and beaten 2-0 at Sassuolo for its

fourth loss in seven matches. Then Juventus drew 1-1 with relegated Hellas Verona.

Third-placed Milan was left only two points ahead of fourth-placed Juventus, which is just three points ahead of fifth-placed Como, which is trying to get into the top four and secure a Champions League spot.

Three rounds remain in the Italian league. Milan has scored only one goal in its last five matches. Christian Pulisic, who came on in the second half, extended his goalless streak to a career-high 17 league matches.

**Vlahovic equalizes for Juventus:** Juventus also dropped points at home against Verona but extended its unbeaten run to nine matches. Kieron Bowie put Verona ahead after intercepting a pass from Juventus defender Gleison Bremer then Dusan Vlahovic equalized for Juventus with a free kick around Verona's wall for his first goal since October.

## Inter transforming treble disappointment into domestic domination

DANIELLA MATARAP ■ Milan

Inter Milan transformed its treble disappointment from last season into domination in Italy this year.

Inter beat Parma 2-0 on Sunday to see the Serie A title return to Milan. It is 12 points ahead of second-placed Napoli with three rounds remaining.

Inter can complete a league and cup double if it beats Lazio in the Italian Cup final on May 13. The last time it won both was when Jose Mourinho led Inter to the treble in 2010. It's a far cry from the bitter disappointment of last year when a season that promised so much ultimately left Inter empty-handed.

With just over a month to go to the end of last season, Inter was on course for a treble of trophies but finished one point below Serie A champion Napoli, lost in the Italian Cup semifinals and was routed 5-



0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the most lopsided Champions League final in history. Here are the key factors in how Inter turned things around on the domestic front to win the 2025-26 Italian league:

**Change of coach:** While there was

little surprise when coach Simone Inzaghi left Inter at the end of last season, the appointment of the relatively inexperienced Cristian Chivu raised a few eyebrows.

There had been rumors about Inzaghi's departure for several

weeks, with the coach going on to take a lucrative job with Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal.

Inzaghi had been in charge for four years, during which he steered Inter to the Italian league title in 2024 and two Champions League finals.

He also won two Italian Cups with Inter. Chivu had only ever overseen 13 matches in Serie A, securing safety with Parma after being given his first senior coaching position that February. But he knew Inter well, having spent the previous seven years in charge of various youth teams at the club, where he ended his playing career in 2014.

The former Romania defender was part of Inter's famous treble-winning team in 2010, lifting the Champions League, Serie A and Italian Cup trophies. He also helped the Nerazzurri to another two Serie A titles among the nine trophies amassed during his seven years at the club. Chivu's fresh approach as a coach and new ideas reinvigorated Inter. He transformed the team into a more aggressive, high-pressing outfit and restored locker room harmony, while integrating academy talents such as Pio Esposito. (AP)

## Max Verstappen takes 5th at Miami but still wants improvements to his car

ALANIS THAMESAP ■ Miami Gardens (Florida)

Max Verstappen was feeling a bit more comfortable in his car at the Miami Grand Prix, but the four-time Formula 1 champion still believes Red Bull has improvements to make.

After testing out Red Bull's upgrades made during a five-week break in the F1 schedule, Verstappen had his best result of the season on Sunday, finishing fifth despite spinning from second on the opening lap.

Verstappen has been a vocal critic of the current car regulations, even going as far

as saying he's considering leaving the sport. He left Miami only slightly happier with the car.

"I mean, my car drives a bit better," said Verstappen, who qualified a season-best second for the race at Miami International Autodrome. "But what I said before about the regulations is the same... It's still not how I would like to see it."

Verstappen was part of a chaotic start to Sunday's race when he spun trying to hold off Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who had surged to the lead ahead of eventual winner Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes on the opening lap. The spin caused Verstappen to fall to ninth.

"Quite hectic," Verstappen said. "I lost the rear into Turn 2. Then I tried to min-

imize the time loss by doing a 360. I thought I was going to crash but then I floored it and managed to do a good 360. So if F1 doesn't work out, I could always go Rally (racing)." Verstappen worked his way through the midfield back into third, even briefly taking the lead as others pitted. He attempted to make it a one-stop race, an approach that eventually cost him.

"After that (spin) I think the pace was not too bad on the medium (tires)," he said, "but as soon as I swapped to the hard compound (tires) it was just a lot more difficult. Now, after the race it's easy to say of course, but I think that stint was just a bit too long."

**Tough weekend for Ferrari:** Leclerc settled for a sixth-place finish despite getting off to a strong start from third.

He was among the leaders throughout the race, but a costly move on the penultimate lap caused him to spin and hit the barriers. "The damage was significant," Leclerc said afterward, adding: "I'm very disappointed with myself. It's all on me and it's not acceptable." Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton said it was a disappointing weekend he qualified sixth and finished seventh. Hamilton's car was affected by an apparent collision with Franco Colapinto of Alpine at the start. )

"Overall, it was a challenging weekend, but I believe we have a good car and there are some positives to take away," Hamilton said. "We just need to keep pushing, both at the factory and at the track, to keep adding performance and close the gap as we move forward."

**Star-studded audience:** F1 races typically bring out famous faces from all over, and rainy weather on Sunday didn't stop the influx of celebrities.

Miami-based entertainer DJ Khaled arrived at Miami International Autodrome on a yacht that was toting an F1 car belonging to Red Bull's sister team. (AP)

## Madrid's victory keeps Barcelona waiting for Spanish league title

TALES AZZONIAP ■ Madrid

Vinicius Junior scored two second-half goals and Real Madrid beat Espanyol 2-0 to keep Barcelona from clinching its second straight Spanish league title.

Barcelona beat Osasuna 2-1 on Saturday to open a 14-point gap over Madrid entering Sunday's matches. Anything but a win by Madrid against Barcelona's city rival would have allowed the Catalan club to celebrate its 29th league title this weekend. Barcelona will have a chance to clinch the title next weekend when it hosts Madrid in a "clasico" at the Camp Nou.

Barcelona's lead stayed at 11 points heading into the final four rounds of La Liga.

"We have a big game



against a great rival and they have been playing well," Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa said. "It's a special game for the fans, for us. We are going to rest and prepare well for it."

Sunday's result kept Espanyol winless in 17 consecutive games this year,

with 10 losses. It sits in 13th place, five points from the relegation zone. It was a hard-fought match until Vinicius broke the deadlock in the 55th minute after a nice fake move to get past a couple of Espanyol defenders inside the area. The Brazil forward added to

the lead in the 66th with a shot into the top corner after a beautiful back-heel set up by Jude Bellingham.

Espanyol defender Omar El Hilali was shown a straight red card for a foul on Vinicius in the first half but the call was changed to a yellow card after video review. Madrid lost left back Ferland Mendy 10 minutes into the match because of an apparent muscle injury.

**Other games:** Rayo Vallecano prepared for its Conference League semifinal against Strasbourg with a 2-0 win at Getafe.

Rayo coach Inigo Perez was able to rest many of his first-choice players with the Conference League semifinal second leg on Thursday in mind. Rayo won the first leg 1-0 at home.

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## Yet to play our best game: Jason Holder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Jason Holder believes that Gujarat Titans are yet to play their best cricket but have still managed to find a way to win matches and remain in IPL play-off contention.

Holder, who produced a match-winning four-wicket haul against a rampaging Punjab Kings, is happy that every win has been based on collective effort rather than individual brilliance.

"The beauty about how we've been playing is that, it's not one individual performing every single day. There are different players stepping up on different days," Holder said at the post-match press conference after GT beat PBKS by five wickets on Sunday.

"So I think we still arguably haven't played our best game yet but you know, the beauty about that is that we're still getting the two points necessary each time we cross the line." While a target of 164 was chased only with a ball to spare, Holder stressed on getting the two points rather than fretting over the net run-rate. "Look, I think the first priority is always to win the game. If we find ourselves in a position where conditions are favourable that we could think about net run-rate. I think we'll do that."

"But I think the first priority is to accumulate the two points every single time we play and build our momentum. We're on a



So I think we still arguably haven't played our best game yet but you know, the beauty about that is that we're still getting two points necessary each time we cross line — Jason Holder

bit of a roll in terms of three back-to-back wins now. So it's just a matter for us just to stay consistent. I think the run rate and these kind of things will take care of itself." While Holder has got seven wickets in four games, he gave a lot of credit to pacers Kagiso Rabada and

Mohammed Siraj for consistently getting wickets in the Powerplay. "Credit to both KG and Siraj. I think they've been outstanding this entire competition. You know, they've led the powerplay, I think, in this entire competition. And they've made it difficult for the opposition. You know, that speaks volumes for their class," Holder

was lavish in his praise. In fact, he was quick to point out that not many pace duos in the world would bowl three overs each in Powerplays. "I mean, very rarely have I seen two bowlers, you know, bowling three overs back-to-back in a Powerplay. So it says a lot about their calibre and their quality. I think when they start, you know, they set the tone in terms of what length works on a particular wicket. And then, you know, it's just a matter for all the other bowlers to follow."

## Desperate DC seek end to horror run at home



BHARAT SHARMA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals will need to stop oscillating between sublime and suicidal to overcome their streak of three painful losses at home when they take on an equally desperate Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.

Both sides are on eight points from nine games and with five matches remaining, there is no room left for error.

The Capitals put up a clinical batting performance in Jaipur on Friday night to get a welcome win after a hat-trick of defeats. Two of those losses came at home causing immense hurt in the dressing room as Punjab Kings chased down a record 265 before Royal Challengers Bengaluru

exposed their fragile batting against a potent pace attack.

The defeats at Kotla also includes a harrowing one-run loss to Gujarat Titans, a game that DC should have definitely won.

The biggest positives going for DC heading into the CSK game is opener Pathum Nissanka finding his range alongside the ever consistent KL Rahul while speedster Mitchell Starc providing the much-needed bite to the bowling attack.

**No Dhoni yet, Gaikwad's return to form a big boost:** Ahead of their 10th game of the season, CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to PTI that MS Dhoni has not yet regained full fitness, ruling him out of the game at Kotla. (PTI)

## Diksha, Tvesa drop down on the final in Mauritius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Port Louis (Mauritius)

The Indian trio of Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik and Hitaashee Bakshi suffered a tough closing round and slipped down the leaderboard at the 2026 MCB Ladies Classic — Mauritius.

After opening with 68-69, Diksha shot a 74 in the third round to finish T-21, while Tvesa, after 70-71, shot 73 and was T-38.

Hitaashee, who carded solid 71-69 on the first two days had a round of 76 and dropped to T-58.

Denmark's Smilla Tarning Soenderby secured her second Ladies European Tour (LET) title becoming the first-ever winner of the 2026 MCB Ladies Classic — Mauritius with a birdie on the last hole.

Diksha had just one birdie on the ninth and dropped shots on the first, 10th and the 15th.

Sweden's Kajsa Arweffall ended the week in a share of second place alongside South Africa's Casandra Alexander one shot behind Soenderby.

Italy's Anna Zanusso set the early clubhouse target firing a sensational bogey-free round of 9-under 63, the best-ever on this golf course and her lowest as a professional, to finish in solo fourth place.

Five players ended the week in a share of fifth place.



## Formula 1's electrical revolution losing spark; call for V8 engines



JAMES ELLINGWORTH ■ Miami

Four races into Formula 1's new era and the peak of electrical power's influence on the sport may already be in the rearview mirror.

The Miami Grand Prix was the first under changes which slightly limited the role of the electrical power which has redefined racing this year. The president of the governing body, the FIA, said in Miami he wants traditional V8 engines back in a few years' time.

F1 started the year with some of the biggest changes in its 76-year history, headlined by a 50-50 split in power between a traditional engine and the on-board battery pack. There were only three Grand Prix races under those new rules before a package of tweaks was introduced which curbed the influence of the electrical power. They answered driver criticism by promoting pure driving skill over electrical recharging, especially in qualifying. Discussions on further changes for 2027 could con-

tinue that trend. Sunday's race in Miami was one of the most wide-open in recent F1 history with drivers from four different teams leading before Kimi Antonelli took his third win of 2026 for Mercedes.

**V8 engines would take F1 back to the future:** When FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem first proposed a return to big, noisy traditional engines last year, some F1 figures thought it was an election tactic, and it fizzled out in a meeting with manufacturers. (AP)

## Washington's innings addressed GT's middle-order crisis: Ashwin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Washington Sundar's match-winning cameo against Punjab Kings is bound to address a few teething questions about fragile nature of its middle-order, former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said. Coming in at number 5, Washington scored 40 not out off 23 balls with help of five fours and a six to complete a tricky chase of 164 with a ball to spare which kept GT in contention for a play-off berth.

"Washington Sundar's innings was extremely important because it addressed a key question around Gujarat Titans' middle order," Ashwin told JioStar after GT beat PBKS by five wickets. He was impressed that Washington showed requisite composure to finish off the game and



gave the team management confidence to use him as a flexible option. "While a lot of their runs come from the top three, contributions like this show the depth they have. Washington has often been used as a flexible option, but he stepped up, handled the pressure well, and ensured the chase was completed. "It might not have looked flashy, but it was a very composed and clinical effort to get the team over the line," Ashwin added. Chasing targets like 164 can be tricky and what sets GT apart from other sides, is their methodical approach, based on conditions.

## Jannik Sinner seems unstoppable

ANDREW DAMPF ■ Rome

Most tennis players — even some of the very best ones — have days where they struggle and don't feel the ball the way that they want to.

For top-ranked Jannik Sinner, those types of days are getting rarer and rarer.

And with Carlos Alcaraz sidelined due to a right wrist injury, it doesn't seem like anyone can beat the top-ranked Sinner as the heart of the tennis season approaches with the French Open and Wimbledon coming up over the next two months.

"He's very stable. He doesn't have dips. He doesn't have phases where he goes down," No. 3 Alexander Zverev said after getting routed by Sinner in Sunday's Madrid Open final for his ninth straight loss to the Italian. "That's why he's world number 1."

Sinner's title in the Spanish capital made him the first player to win five consecutive Masters 1000 events — the top tournaments outside of the Grand Slams — and extended his winning streak to 23



matches. Sinner hasn't lost since getting beat by Jakob Mensik in the Qatar Open quarterfinals on February 19. "There's a big gap between Sinner and everybody else right now," Zverev said. "It's quite simple. And to think that at age 24, Sinner is still developing his game. "He hasn't reached his full potential yet," said Simone Vagnozzi, one of Sinner's coaches. "We're sure of that. And that's key, because when you feel like you've maxed out it's tough to find the motivation to keep training."

Italian Open next: Up next for Sinner is his home Italian Open, which starts this week and also happens to be the only Masters Series event that he hasn't won.

While there have been questions over whether Sinner might sit out Rome after his string of successes and choose to rest up for the French Open, which starts May 24, he dismissed that idea after beating Zverev. "Playing at home is always very special," Sinner said. "Physically, I'm good. There is no reason not to play Rome."

Last year, Sinner lost the Rome final to Alcaraz in his comeback tournament after

## Injured Phil Salt returns home for scans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Royal Challengers Bengaluru opener Phil Salt has returned to England for scans on a finger injury sustained last month.

The injury has kept Salt out of RCB's last three matches, with compatriot Jacob Bethell stepping in at the top of the order. The 29-year-old is reported to



have "damaged a finger on his left hand" while diving to save a boundary at deep backward square leg during RCB's defeat to Delhi Capitals at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on April 18.

"Salt, who is centrally contracted by the ECB, has since returned home at the request of England's management and has undergone scans on his finger," ESPNcricinfo reported.

## Top tennis players slam Roland Garros prize money

SAMUEL PETREQUIN ■ Paris

A group of leading players including Novak Djokovic, Jannik Sinner, Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff have expressed "their deep disappointment" at the level on prize money at Roland Garros amid a lingering

dispute with Grand Slam tournament organisers.

The clay-court Grand Slam event starts later this month in western Paris. The players said they have other demands that have not been addressed by officials, including better representation, health and pen-

sions. The players' call came after French Open organisers announced last month the Roland Garros prize money has increased by about 10 per cent for an overall pot of 61.7 million euros (\$72.1 million), with the total amount up 5.3 million euros from last year.

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Higher Education Department had invited RFP for CONSTRUCTION OF COMPLETE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR 18 NEWLY ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT COLLEGES, ONE MDC UNDER RUSA, INFRASTRUCTURE FOR B.ED. COLLEGES, HOSTELS FOR 12 EXISTING GOVERNMENT HEIS, 20 HOSTELS FOR AIDED COLLEGES"

The complete details of corrigendum & clarification are available at <https://dhe.odisha.gov.in>

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Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online for bidding	
		From	To
Chief Construction Engineer, R.W.Circle, Berhampur	Online Tender/01-2026-27/BPR	11.05.2026 at 10.00 A.M.	25.05.2026 upto 5.30 P.M.

(i) EMD / Bid Security, Cost of Bid document is to be transferred through Online as per the procedure mentioned in the DTCN.

(ii) Non-submission of the information/documents through online by the bidder as per the items mentioned in the eligible criteria of the DTCN will also liable for rejection of his tender.

Further details & Corrigendum if any can be seen from the website :- [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

OIPR-25001/25071/1/2627/0002

Chief Engineer  
R.W. Circle, Berhampur