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## Happening today

● **VIETNAMESE PRESIDENT** To Lam, who is on a three-day visit to India, is scheduled to hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

● **IPL 2026:** Hosts Sunrisers Hyderabad and league leaders Punjab Kings will face off in a key encounter.

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## 3 Indians in UAE injured in Iran drone strike, PM says it is 'unacceptable'

Shubhajit Roy  
New Delhi, May 5

A DAY after three Indian nationals in UAE were injured in a fire caused by an Iranian drone strike in Fujairah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi "strongly condemned the attacks" and said targeting civilians and infrastructure was "unacceptable".

In a separate statement, the Ministry of External Affairs called for the "immediate cessation of these hostilities and the targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians".

Monday's incident at the Fujairah Petroleum Industries Zone (FOIZ) signalled rising tensions in the region along the Strait of Hormuz amid a fragile ceasefire involving the US, Israel and Iran.

On Tuesday, too, UAE authorities said their air defences were intercepting missiles and drones from Iran.

In a post on X, Modi said: "Strongly condemn the attacks on the UAE that resulted in injuries to three Indian nationals. Targeting civilians and infrastructure is unacceptable. India stands in firm solidarity with the UAE and reiterates its support for the peaceful resolution of all issues through dialogue and diplomacy."

He said, "Ensuring safe and unimpeded navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is vital for enduring regional peace, stability and global energy security."

Earlier, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the attack "that resulted in injury to three Indian nationals is unacceptable". "India continues to stand for dialogue and diplomacy... so that peace and stability may be restored across West Asia. We also call for free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in keeping with international law," he said.

## THE WORLD PAGE 14



## EXCHANGE OF FIRE, BUT IRAN CEASEFIRE HOLDS, SAYS U.S.

UNTIL A month ago, all Motab Shaikh hoped for was to make it to the West Bengal electoral roll. Now, the 58-year-old is one of only two candidates of the Congress to have won in the state, keeping alive hopes of the party, after it had scored a duck in 2021.

His name deleted as a voter after adjudication, following the Special Intensive Revision

## SHAH TO BE OBSERVER AT MEETING OF MLAs TO ELECT LEADER

# Suvendu frontrunner for Bengal CM, swearing-in likely on May 9

## Two workers each from TMC, BJP killed in post-poll violence in state

Tanusree Bose, Liz Mathew & Jatin Anand  
Kolkata, New Delhi, May 5

GIANT-KILLER SUVENDU Adhikari, who spearheaded the BJP's ground offensive in West Bengal that breached the TMC citadel to end Mamata Banerjee's 15-year rule, has emerged as the frontrunner for the post of Chief Minister.

Hailing the party's election victory as "a triumph for every patriotic nationalist and every BJP worker," Adhikari, who defeated Banerjee in Bhabanipur and also won from Nandigram, said Tuesday that the BJP was committed to "a developed, prosperous and secure West Bengal".

His remarks came on the day post-poll violence erupted in different parts of the state and four persons — two workers each of the TMC and BJP — were killed in separate incidents.

The TMC said two party members were killed in Belegata in Kolkata and Nanoor in Birbhum. The BJP, on the other hand, said two of its workers were killed in New Town in North 24 Parganas and Udaynarayanpur in Howrah. Each party blamed the other for the deaths.

The TMC also said that there were widespread attacks on its offices and workers fol-

## Business as Usual

By EPUNNY



## DECISION 2026

### TMC SAYS PARTY OFFICES BEING ATTACKED

### BJP WIN IN EAST MAY HELP OPEN NEW FOREIGN POLICY DOORS IN REGION PAGES 5, 7

lowing its defeat in the Assembly elections. The BJP said it had instructed its district presidents and party workers not to



BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari distributes sweets at the party office in Kolkata on Tuesday. PARTHA PAUL

## Not defeated, won't resign... Will strengthen INDIA bloc: Mamata

Ravik Bhattacharya & Atri Mitra  
Kolkata, May 5

A DAY after the BJP swept the West Bengal Assembly elections, Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson Mamata Banerjee Tuesday ruled out stepping down as Chief Minister, alleging that the results were "not a people's mandate but a conspiracy". Banerjee vowed to take the battle to the streets and strengthen the Op-



TMC leader Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Tuesday. PARTHA PAUL

position INDIA bloc. "We have not been defeated, I will not resign. There is no question of my going to Raj Bhavan. In this election, the BJP and the Election Commission have played a dirty game. They forcefully grabbed (votes)," the TMC chief, who lost to BJP's Suvendu Adhikari by 15,105 votes, said at a press conference in Kolkata, with her nephew and Diamond Harbour MP



Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief Vijay pays tribute to the party's ideological leaders at the party headquarters in Chennai on Tuesday. PTI

## For a majority, Vijay starts talks with both Congress, AIADMK

Arun Janardhanan  
Chennai, May 5

ADAY after the election results, which saw Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) emerge as the single largest party in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the state is preparing for something it has not witnessed in decades — a coalition government.

Leaders from both the Congress and the AIADMK said on Tuesday that Vijay reached out to their parties for support in forming a government.

## THE BIG PICTURE

### A Vijay blockbuster PAGE 16

Making its Assembly election debut, the Tamil film superstar's TVK won 108 seats, leaving a significant gap to the ruling DMK, which came in sec-

ond with 59 seats. However, with the TVK falling short of the majority mark of 118 in the 234-member Assembly, attention has shifted swiftly from celebration to coalition-building.

By Tuesday morning, as Vijay visited his party office and convened a meeting with newly elected MLAs, plans for a coalition were already set in motion.

Sources indicated that under one proposed arrangement, the TVK-led government

## Free LPG to grants for jobless, TVK's poll sops could see 52% spike in welfare bill

Projected cost about Rs 1 lakh cr/ year; DMK spent Rs 65,000 cr in 2025-26

Deeptiman Tiwary  
New Delhi, May 5

FROM RS 2,500 every month to women heads of households to six free LPG cylinders per household every year, a grant of Rs 4,000 per month for 10 lakh unemployed graduates — and much more.

As film star-politician Vijay's TVK prepares to rule Tamil Nadu following its incredible election victory, the focus is now on the expansive promises listed in its manifesto, which builds upon, and even exceeds, commitments made by previous state governments (see chart on page 2).

Given the TVK's manifesto and official state data, the new government's projected annual expenditure on welfare spending alone would be close to Rs 1 lakh crore — an increase of over 52% from the Rs 65,000 crore

spent by the previous DMK government on welfare schemes and subsidies in 2025-26.

To put these numbers in perspective, TVK's projected welfare expenditure equals approximately one-third of Tamil Nadu's total revenue receipts of Rs 3.31 lakh crore, as per the 2025-26 state budget. That could put a significant burden on the budget, squeezing space for capital expenditure in a state that already carries a debt of 26% of GDP. If financed entirely through higher expenditure without new revenues, this could push the fiscal deficit from the budgeted 3% of GDP in 2025-26 to about 3.5-4.0%.

This does not count the projected spending on a cooperative farm loan waiver and legally guaranteed MSP procurement of paddy and sugarcane that have been promised

## CREDIT LINE GUARANTEE SCHEME

# Union Cabinet clears Rs 2.55 lakh-cr lifeline for MSMEs, airlines hit by West Asia war



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw at a Cabinet briefing Tuesday. PTI

Aanchal Magazine  
New Delhi, May 5

THE UNION Cabinet on Tuesday approved a credit support scheme to meet the needs of industries in distress due to the West Asia conflict, targeting an additional credit flow of Rs 2.55 lakh crore, including Rs 5,000 crore for airlines.

Modelled on similar lifelines for distressed sectors during Covid, the Government's new Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 5.0 (ECLGS 5.0) has an estimated outlay of Rs 18,000 crore.

According to an official release, additional credit will be available to MSMEs and non-MSMEs, excluding aviation, up to 20% of peak working capital utilised during Q4 FY26, capped at Rs 100 crore. For airlines, the credit will be up to 100%, capped at Rs 1,500 crore

## BENCH STRENGTH OF SC TO RISE TO 38

● The Cabinet cleared a proposal for introducing The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, in Parliament to increase the court's strength from the existing 34 Judges to 38, including the Chief Justice of India.

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per borrower, subject to certain specific conditions, it said.

Guarantee fees will be waived under the scheme. For MSMEs and non-MSMEs, except aviation, the loan tenure would be five years from the date of first disbursement, including a moratorium of one year. For airlines, the loan tenure would be seven years from

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## INSIDE

TWO NEW CHIP PLANTS WORTH RS 3,936 CR GET CABINET NOD PAGE 15

RS 5,659 CR FOR 5-YEAR MISSION TO INCREASE COTTON YIELD PAGE 5

## CJI: Original PIL on Sabarimala should have been thrown in dustbin

### Bench questions locus, intent of original petitioner

Ananthkrishnan G  
New Delhi, May 5

HEARING CONSTITUTIONAL questions arising out of petitions seeking a review of its 2018 judgement on the Sabarimala issue, a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court Tuesday questioned the locus and intent of the original petitioner, with Chief Justice of India Surya Kant saying that the PIL should have been "thrown outright in the dustbin".

On September 28, 2018, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, in a 4-1 verdict,

ruled that the practice of banning women of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala was unconstitutional. That bench was headed by then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra.

On Tuesday, while questioning Advocate Ravi Gupta's submission that the then CJI had provided police security to him and Naushad Ali, president of the NGO Indian Young Lawyers Association (IYLA) which had filed the Sabarimala PIL in 2006, Justice B V Nagarathna said, "Since you are referring to the learned former Chief Justice, with great respect, rather than ensuring there was security provided to the advocates, he could have ensured that there was no need for a security threat at all by not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

● THE 58-YEAR-OLD CONGRESS CANDIDATE MADE IT TO VOTER LIST ON EVE OF NOMINATION DEADLINE, AFTER SC RULED IN HIS FAVOUR. HE WON FROM FARAKKA BY 8,000-PLUS VOTES

# Deleted by SIR, elected by people: Motab Shaikh is the 'luckiest person'

Ravik Bhattacharya  
Kolkata, May 5

(SIR) exercise, Shaikh had approached the Supreme Court to urge the tribunals to hear his case on priority. On April 5, a day to go for the end of deadline to file nominations for the first-phase seats, the apex court ruled in Shaikh's favour.

On April 6, Shaikh filed his papers from the Farakka Assembly seat.

On Monday, he got 63,050 votes to win the constituency by a margin of more than 8,000. It was his first Assembly election; with the last

polls that the contractor by profession fought being for panchayats. His son now handles the family business.

The Trinamool Congress, which held the Farakka seat, was relegated to the third position, with the BJP finishing second.

Incredulous at the reversal in his fortunes, Shaikh told *The Indian Express* over the phone: "I am one of the luckiest people in the world. I had lost all hope when I found my name deleted from the electoral list following the SIR. I thought I would never



'I had lost all hope... It is a victory of the people,' says Motab Shaikh

even be able to vote... But the people voted for me... It is a victory of the people."

Of the roughly 27.1 lakh deletions after adjudication in Bengal, 38,222 were in Farakka. The Murshidabad district, where Farakka falls, saw the highest number of deletions in the state, at over 11 lakh.

The other Assembly seat won by the Congress in Bengal, Raninagar, also falls in Murshidabad district. Julfikar Ali won from here by a margin of 2,701 votes, winning 79,423 votes, against sitting MLA Abdul Sou-

mik Hossain of the TMC.

Shaikh points out that he only got 14 days to campaign because of the long uncertainty over whether he would be included as a voter and be allowed to contest. "First the Congress took time to nominate me, and then I found that my name was deleted from the electoral roll. I could campaign only in half of my Assembly constituency," Shaikh says. Had he got more time, he adds, "my margin would have been more".

The Congress, which had won Farakka in 2016, says Shaikh's victory was proof of "the lack of a level-playing field" due to the EC. "Creating a foolproof electoral roll is the duty of the poll panel. Here, the EC was forced to allow Motab to file his nomination after a Supreme Court order... His victory shows people's faith in the party," says Congress spokesperson Soumya Aich Roy.

Shaikh, who says he has always been with the Congress, like his father and grandfather before him, says: "The Farakka

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## Vietnam Prez in India

President of Vietnam To Lam lands in New Delhi on Tuesday afternoon on his first state visit to India. He was accorded a warm welcome and received by MoS Nityanand Rai upon his arrival at the airport. ANI

## Who gets to be called 'Hon'ble' and 'Mr'? Allahabad High Court clarifies

Bhupendra Pandey  
Lucknow, May 5

A MONTH after taking exception to the Uttar Pradesh Police not inserting honorifics like 'Hon'ble' or 'Mr' before the name of BJP MP Anurag Thakur in an FIR, the division bench of Allahabad High Court, in an order, has laid down who gets to be addressed this way.

"Ministers of the Central and State Governments; Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts; the Speaker; the Chairman of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, respectively; and likewise of the State Legislative Assemblies; the Members of Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies are entitled to the use of this honorific," the division bench of Justices JJ Munir and Tarun Saxena observed while hearing the matter on April 30. The order was uploaded on May 4.

It observed that there could be other functionaries who, as per protocol, are entitled to the usage. "Whosoever is entitled to the use of this honorific has to be addressed likewise."

The bench further observed, "It is to be noted that the honorific 'Hon'ble' is to be appended to the names of constitutional functionaries who exercise sovereign functions of any of the three organs of the Government..." But it said no functionary, however high, who is a civil servant and "not the holder of a sovereign constitutional office, is entitled to use" it.

"Personal disgruntlement or familiarity with a family, who is entitled to an honorific, cannot permit the author of any communication to refer to a sovereign functionary of the Government... without it. This part of the matter stands closed," observed the court.

## Delhi court allows confiscation of Sanjay Bhandari's assets in PMLA case

Nirbhay Thakur  
New Delhi, May 5

A DELHI court on Tuesday allowed the confiscation of the properties of UK-based arms consultant Sanjay Bhandari in a money laundering case.

"So far as properties held in the own name of the respondent (first category) are concerned, as discussed earlier, by virtue of him having been declared an FEO (Fugitive Economic Offender) by this court, the respondent Sanjay Bhandari has no say at this stage. He has already lost his right to contest the confiscation of such properties," said Special Judge Sanjay Jindal of Rouse Avenue Court in his order.

"...in view of above facts and circumstances, it is ordered that properties mentioned under Table I above stand confiscated to the Central government in terms of section 12(2) of the FEO Act, 2018 with all necessary implications as per law. So far as properties mentioned under Table II above are concerned, the same require further consideration/verification before confiscation," he said.

The court will now hear the matter on July 18 regarding the



BJP MP Anurag Thakur

During the earlier hearing, the court had directed the Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, to file an affidavit explaining the reason behind police not abiding by the protocol in using honorifics.

The court took note of the affidavit on April 30, which stated that the complaint — typed in Hindi and on the basis of which the FIR was registered — was produced by the complainant, Khajan Singh, and was reproduced in the FIR verbatim.

The affidavit further stated that after the court's March 31 order, directions were issued to the Mathura Senior Superintendent of Police on April 2 to initiate a preliminary inquiry regarding name and honorifics for the former Union Minister.

Thakur is a minister of sports, youth affairs, and Information and Broadcasting in the second Modi government.

The affidavit also stated that the complainant said he was unaware of the protocol regarding use of honorifics for MPs or former Union Ministers. Anurag Thakur is an Hon'ble Member of Parliament and is entitled to the honorific, it stated. The court has listed the matter for hearing next on May 11.

confiscation of the remaining properties. The court had divided the properties into two lists: those claimed to be in Bhandari's name and properties stated to be held by Benamidars or companies beneficially owned by him.

The case stems from allegations that Bhandari did not disclose assets worth hundreds of crores owned by him abroad. After the Income Tax Department raided him in 2016, Bhandari fled to London. A year later, the Enforcement Directorate filed a criminal case against him under the anti-black money law of 2015.

The ED's case against Bhandari was primarily that he failed to disclose his foreign assets — specifically foreign bank accounts and immovable properties — to the Income Tax Authorities for taxation purposes, thereby committing an offence under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income & Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015.

I-T authorities had earlier searched Bhandari's premises and seized digital evidence from which it allegedly retrieved emails regarding a property at 12, Bryanston Square, London, valued at 1.9 million pounds.

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## Suvendu frontrunner for Bengal

allow vandalisation of offices of rival parties.

Meanwhile, BJP sources said Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has been named the party's central observer for the election of the leader of the legislature party, is likely to leave for Kolkata Thursday. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will be the co-observer for the election.

In New Delhi, BJP national president Nitin Nabin chaired a meeting of general secretaries at the party headquarters in which preparations for the swearing-in ceremonies were discussed.

While BJP leaders from West Bengal joined the meeting via virtual mode, Sunil Bansal, BJP national general secretary in charge of West Bengal, flew in from Kolkata to participate in the discussions.

Party sources indicated that the swearing-in ceremony could be held on May 9, which coincides with Pochishe Boishakh, the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. The

venue is still to be finalised. Sources said the date for the swearing-in was a suggestion from Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he addressed the party's victory rally in New Delhi Monday.

Adhikari tops the list of names being discussed for the post of Chief Minister. While the party leadership has, in the recent past, picked surprise names for the post in states such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha and Delhi, the case of West Bengal, a party leader said, could be different.

"Adhikari has been the aggressive face of the BJP for the last few years. Our fight to remove the TMC culture from the state will continue. The party needs a strong and combative face as a leader connected to the ground. Adhikari knows the TMC and its culture very well," the leader said.

BJP chief Nabin, who visited the Kali Bari temple in Chittaranjan Park in New Delhi, later said, "The prayer is that Ma

Kali's blessings remain upon all the citizens of the country and that we continue to move forward steadfastly with complete devotion towards the creation of a Viksit Bharat."

In Kolkata, Adhikari held a series of meetings at the party office in Salt Lake. Those present there included Bansal and Bhupender Yadav.

It is learnt that at the meetings, the leaders, including Adhikari, Samik Bhattacharya and Dilip Ghosh, discussed the blueprint for the tasks on hand once the BJP government takes charge. Portfolio allocation, implementation of schemes, including Central schemes, also figured in the discussions, sources said.

According to sources, the new government will work from the Writers' Buildings but given the renovation work, seating arrangements will be worked out. Sources said a plan has been sought from the PWD and also from the police regarding the security.

## Won't resign: Mamata

Abhishek Banerjee by her side. Her remarks came on a day the EC sent a notification to the Governor constituting the new Assembly in West Bengal.

"Why should I resign? We have not lost. Votes have been looted. Where does the question of resignation arise?" the TMC chief asked. "We were not fighting the BJP; we were fighting the Election Commission which was working for the BJP. I have never seen such an election in my entire political career. A black chapter in history has been created. The Chief Election Commissioner has become the villain," Banerjee said.

Banerjee alleged that TMC candidates, including her, were roughed up inside counting centres. "I was assaulted inside the counting centre. They hit me in my belly and on my back. I was not allowed to enter. My

agent was also not allowed to enter. If such atrocities happened against me, imagine what happened with other candidates," she said.

She said the party was planning action against the BJP and the EC, reiterating her allegation that nearly 100 seats were "looted", CCTVs were switched off at her counting centre, and the process was slowed to break her party's morale. "We have an action plan which is being prepared. But we can't share that with you now," she said.

In response, the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) released an excerpt from the report of the District Election Officer (DEO) dismissing the allegations. "The CCTV was never switched off and any incident of alleged jostling with the candidate of AITC and Hon'ble CM is baseless and a figment of imagination. The

counting process was halted briefly since she insisted on stopping it, however, it was later on started with an intimation to her under the guidelines."

Banerjee thanked INDIA bloc leaders for standing by her. "Thankful to all INDIA bloc leaders — Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh (Yadav), Hemant Soren, Uddhav Thackeray, Tejashwi (Yadav) — who called me. Akhilesh wanted to come today. But Akhilesh will come to meet me tomorrow," she said.

The TMC chief alleged that BJP workers had ransacked party offices and attacked party workers after the results. "We have decided to form a fact-finding committee of 10 members that will be visiting the violence-hit areas. The committee will have five MPs too," she said. "As long as I was in the chair, I tolerated many things. Now, I am a free bird, an ordinary person. I am a street fighter. I will remain on the streets and fight all atrocities," she said.

## Rs 2.55 lakh-cr lifeline

the date of first disbursement, including a moratorium of two years. The rate of interest by banks will be capped at 9% and by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) at 13% or 0.75% above benchmark rate, whichever is lower, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

Taking to X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said ECLGS 5.0 "reflects our commitment to supporting India's businesses, especially the MSME sector in challenging global times".

"By enabling additional credit flow with strong guarantee coverage, this initiative will help a wide range of sectors. Our focus remains on empowering enterprises, sustaining growth momentum and safeguarding livelihoods," Modi posted.

According to Vaishnaw, "The scheme has been approved to tackle the stress being faced by MSMEs and the aviation sector as a result of the ongoing West Asia conflict. The credit guarantee scheme was established during Covid and the benefit of this

scheme is that there is no moral hazard. Only those who need (credit) in real, (they) utilise this scheme and there is very less probability of it being misused. It is a very well thought through scheme."

About 1.1 crore MSMEs have benefited so far from existing credit guarantee schemes and Rs 3.7 lakh crore has been extended under these schemes, Vaishnaw said.

ECLGS 5.0 aims to provide credit guarantee coverage of 100% for MSMEs and 90% for non-MSMEs, along with the airline sector, to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) for the amount in default under the additional credit facility to the eligible borrowers to tide over any short-term liquidity mismatches, the official release said.

Borrowers eligible for the scheme will include MSMEs and non-MSMEs with existing working capital limits and scheduled passenger airlines having out-

standing credit facilities as of March 31, 2026, provided their accounts are standard, the release stated.

The maximum period of guarantee cover shall be co-terminus with the tenor of the loan, it said. The scheme will apply to all loans sanctioned during the period from the date of issue of these guidelines by NCGTC upto March 31, 2027.

The scheme aims to enable businesses to tide over the challenges arising from the West Asia conflict, the release said.

"Additionally, this is expected to help businesses maintain their operations, protect jobs, and sustain supply chains. The proposed credit guarantee scheme is a major step to help businesses, particularly MSMEs and airline sector, to ensure their additional working capital needs are catered by the Banks & FIs (financial institutions)," it said.

"By providing timely liquidity, the scheme will sustain the businesses and prevent job losses. It will also promote uninterrupted domestic production and maintain the resilience of the ecosystem," the release said.

## CJI on Sabarimala

entertaining this petition. With great respect, we are saying this."

While CJI Surya Kant said the PIL ought to have been "thrown outright in the dustbin", Justice M M Sundresh described the filing of the petition as "a clear abuse of the process of law".

The bench made these remarks as they questioned Gupta, representing the IYLA, on the organisation's locus standi as the PIL petitioner.

Gupta said there were several threats at that time to him and Ali though the latter hardly had anything to do with the matter. "So far as Naushad Ali was concerned, he was only a name-lender president. He did not know anything about Sabarimala... And he started getting threats from all over the world. Chief Justice Dipak Misra was shocked," he said.

He said the affidavit filed with the petition was sworn by IYLA general secretary Advocate Bhakti Pasrija. "So these threats were there and CJI Dipak Misra was very annoyed, that you cannot stop the judicial process with these kinds of threats. He provided police protection to me, to

the president also. I refused."

Justice Sundresh said, "Naushad is very smart... If he had made an attempt to clean his own house, he would not have been available to file this PIL."

Justice Nagarathna asked, "If he (Ali) had no interest in the matter, then why was it (PIL) entertained by this court?"

The CJI, referring to a news report annexed to the PIL about the priest of the temple being allegedly found in a compromising position, said, "And we entertain a PIL based upon this kind of document? It should have been thrown outright in the dustbin."

"How does this article give you a cause of action to rake up the issue ultimately which is adjudicated?" he asked Gupta.

Justice Nagarathna said, "Every day, the CJI receives hundreds of letters. Can all those be converted into PILs?... Public Interest Litigation has now become Private Interest Litigation, Publicity Interest Litigation, Paisa Interest Litigation and Political Interest Litigation, all are called PILs. We entertain only real and genuine PILs." She also sought to know how

the organisation was concerned with a question of freedom of conscience. "How does a juristic body have any beliefs? ... How are you concerned with all this?... We want to know why you filed this PIL at all? What was it that you wanted to achieve? What good has come out of it?" she said.

"Are you the chief priest of the country," the CJI asked Gupta.

Meanwhile, the bench also questioned the practice of barring a Parsi woman from a fire temple if she marries outside the religion, wondering how freedom of conscience, which accrues upon birth, can be taken away by marriage.

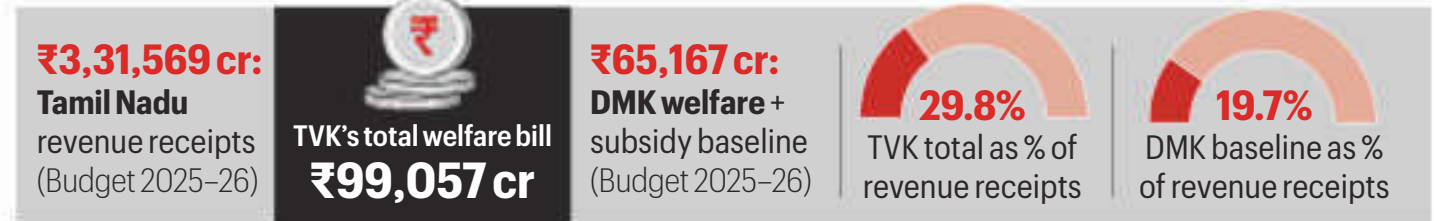
"The right to conscience under Article 25(1) is a right by birth, and it can't be taken away by marriage... In this case, marriage as a basis for classification is discriminatory against women," Justice Nagarathna asked Senior Advocate Darius J Khambata, appearing for Goolrokh Gupta, in related petitions concerning a Parsi woman's religious identity.

Justice Sundresh said, "This practice presupposes once there is inter-marriage, faith is given up." Justice Nagarathna said, "It's virtually excommunication."

## TVK poll sops may see 52% spike

• What the TVK's poll promises may cost

| Scheme                       | Beneficiary base used         | Unit benefit  | Annual cost (Rs crore) | Data source   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Women DBT                    | 1.57 crore                    | Rs 2,500/month  | 47,100                 | Govt beneficiary data   |
| Free LPG                     | 1.85 crore households         | "6 cylinders/year - Rs 900 each"                        | 9,990                  | 2011 Census   |
| Mother/guardian school grant | 56.25 lakh in govt schools    | Rs 15,000/year  | 8,438                  | 1.25 crore enrolment, 45% in govt schools                     |
| Farmer income support        | 79.4 lakh landholding farmers | Rs 15,000/year  | 11,910                 | Agriculture Census 2015-16                                    |
| Farm labourer support        | 96 lakh farm labourers        | Rs 10,000/year  | 9,600                  | 2011 Census aligned labour force data                         |
| Fisher family support        | 2.02 lakh families            | Rs 27,000/year  | 545                    | Marine Fisheries Census 2016                                  |
| Youth internship stipend     | 5 lakh youth per year         | Graduates: Rs 10,000/month; ITI/diploma: Rs 8,000/month | 5,400                  | TVK manifesto   |
| Health insurance top-up      | 1.5 crore families            | Total premium doubled from Rs 849 to Rs 1,698           | 1,274                  | CMCHS data; assuming premium only doubles at Rs 25 lakh cover |
| Unemployment grant           | 10 lakh                       | Rs 4,000/month  | 4,800                  | Govt survey, PLFS data  |



in the manifesto and for which comparable state data is not available.

Beyond these, there are several other announcements that could push up the state's revenue spending, such as a rise in police salaries from Rs 18,500 per month to Rs 25,000, a Rs 1,000 monthly hardship allowance and permanent jobs for temporary teachers, nurses and staff who have completed five years in service.

All of this could severely restrict the new government's room for investments needed to fulfill its biggest promise: job creation for youth.

More so, because the TVK's manifesto does not lay out an elaborate roadmap to find new avenues for revenue generation. It merely says: "By reducing the growing debt burden, increasing revenue without imposing any additional tax on the people, ensuring efficient and prudent expenditure, and creating new sources of income, Tamil Nadu will be transformed into a financially self-sufficient state."

The manifesto also speaks of setting up an AI Ministry and an AI city to attract leading companies from around the

world, but does not spell out what investments it will make to realise this.

Building an AI ecosystem could involve setting up data centres, allocating adequate power and offering tax incentives.

What the manifesto does make clear is that TVK has not attempted to disrupt Tamil Nadu's established policy framework. Instead, it leans heavily into it — offering expansive, targeted welfare especially for women, while addressing every major electoral constituency, from youth to farmers to state employees.

## TVK keeps all options open

could include as many as two Cabinet berths for the Congress, which won five seats, if the parties decide on a tie-up. The arrangement would require other smaller parties' support, too, for the block to have a majority in the Assembly. Later in the day, sources said the "hesitation" of several of the smaller parties has led TVK to consider an arrangement with the AIADMK, which has 47 seats.

On Tuesday evening, AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said that the state Congress unit has been directed to take a final decision on Vijay's request for support.

"The president of TVK, Thiru Vijay, has requested the Indian National Congress for support to form a government in Tamil Nadu... INC is clear that the mandate in Tamil Nadu was for a secular government committed to protecting the Constitution in letter and spirit. INC is determined not to have the BJP and its proxies run the government of Tamil Nadu in any manner," Venugopal said after a meeting chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and attended by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi as well as AICC in charge of Tamil Nadu Girish Chodanar.

"Thiru Vijay has spoken about drawing inspiration from Perunthalaivar Kamaraj also.

Accordingly, the Congress leadership has directed the TNCC to take a final decision on Thiru Vijay's request, keeping in view the sentiments of the state reflected in the electoral verdict," Venugopal said.

Late at night, the state Congress's Political Affairs Committee unanimously decided to support Vijay, sources said.

At the same time, lottery baron Santiago Martin's wife, Leema Rose Martin, an AIADMK MLA who recently joined the party, said discussions were in progress between Vijay's camp and Edappadi K Palaniswami, the general secretary of AIADMK.

"Talks are happening. We hope it leads to a stable government," she said, adding that her party remained open to options as the numbers settle.

Top sources within the TVK confirmed that exploratory conversations had begun, with Aadhaar Arjuna, a key figure in Vijay's inner circle, playing a central role in initiating contact. Arjuna, who has emerged as one of the party's most visible coordinators, is also Leema Rose Martin's son-in-law, adding a layer of familiarity to the otherwise formal engagement.

"Congress has reacted positively, but CPI, CPM, VCK and IUML have been uncertain so far," a senior TVK leader said.

According to sources, TVK is

expected to allocate four to six ministerial positions to partners, both to secure numbers and to compensate for its own relative inexperience in governance. Apart from former AIADMK veteran K Sengottaiyan, most of Vijay's winning candidates are first-time legislators.

That lack of administrative depth is already shaping early decisions. Senior bureaucratic and political circles are closely watching reports that former IAS officer U Sagayam, widely known for his anti-corruption stance, may be considered for a legislative role, possibly through a by-election in Tiruchi East, one of the two constituencies Vijay has won and may vacate.

The immediate procedural steps are underway. TVK MLAs are expected to formally elect Vijay as their legislature party leader soon, after which the Governor will invite him to form the government once majority support is demonstrated. According to party sources, Vijay is likely to seek up to a week to prove his numbers on the floor of the House even as he takes charge of the government by the weekend.

Meanwhile, both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi have congratulated TVK on its victory. Vijay thanked both of them.

(WITH INPUTS FROM ENNS, NEW DELHI)

## Deleted by SIR, elected by people

seat used to be a Congress stronghold like the rest of Murshidabad. Then the TMC came. But this time people have rejected the TMC."

Shaikh says the anger against the ruling party had been growing due to its MLAs not working for the people. "People have also rejected them for their corruption. I am with the people and that is why they blessed me."

On whether he expects problems with a BJP government at the helm in the state, and the Congress having only two MLAs in the Assembly, Shaikh says: "I do not believe in unnecessary confrontation. Though the BJP has come to power, I will get work done for my constituency with the new government's cooperation."

Among the issues top of the agenda for Shaikh, a resident of Doipur village, is drinking water shortage, and the SIR, which has left "the future of 27 lakh people uncertain". "I will

raise the plight of lakhs of people in the Assembly."

In his appeal to the Supreme Court, Shaikh said he was deleted as a voter due to a mismatch in his name's spelling between the 2002 electoral roll (a benchmark for the EC) and his present documents. He was called for a hearing on January 29, his name was sent for adjudication, and later, deleted.

Shaikh, who has a passport and other documents, says he had submitted the same during the hearing. "But still my name was deleted. Then, after my party nominated me, I approached the Supreme Court."

After the Court asked that his case be considered on priority, the tribunal hearing it ruled in Shaikh's favour, saying that Aadhaar card was "one of the documents enumerated for the purpose of establishing the identity of a person". Accordingly, the tribunal said, "a direction was issued to the Election Commission of India and its

authorities to accept Aadhaar Card as a proof of identity for the purpose of inclusion or exclusion in the revised voter list."

Apart from Aadhaar, which was "sufficient" to accept Shaikh's appeal, the tribunal cited the fact that he had a passport issued in November 2018 and a driving licence from 2001 with his name spelled as Motab Shaikh in both.

Roy says Shaikh's case showed that "many genuine electors may have failed to cast their votes because of their names being deleted". "This is unfortunate for a democracy."

Only one of a handful of people to have escaped that fate due to last-minute relief from the Supreme Court — including another Congress candidate, Alam Mottakin, who lost from Ratua — Shaikh says: "I wish that all the people whose names have been deleted in Farakka and at other places, who are genuine, find their place again in the electoral list."

## CHIEF MINISTER CALLS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING, VISITS AFFECTED FAMILIES

## Vivek Vihar fire: 'First tender half-filled, another came late'; firemen deny lapses

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

THE FIRST fire tender which reached East Delhi's Vivek Vihar where a fire at a residential building on Sunday claimed nine lives was "only half-filled, while the second arrived late and the escape ladders brought by the team were short in height," according to sources in the Delhi government.

Amid allegations of "lapses" in the initial response, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has called a high-level meeting on Tuesday with the District Magistrate, Delhi Fire Services, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Police, Urban Development department and other departments concerned. She will also review Delhi's preparedness for summer at the meeting.



Firefighters at the site. VIVEK PRAKASH KRISHNA

"The first fire tender that reached the spot was half-filled and the second one was a bit delayed. People also complained that there was a lack of adequate safety equipment and measures and that there was no rescue net and that they (fire officials) asked for mattresses...The

ladders the firefighting team brought along were not tall enough to reach the top floors..." a government official said.

CM Gupta on Tuesday also visited the area and met the affected families. Officials said that she was briefed about the alleged lapses and delays during

her visit. "She met the families and people have raised a lot of issues...following which, the CM has called a high-level meeting tomorrow not only to discuss this recent one but other fire incidents...The CM will be taking cognisance in the matter and strict action will be taken against any department and officials, if any negligence is found in the reports," said an official.

A senior fire department official, however, denied the allegations, saying, "We received a call around 24 minutes after the fire broke out and our team reached within six minutes. By the time it reached, the fire had turned massive. The rescue operation was launched without any delay."

Fire officials said 14 fire tenders and five teams were pressed into service. "We re-

ceived 16 people. If a tanker is not full, it is not released from the station. It is always checked when it leaves from station... There was a central minister at the spot who appreciated our effort," said the official.

Gupta, meanwhile, also directed the District Magistrate to submit a detailed report on the incident. "DM has been asked to examine the role of each department and submit the report... the CM will review it during the meeting and evaluate how the incident unfolded, the time taken for fire tenders to reach the spot and why the blaze could not be doused in time. The MCD and Urban Development department have also been asked to submit reports on building byelaws, fire safety clearances and any violations by builders or contractors," an official said.

## 2 MINORS AMONG 20 NAMED

## Chargesheet filed in Uttam Nagar murder

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

DELHI POLICE on Sunday filed before a city court a 550-page chargesheet in connection with the murder of a 26-year-old youth in West Delhi's Uttam Nagar in March, and named 20 people, including two minors, as accused in the case.

Tarun Kumar was killed after a fight over a water balloon escalated and the incident had taken a communal turn in no time.

Police said that the preliminary assessment report related to the two minor accused has been submitted before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB). Investigators have examined around 50 witnesses during the course of the probe, police said. Two of the accused remain absconding and efforts are underway to trace and apprehend them, they said.



Police personnel deployed in Uttam Nagar. FILE

The incident, according to police, was triggered by a prior dispute between the victim and some of the accused and escalated on Holl.

The chargesheet details the sequence of events, the roles of the accused and evidence collected, police said. Police invoked provisions related to murder, attempt to murder, rioting, unlawful assembly, criminal conspiracy, and sections of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

## TERMINATION OF TEEN'S 30-WEEK PREGNANCY

## The infant, born with disabilities, has 80% survival rate: AIIMS to SC

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

THE SUPREME Court on Monday dropped contempt of court proceedings against AIIMS Delhi after the hospital confirmed it had complied with directions to medically terminate the 30-week pregnancy of a 15-year-old girl.

Appearing for AIIMS, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhatti informed a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan that the medical termination of pregnancy resulted in the birth of a baby boy. The ASG reported that the infant, born with certain disabilities, has 80% survival rate and is in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

The contempt petition was originally filed by the minor's mother, alleging that AIIMS had failed to comply with an April 24

court order authorising the termination. AIIMS initially hesitated, seeking a review and later filed a curative petition, both of which were dismissed. The institute argued that at 30 weeks, the procedure carried a high risk of the child being born alive with congenital disabilities, and suggested allowing the foetus a few more weeks to grow to ensure a healthy delivery for adoption.

However, the SC emphasised that forcing the minor to carry an "unwanted pregnancy" to term would violate her fundamental right to reproductive autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution and issued a contempt notice. On Monday, Justice Nagarathna admitted the difficulty of the situation. "It's not easy for us here. There is nobody who is winning, nobody is losing this. But then we have to take a decision without emotion. I hope it doesn't come to

this again in the sense that we don't want any more unwanted pregnancies coming for termination," the judge said.

Explaining why it asked AIIMS to carry out the procedure, she said that without that, the women would depend on unqualified practitioners or quacks risking their lives.

Justice Nagarathna flagged a societal trend related to the rise of unwanted pregnancies among minors. She noted that by the time families come to know and overcome the shock to make a decision, the term often reaches the seven-month mark, creating a legal and medical crisis. "The shock of the girl who is not married and is a minor having become pregnant, and the decision of the family on what to do... This is a mischief. Either a lacuna in the law and tendency in the society. Somebody has to answer it," she said.

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND INITIATIVE TO MODERNISE POLICING  
AI push to fight crimes: Senior cops to adopt 100 police stationsSakshi Chand  
New Delhi, May 5

IN A major push to modernise policing, the Delhi Police is set to roll out a first-of-its-kind initiative where senior officers of DCP rank and above – each with over a decade of service – will adopt 100 police stations to drive targeted reforms.

At the heart of the plan is AI-based predictive policing to identify crime hotspots and enable sharper deployment of patrols and personnel on the ground, officers told *The Indian Express*.

They added that the direction was issued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a conference attended by director generals and inspector generals of police last year. The project is now beginning to take shape with senior officers being assigned police stations.

The initiative is also set to focus on tracking missing children, strengthening cyber-crime response, and addressing station-level gaps to improve overall policing efficiency at the grassroots.

"This will be backed by an expanded network of CCTV cameras equipped with facial recognition across public spaces, along with deeper integration of databases such as Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) and 'Crime Kundali' to give officers real-time access to criminal records," a senior officer said.

Delhi Police is also looking to enhance surveillance and response during large gatherings, protests and emergencies through the use of drones, while body-worn cameras are expected to improve transparency and aid evidence collection, officers said. Police sta-

**AI-based predictive policing to identify crime hotspots, enable sharper deployment of patrols and officers on the ground**

tions will be equipped with performance dashboards to track response times and overall efficiency, they added.

"But the revamp is not limited to technology. A parallel push is being made to strengthen community policing. Mohalla committees and resident welfare associations will be more actively engaged, while police stations will hold regular public interaction meetings. Citizen-facing mobile applications will be promoted to make reporting of crimes and grievances easier, and awareness campaigns will target the rising threat of online scams and digital fraud," the officer said.

According to the police, the initiative puts a spotlight on crime control at the ground level. Measures such as integrated picket checking and group patrolling are expected to increase visibility on the streets, while focused efforts will be made to track habitual offenders. "We will also prioritise tracing missing children and stolen electronic devices, alongside fast-tracking investigations in cases involving crimes against women and children. Expansion of women help desks and all-women patrol units is also part of the plan," the officer said.

"Recognising the changing nature of crime, Delhi Police is investing in capacity building within the force. Personnel will

undergo training in cyber-crime, financial fraud and digital forensics, along with specialised modules in counter-terrorism and intelligence gathering," another officer said. Leadership and ethics training is also being emphasised to improve professionalism within the ranks, the officer added.

The plan calls for closer coordination with national agencies as well. Police stations are set to work in tandem with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) on digital offences, while collaboration with bodies such as the National Commission for Women is expected to strengthen victim support systems. Improved coordination with central agencies like the CBI and NIA is also on the agenda, said officers.

On the infrastructure front, police said, the goal is to transform police stations into smart facilities with digital records and citizen service centres. Mobility is set to improve with GPS-enabled patrol vehicles and rapid response bikes, while integrated command centres will support disaster management and terror response.

At the same time, strengthening vigilance mechanisms to curb corruption has been identified as a key priority, with senior officers expected to closely monitor functioning at the station level.

Officers described the initiative as an attempt to blend technology with accountability and public trust; a shift from reactive policing to a more proactive, data-driven and citizen-centric approach. If implemented effectively, the adopted police stations could serve as a template for policing reforms across the Capital, they added.

## • BRIEFLY

## Nod to pay hike for vocational teachers in city


THE DELHI government Tuesday approved a proposal to hike the salaries of vocational teachers and those working under centrally sponsored Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. The move also covers teachers engaged at Special Training Centres. CM Rekha Gupta said around 1,131 vocational teachers in Delhi will now get Rs 38,100 per month, up from Rs 20,000-Rs 23,000. Salaries of teachers at 784 centres under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan have been raised from Rs 21,000 to Rs 35,420 per month. ENS

## Four UP police officers, 1 civilian killed in accident

FOUR UP Police officers and a civilian were killed in an accident on KMP Expressway in Haryana's Nuh on Tuesday, police said. The officers were en route to Haryana's Jind to probe a kidnapping case. The officers were identified as SI Satyabhan Singh; SI Mohit Yadav; Constable Pradeep Kumar; and Constable Ashok Kumar. The fifth victim, Amreek Singh, was a complainant travelling with the officers. Preliminary probe indicate that their car, while attempting to overtake a vehicle ahead, lost control, resulting in a collision. ENS

## Man kills ex-NSG officer to avenge father's murder

THE GURGAON police Monday arrested two youths for allegedly killing a former NSG commando in Kasan village, officers said. Deceased Sundar Fauji was serving a life term for the murder of former village sarpanch Bahadur Chauhan, the father of one of the accused, police said. Sundar was out on parole. The accused were identified as Kartik Chauhan and Gulshan. ENS



**State Election Commission, Haryana**

# Cast Your Vote

Date - 10.05.2026 (08:00 AM to 06:00 PM)

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ELECTIONS**  
Panchkula, Ambala & Sonipat

**MUNICIPAL COUNCIL & COMMITTEE ELECTIONS**  
Rewari, Dharuhera, Sampla & Uklana

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Advertisement No.: ABVIITMG/DoMS/MBA/Ad/2026/02 Date: 05.05.2026

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ABV-IIITM Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh is an autonomous institute set by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India in 1997 with a vision of creating professionals in areas of management and technology. Further the Department of Management Studies (DoMS), ABV-IIITM Gwalior, aims to develop holistic and responsible leaders by creating insightful knowledge and transforming human endeavors through technology-enabled management solutions. The DoMS is seeking the applications from bright aspirants for its Two Years Flagship Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme with below mentioned eligibility criteria. The programme covers management domains like Marketing, Finance, Operations, IT & Systems and Human Resource Management. It offers a diversified pool of electives in the said areas alongside the research-based internship.

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**Eligibility:** The candidates having the following qualifications are eligible to apply for admission to the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Programme at the ABV-IIITM Gwalior.

(i) A First-Class Bachelor's Degree with minimum of 60% marks or 6.50 CGPA on a 10-point scale or equivalent in aggregate (of all the years/semesters) in any discipline awarded by any of the universities incorporated by an act of the central or state legislature in India or other educational institutions established by an act of Parliament or declared deemed-to-be-University under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956, or equivalent qualification recognized by the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

(ii) The Bachelor's degree obtained by the candidate must have (a) Mathematics/Statistics as one of the courses, and (b) a minimum of three years of education after completing higher secondary schooling (10+2) or equivalent.

(iii) A Valid CAT/MAT/CMAT/ATMA/GMAT/GRE/CUET Score.

**Application Procedure:** Candidates who fulfil the above stated eligibility criteria can apply for the MBA programme at the ABV-IIITM, Gwalior, the details of which are available on institute's website. The application fees for General and OBC candidates is Rs. 1000/- and Rs. 500/- for SC/ST/PH/Female candidates, the payment link is provided in the detailed advertisement available at institute website.

The applicants fulfilling the above mentioned eligibility criteria are required to submit the completely filled-in online application form available at institute website along with applicable fee details and relevant enclosures latest by **16th May, 2026**.

The admission process to be carried out on **23rd & 24th May, 2026** at ABV-IIITM Gwalior.

For further details please visit the institute website [www.iiitm.ac.in](http://www.iiitm.ac.in). Mere fulfillment of the eligibility criteria does not entail the admission of any candidate in the management programme.

**Joint Registrar (Academics)**

## EXCISE POLICY CASE

## HC to appoint advocates as amicus for Kejriwal, Sisodia and Pathak

Sohini Ghosh  
New Delhi, May 5

AFTER AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal as well as party leaders Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak last month declared that they have chosen to go legally unrepresented before the Delhi High Court, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma on Tuesday said that she will appoint "someone senior (advocate) as an amicus (friend of the court)" for the three leaders.

The CBI, in a revision plea before the HC, is challenging a trial court order from February that discharged 23 accused — including Kejriwal, Sisodia and Pathak — in the excise policy case.

Justice Sharma on Tuesday

said that she will pass an order on Friday, appointing senior counsel/s to assist the court, given that the three leaders have chosen to not appear before the court, either personally, or through appointed counsels. She added that once the appointment for amicus curiae is made, she will begin hearing the case.

Appointment of amicus curiae — in the absence of litigant-appointed lawyers — is not unprecedented. The Supreme Court in 2011 had appointed senior advocate Raju Ramachandran as amicus curiae for Mumbai terror attack accused Ajmal Kasab. Similarly, in the Nirbhaya gangrape case, the SC had appointed senior advocate



Arvind Kejriwal

Sanjay Hegde to represent the accused.

In criminal cases, where an amicus curiae is appointed to represent an unrepresented litigant, the amicus curiae often serves as the defence lawyer. However, what presents a

unique position here is the fact that Kejriwal, Sisodia and Pathak have voluntarily refused to be represented by legal counsels in the HC.

The HC, while dealing with criminal matters which involve a question of law, in the past, has also appointed amicus curiae, largely to assist the court.

In April, the three AAP leaders, in three letters purportedly sent to Justice Sharma after she refused to recuse herself from hearing the CBI's plea, had said that they will be opting to go legally unrepresented before the court. In a purported 'satyagraha' move, they have objected to Justice Sharma's alleged "public association with the RSS's legal front Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad", to which AAP claims it is ideologically opposed.

They have also said that they apprehend bias if Justice Sharma hears the matter, given that her children are on the Union government's advocates' panels and are assigned cases by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. Mehta is appearing for the CBI in the excise policy case before Justice Sharma at the HC.

On April 20, Justice Sharma had refused to recuse herself from hearing the CBI's challenge, noting that the recusal applications did not arrive with evidence but rather "with aspersions, insinuations and doubts" cast on her.

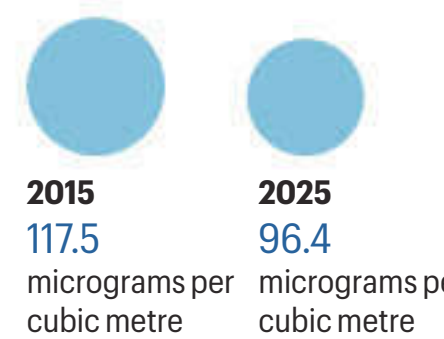
Sophiya Mathew  
New Delhi, May 5Pollution shift: Air quality dashboard shows rise in Ozone as NO<sub>2</sub>, CO decline

## ● POLLUTANT TRENDS IN DELHI

PM<sub>2.5</sub>

**SOURCE:** Vehicle emissions, industry, coal combustion, biomass burning, including stubble

## ANNUAL AVERAGE

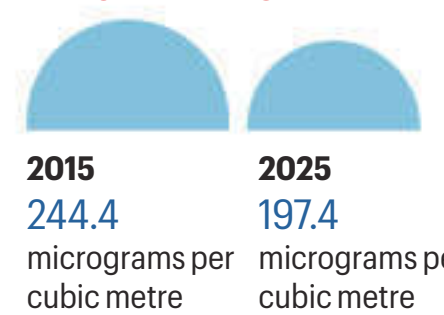


**TREND:** Declining but still high  
**PEAK:** 170 micrograms per cubic metre average in Oct-Feb vs 43 micrograms per cubic metre in monsoon

PM<sub>10</sub>

**SOURCE:** Road dust, construction, open soil, resuspended particles, some industrial emissions

## ANNUAL AVERAGE

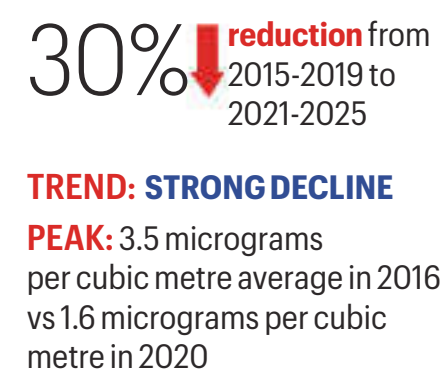


**TREND:** DECLINING, BUT YEAR-ROUND PERSISTENT  
**PEAK:** 309 micrograms per cubic metre average in Oct-Nov vs 292 micrograms per cubic metre in winter

## CO (Carbon monoxide)

**SOURCE:** Incomplete combustion from vehicles, generators, industry, household fuels

## ANNUAL AVERAGE



**TREND:** STRONG DECLINE  
**PEAK:** 3.5 micrograms per cubic metre average in 2016 vs 1.6 micrograms per cubic metre in 2020

NO<sub>2</sub> (Nitrogen dioxide)

**SOURCE:** Vehicles, thermal power plants, industrial combustion

## ANNUAL AVERAGE

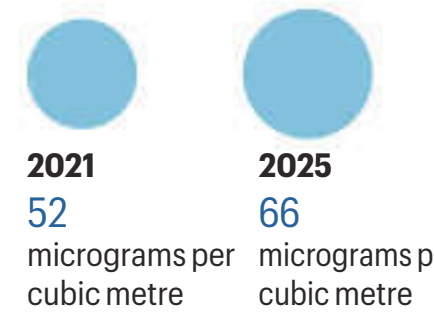


**TREND:** CLEAR LONG-TERM DECLINE, INDICATES REDUCTION IN COMBUSTION EMISSIONS  
**PEAK:** 60.4 micrograms per cubic metre average in 2016

O<sub>3</sub> (Ground-level ozone)

**SOURCE:** Secondary pollutant formed from Nitrogen dioxide, Carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds under sunlight

## ANNUAL AVERAGE



**TREND:** GRADUAL RISE, EMERGING SEASONAL RISK  
**PEAK:** March-June average of 79.9 micrograms per cubic metre vs May highest of 91.6 micrograms per cubic metre

(SOURCE: ENVIROCATALYSTS, A RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY THINK TANK)

A PUBLIC air quality dashboard on Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data since 2015, launched by Delhi-based research and public policy think tank Envirocatalysts, has highlighted a shift in the Capital's pollution pattern — decline in nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide emissions are accompanied by a growing challenge from ozone.

The dashboard, launched on Monday, enables pollutant-wise, long-term analysis of emissions across cities.

In Delhi, fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and coarse particles (PM<sub>10</sub>), for instance, show a winter and post-monsoon peak. Between October and February, pollution levels rise sharply, aided by stagnant atmospheric conditions that trap emissions close to the ground.

Over the years, January PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in Delhi have typically ranged well above safe limits, often crossing 150 micrograms per cubic metre, before dropping during monsoon.

However, this seasonal dip does not necessarily indicate lower emissions. Instead, meteorological conditions such as rainfall and stronger winds help disperse pollutants more effectively, temporarily improving air quality index (AQI).

In contrast, the data shows that ozone peaks during summer, particularly in May, when strong sunlight drives photochemical reactions between nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds.

Delhi's annual average ozone rose from 52 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (micrograms per cubic metre) in 2021 to 66 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2025, alongside a sharp increase in ozone-dominant days, from 33 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2024 to 76 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2025.

Among cities with consistent data across five years, the steepest increases were recorded in Meerut (53 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 76 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), Noida (54 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 74 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), and Muzaffarnagar (55 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 73 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), indicating a broader regional shift beyond the Capital.

The trends, however, remain uneven. Bulandshahr in UP saw a sharp decline from 95 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2021 to 45 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2025, while Ghaziabad and Gurgaon recorded moderate reductions. Bharatpur stands out as a persistent high-ozone location, recording annual averages of 81 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2023 and 84 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in both 2024 and 2025.

Nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide, largely linked to sources of combustion such as vehicles and industry, show relatively different trends. While they also exhibit seasonal variation, long-term data indicate a gradual decline in their concentrations since 2015.

The long-term data for Delhi show that PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels have declined from about 117.5 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in

2015 to 96.4 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2025, while PM<sub>10</sub> has fallen from around 244 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 197 µg/m<sup>3</sup> over the same period. Although this indicates progress, both pollutants remain far above national and global safety limits.

The persistence of PM<sub>10</sub> has been a key concern as well. Even in recent years, coarse particulate matter has dominated pollution levels across days, pointing to the growing role of dust from construction, road surfaces and open land.

This April, PM<sub>10</sub> emerged as the dominant pollutant on a majority of monitored days — 52% — across NCR.

Further, data revealed that Delhi's AQI is closely tied to the wider NCR, as cities like Ghazia-

bad and Gurgaon continue to record high particulate levels.

While Delhi recorded a year-on-year improvement, with PM<sub>2.5</sub> falling from 77 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in April 2025 to 68 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in April 2026 and 'Poor' AQI days halving from 20 to 10, surrounding cities recorded worsening trends.

The PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels rose sharply in Hapur (36 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 67 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), Meerut (55 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 84 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), Gurgaon (73 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 92 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), Ghaziabad (81 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 99 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), and Noida (53 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 66 µg/m<sup>3</sup>).

This April, the highest PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels were recorded in Ghaziabad (99 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), Gurgaon (92 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), and Faridabad (82 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), all higher than Delhi's average for the month.

## HC issues notice on Hansraj College student's plea challenging his suspension

Vidheesha Kuntamalla  
New Delhi, May 5

THE DELHI High Court has issued notice on a petition filed by Hansraj College student Parth Srivastava, challenging his suspension on grounds that include, among others, "defaming the college through social media platforms" and using "derogatory language."

When the matter came up for hearing on April 29, Justice Jasmeet Singh allowed limited interim relief, permitting Srivastava to enter the college campus for one hour to fill his examination form, noting that the last date for submission was April 30. The court further directed that he "will not cause any disruption to the working of the college".

The petition arises from a series of suspension notices issued by Hansraj College between April 20 and 25 against at least 30 students. Several of these notices cited "defaming the college through social media platforms" as a ground for disciplinary action, alongside allegations of indiscipline and violence during the college's annual fest held earlier in April. Srivastava, a former president of the students' union, was among the first to be suspended.

Srivastava's counsel, advocate Shaurya Vikram, said, "This is not merely a challenge to a suspension but to the legality of the process that led to it. A student cannot be subjected to serious civil consequences through a mechanism that has no clear statutory basis, offers no notice, and denies a meaningful opportunity to respond. That strikes at the heart of articles 14 (Right to Equality), 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech), and 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)."

"When criticism of the administration is not isolated, the decision to proceed only against one student... raises a serious question of whether he is being singled out," he said.

## 'Is being Bihari a crime?': Family of delivery agent shot dead by Delhi cop demands Rs 1-crore compensation

Alok Singh  
New Delhi, May 5

INSIDE A temporary tent set up in the narrow lanes of Prajapati Colony in Delhi's Uttam Nagar is a poster bearing the photograph of 21-year-old Pandav Kumar that reads: "Kya Bihari hona gunah hai (Is being Bihari a crime)?" Beside it sits a pot containing his ashes.

A food delivery worker, Pandav was shot dead allegedly by Delhi Police Head Constable Neeraj Balhara, posted with the Special Cell, following a heated exchange that reportedly involved a 'Bihari' slur early April 26.

According to Pandav's cousin Rahul, the family has three demands — a speedy trial, a government job for Pandav's brother who suffers from bone tuberculosis and Rs 1 crore as compensation.

"The government can at least provide a job, even a small one, to Pandav's brother. A police officer has killed Pandav without fault; the family should be given Rs 1 crore," he said.

Rahul, who works as a supervisor in a construction company and lives in the same locality — home to many migrant workers from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh — maintains that most of their relatives are daily wage labourers.

Rahul says he was called to meet Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on April 29, who assured educational support for Vikas and Pandav's niece. "But the family has not received any help from the government so far," he claims.

Mina Devi, Pandav's mother, says, "My son was killed by a police officer for no fault of his... He quit studying after Class X to support us. He used to earn Rs 1,000 a day delivering food, and spent everything on the family."

The family stays in a single room located on the second floor of a two-storey building. Along one wall stands a dilapi-



Pandav's relatives outside his house in Uttam Nagar; (above) inside the family's single room accommodation, Pandav's younger brother, Vikas, sits on the floor. ALOK SINGH

dated wardrobe with two cupboards on either side, stacked with bags and provisions. A thin rope is strung across another wall to hang clothes. On the opposite side of the room is a long white slab fitted with a burner stove. The cylinder, though, is empty.

Pandav's younger brother, Vikas, says, "No one else in the family can earn. My parents are old and unwell and I suffer from bone tuberculosis... Our family has fallen apart after Pandav's death. We don't know what the future holds."

He had to drop out of school after Class VI due to his illness. The family, along with several relatives, had migrated to Delhi from Bihar's Khagaria district around two decades ago in search of work. Pandav's father, Ganesh, took up temporary cleaning jobs in fac-

ilities but had to stop due to illness. Ganesh and Mina Devi, along with their two sons, as well as their five-year-old granddaughter Deepika, used to live in another house in the same locality before shifting to this rented accommodation last month.

Only three years ago, the family alleged, the elder sister Kajal was murdered by her in-laws over dowry in Begusarai. Her daughter Deepika has been raised by the family since. "Her husband refused to take in Deepika, who was three at the time. Pandav was planning to get her admitted to a school," Rahul claims.

Vikas says Pandav would pay the rent of Rs 5,000 for the single room. He had also bought a cooler and a washing machine for the family on

monthly installments. The only smartphone Vikas carries belonged to Pandav, he adds, also purchased on EMI, which the family is now unable to repay.

Pointing to the empty cylinder, Vikas adds, "My brother used to get the cylinder refilled, but now it's empty. We are forced to cook on a clay stove outside the room."

He adds that a Hero Splendor motorcycle, bought last year on installments, has been seized by police as part of the case property.

The case had triggered political reactions from Delhi to Patna. Leaders including Pappu Yadav, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) MP R K Verma, BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, and Congress leader Devender Yadav visited the family, assuring justice and offering financial aid. Leader of Opposition in Bihar and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, LJP leader Chirag Paswan, and Bhojpur actor-politician Khesari Lal Yadav condemned the killing.

The evening of April 25 had unfolded in celebration. Pandav's relative Rupesh Kumar had invited him and other family members to his two-year-old son's birthday party at his home in Jaffarpur Kalan's Rawta village. The party ended around 1.30 am, and the group headed downstairs.

According to the FIR, registered based on Rupesh's statement, they were talking when Neeraj came out of his house, in Gali number 7 across the road. "Neeraj had a pistol in his hand. Waving it around, he said, 'You Biharis have created chaos here. Everyone is building houses here and has gathered here, ruining the atmosphere, and we local residents can do nothing. But today I will set things right,'" the FIR quoted him as saying.

Following the murder, Delhi Police arrested Neeraj from his village in Rohtak, and recovered his service weapon 9 mm Glock, which was allegedly used in the crime.

## ● CONTRACTUAL JUNIOR ENGINEER FROM I&amp;FC DEPARTMENT DISMISSED AFTER CM SEEKS ACTION

## MCD was told to maintain drain in which toddler drowned, shows letter sent by I&amp;FC dept last July

Gayathri Mani  
New Delhi, May 5

TWO DAYS after a two-year-old girl died after falling in an open drain in North Delhi's Burari while playing outside her house, *The Indian Express* has learnt that the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) department had written to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) last July to take over the management of the drain but it did not.

According to the letter accessed by *The Indian Express*, the drain — located between Gujjar Chowk and Ramlila Ground in Mukundpur — was constructed by I&FC department. However, as it was a small drain, only 4 feet in width, the department had

asked MCD to take over the drain for desilting purposes and also maintain it.

The letter was based on a 2014 order issued by the Delhi Lieutenant Governor, as per which, "municipal corporations... carry out desilting work of drains in unauthorised colonies which are less than 4-ft... irrespective of the agencies which are carrying out the development work in that area..."

In its letter to the MCD, the department said, "A road and side drains from Gujjar Chowk to Ramlila Ground (D-Block Mukundpur) has been constructed by I&FC department and after that the cleaning of the side drain on both the sides has also been cleaned/desilted..."



The two-year-old girl fell in the drain while she was playing.

"It is requested to take care of the above cited drains and maintenance at your end

please, to avoid any inconvenience to people residing there," it added.

A senior government official said, "Even when AAP was in power and Manish Sisodia was the minister, he had directed the MCD to take over and manage the drain... A letter was also written by the I&FC to the MCD last year."

Despite repeated attempts, MCD officials could not be reached for a comment.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, meanwhile, on Tuesday demanded action against officials and engineers found responsible for the child's death. Following this, a contractual junior engineer from the I&FC department was dismissed from service with immediate effect, officials said.

"The CM also directed officials to identify open drains and other hazardous sites that pose a threat to life and property, and to rectify them immediately," said an official.

According to Bhalswa Dairy police station, officers found the toddler inside the drain, located about 15 m away from her residence, on Sunday. She was taken to Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Preliminary inquiry revealed that the child had likely wandered out of the house while playing and accidentally fell into the open drain, leading to drowning. Family members have not expressed any suspicion of foul play at this stage, police had said.

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

DELHI BREATHED its cleanest air of the year so far on Tuesday after rainfall lashed the city, leading to a sharp drop in temperature after a period marked by scorching heat.

At 86, the AQI remained in the 'satisfactory' category for the second consecutive day on Tuesday.

"Delhi records its lowest daily average AQI of the current year today with average AQI clocking 86 at 4:00 PM," the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said in a post on X.

Hailstorm, thunderstorm and lightning were witnessed at isolated places including ITO, Akshardham, Nehru Stadium, Dilshad Garden, Seemapuri, Shahdara, Vivek Vihar in Delhi; and Loni Dehat, Hindon Air Force Station, Ghaziabad, Bagpat, Khehra in the Capital's neighbouring regions.

The Delhi Airport, meanwhile, posted an advisory on its X handle, stating that flight operations may be impacted due

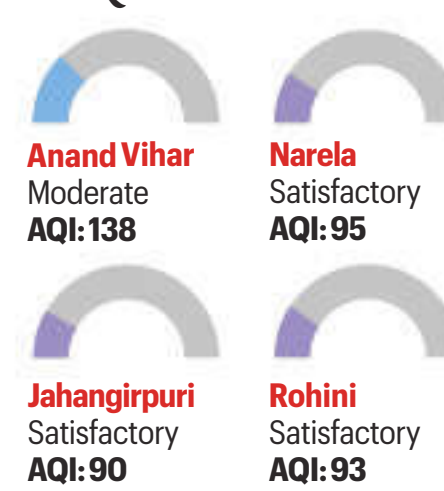
## ● Skywatch

**Forecast: May 6, 2026**  
Partly cloudy sky, possibility of thunder towards evening

**MAX: 34-36**  
3.3°C below normal

**MIN: 20-22**  
5.1°C below normal

## ● AQI Tracker



● Good (0-50)  
● Satisfactory (51-100)  
● Moderate (101-200)  
● Poor (201-300)  
● Very Poor (301-400)  
● Severe (401-500)

to hailstorm near the airport that could result in delays or short-term disruptions.

Palam recorded 9.8 mm of rainfall between 8.30 am and 5:30 pm, followed by Ayanagar at 1.4 mm, while Safdarjung recorded only trace rainfall and Lodi Road and Ridge reported none during this period.

Till 8.30 am, Ridge recorded 11.9 mm rainfall, followed by Lodi Road at 6.1 mm and Safdarjung at 4.6 mm, while Palam recorded only 'trace rainfall' and Ayanagar reported none.

The Capital remained under a yellow alert throughout the day.

Delhi also recorded below-normal maximum temperatures across all major weather stations, with Safdarjung logging a high of 33.6 degree Celsius, 5.7 degrees below normal and while Palam recording 32.8 degrees, 7.3 notches below normal. Lodi Road registered a maximum of 32.2 degrees, 5.8 degrees below normal; Ridge 32.8 degrees, 7.2 degrees below normal; and Ayanagar logged 32.8 degrees Celsius, 8 degrees below normal.

## BJP's Eastern mandate could help New Delhi open new foreign policy doors in region

C Raja Mohan  
New Delhi, May 5

THE BJP'S rise in West Bengal and consolidation in Assam presents a rare political opportunity to revitalise India's engagement with its eastern neighbourhood.

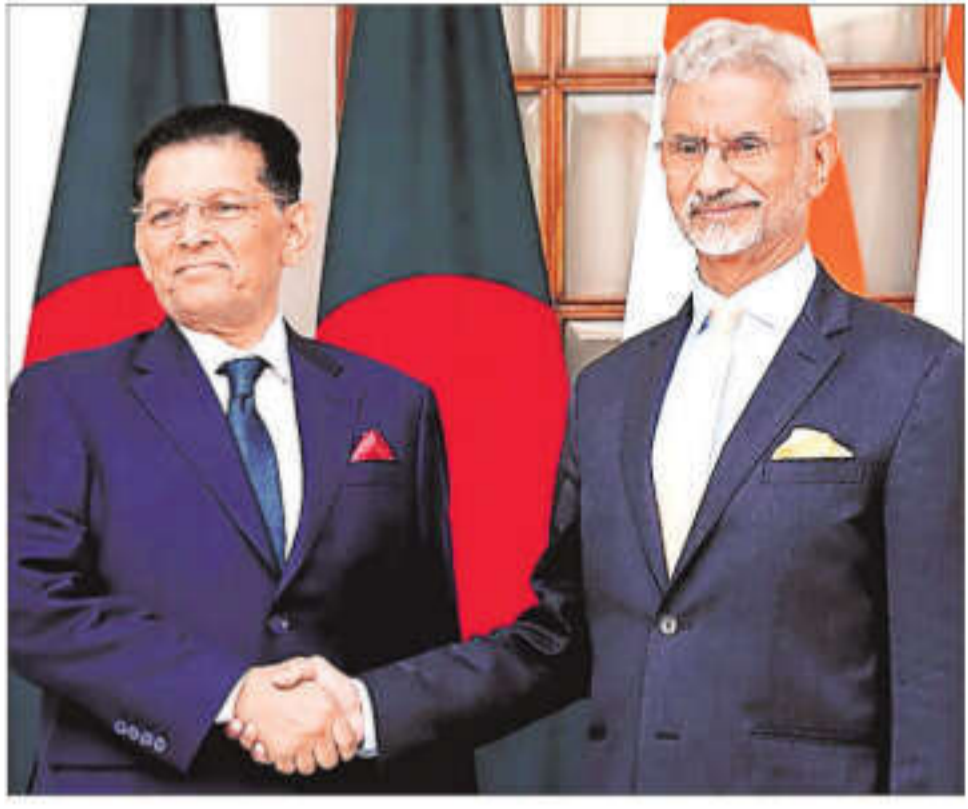
At the same time, leadership transitions in Dhaka and Kathmandu offer Prime Minister Narendra Modi a chance to revisit India's regional policy. For the first time in years, the political geography within India and across its eastern periphery are in alignment with an ambitious regional agenda.

Elections have political consequences; when they occur in border states, they also have foreign policy implications. Divergences between the Centre and border states have long complicated India's neighbourhood policy.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in West Bengal, Assam, and Tamil Nadu, where local political calculations have often clashed with national foreign policy priorities. Over time, regional leaders in bordering states have often become diplomatic spoilers, with an effective veto over Delhi's external engagement with neighbouring countries.

On the face of it, the alignment of political power between the Centre and key states creates the means for better coordination of local and national interests. Yet the problem is not merely political; it is rooted in geography. Unlike relations with distant powers, diplomacy with neighbours directly affects people in the borderlands. That local and national perceptions diverge is not unnatural. Managing this tension requires sustained political tending of borderlands on Delhi's part and a deeper accommodation of state-level concerns within national strategy.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government struggled with serious internal contradictions. Between 2004 and 2014, a divided Congress found it difficult to seize international opportunities. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with his Bangladeshi counterpart Khalilur Rahman in New Delhi last month. PTIFILE

for instance, faced intense domestic opposition, including in his own party and coalition, over the civil nuclear agreement with the United States. So much so that he was forced to win an unprecedented confidence vote in Parliament on a foreign policy issue.

Neighbourhood diplomacy was no less contested. In Tamil Nadu, state Congress leaders constrained Delhi's engagement with Sri Lanka over electoral considerations. In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee emerged as a decisive constraint on India's eastern diplomacy. Politics in Assam has long complicated ties with Bangladesh.

During his second term, Manmohan Singh attempted an ambitious reset with Bangladesh in partnership with Sheikh Hasina. The agenda was comprehensive: settling the land boundary, addressing security concerns such as terrorism, resolving water-sharing disputes, expanding trade, and restoring pre-Partition connectivity.

This effort, however, faltered at a critical moment. During Singh's visit to Dhaka in September 2011, the proposed agreement on sharing the Teesta waters could not be inked thanks to the last-minute withdrawal of Banerjee's politi-

cal consent. This was despite the fact that the West Bengal government had been closely involved in the talks over Teesta. Yet, there was no escaping the fact that Mamata's whims sharply curtailed Delhi's diplomatic options with one of India's most important neighbours.

The UPA government also faced resistance from the BJP on ratifying the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) with Bangladesh. For a time, it appeared that domestic political divisions would indefinitely delay a historic settlement on long-contested post-partition boundaries.

This impasse was broken after Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014. Overruling earlier opposition within the BJP, Modi declared that a settled boundary with Bangladesh is in India's national interest and pushed through the ratification and implementation of the LBA. He also accepted the international arbitration award on the maritime boundary with Bangladesh.

These steps helped inaugurate what Modi himself described as a "golden chapter" in India-Bangladesh relations. The extraordinary momentum in bilateral relations after 2014 was disrupted by Sheikh Hasina's ouster in 2024. The interim government led by

Muhammad Yunus signalled significant departure from the direction of travel in the previous decade. However, the new leadership under Tarique Rahman has signalled a clear desire to restore positive engagement with India.

Parallel to bilateral efforts, Modi sought to advance sub-regional cooperation with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal after the failure of the SAARC summit in 2014. Today, the BJP's surge in the north east and the emergence of new leaders in Dhaka and Kathmandu provides the basis for a fresh effort at sub-regionalism.

Yet the burden of rebuilding regional cooperation cannot rest on Delhi alone. The new governments in Dhaka and Kathmandu must also be prepared to rethink regionalism in the eastern subcontinent.

Even before the recent electoral outcomes, Delhi had begun signalling its intent to reinvigorate neighbourhood policy. At a recent conclave of Indian envoys, Modi reaffirmed the importance of the "Neighbourhood First" policy, with a sharper emphasis on trade and connectivity.

The challenges, however, remain formidable. Issues such as migration, demographic changes, cross-border crime and terrorism, trade barriers, and river water sharing involve complex negotiations — not only between India and its neighbours, but also between the Centre and the states. These are not easily resolved through political coherence alone.

But the broader regional vision that Modi articulated over the past decade remains relevant. With domestic political constraints easing and tentative openings emerging in the region, Delhi has an opportunity to advance a more coherent, sustained and productive engagement with its eastern neighbours.

(C. Raja Mohan is contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express. He is also associated with the Motwani Jadhav Institute of American Studies, Jindal Global University, Delhi)

## Cabinet approves Bill to increase SC judges strength from 34 to 38

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

AHEAD OF the Monsoon Session of Parliament, the Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a Bill to increase the strength of judges in the Supreme Court from the existing 34 to 38.

Highly placed sources said Chief Justice of India Surya Kant had recommended to the government in March this year to increase the strength of judges so that a permanent constitution bench can be put in place. With a host of constitutional bench matters pending hearing, the CJ is learnt to have flagged the shortage of judges to hear regular matters as and when these benches are set up.

A nine-judge bench of the court is currently hearing constitutional questions arising out of the Sabarimala review

petitions. The CJ had earlier indicated that soon after the hearing is completed, he will constitute a constitution bench to hear 7-judge bench matters.

In a statement, the government said the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, which seeks to amend the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, to increase the strength of the court by four. Currently, the Act provides for a maximum of 33 judges of the Supreme Court, excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The amendment increases that to 37 judges, excluding the CJI.

"The increase in the number of Judges will allow the Supreme Court to function more efficiently and effectively, ensuring speedy justice. The

expenditure on salary of Judges and supporting staff and other facilities will be met from the Consolidated Fund of India," the government said.

Welcoming the move, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said it will boost speedy justice, provide relief to poor and remote petitioners, and expedite the resolution of constitutional matters. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said a Bill will be brought in the next session of Parliament to raise the apex court's strength by four judges.

The Supreme Court currently has a strength of 32 judges, with at least four judges expected to retire in 2026. While Justice Rajesh Bindal retired in April, Justices J K Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal are set to retire in June, Justice Sanjay Karol will retire in August and Justice Satish Sharma will retire

in November. Effectively, the SC Collegium headed by CJI Kant will have to make at least nine recommendations this year, if the Bill is cleared. He has a tenure till February 2027.

The last time the strength of the court was increased was in 2019, when an amendment raised it from 30 to 33, excluding the CJI. Originally, the Act had provided for a maximum of 10 judges, excluding the CJI, which was increased to 13 in 1960 and then 17 in 1977.

"The working strength of the Supreme Court was, however, restricted to 15 Judges by the Cabinet, excluding the Chief Justice of India, till the end of 1979, when the restriction was withdrawn at the request of the Chief Justice of India," the government said.

The strength was further increased in 1986, 2008 and 2019.

## Centre okays Gujarat shipyard, 3 rail projects to ease up congestion

Dheeraj Mishra  
New Delhi, May 5

THE CABINET Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday approved the construction of a ship repair facility at Vadinar in Gujarat.

The project will be jointly implemented by Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) and Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) at a cost of Rs 1,570 crore. Along with this, the Cabinet also approved the multitracking of three key railway sections covering 19 districts in six states at a cost of Rs 23,437 crore.

In the ship repair facility, two floating dry docks (FDDs) of 300 metres each will be cre-

ated for the repair and maintenance of large vessels. The site will have over 14-metre-deep natural draft (depth of water) to accommodate large vessels for maintenance. The facility will have the repairing capacity of 34 ships per year.

According to officials, with this project India will get a facility to repair large vessels which are 250 metres and above in length. It will capture 5-6% vessel share of the potential market, including commercial domestic and foreign vessels. The project will also provide access to major ports such as Deendayal Port (Kandla), Mundra and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA).

## Govt nod to Rs 5,659 cr for five-year mission to increase cotton yield

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

THE CENTRE on Tuesday approved Rs 5,659.22 crore for the Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026-27 to 2030-31) and hiked the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for 2026-27 (October-September) to Rs 365 per quintal from Rs 355.

According to an official statement, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved Rs 5,659.22 crore for cotton productivity to "address bottlenecks, declining growth and quality concerns in India's cotton sector". "The (cotton) Mission envisages to accomplish the pro-

duction of 498 lakh bales (170 kg lint each) of cotton by enhancing lint productivity from 440 kg/ha to 755 kg/ha by 2031," it said. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, India's cotton production stood at 290.91 lakh bales during 2025-26, with Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Karnataka and Rajasthan the top five producers in the country.

Approximately 32 lakh farmers will benefit, leading to self-reliance, said the statement, adding that this is a milestone in making the country self-reliant in the cotton sector. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan termed the decision a "historic step towards reviving the cotton sector".



President Droupadi Murmu being felicitated by Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday. PTI

## Merger or defection? CM of Punjab, Chadha meet Murmu over legal status

Kanchan Vasdev  
Chandigarh, May 5

CHIEF MINISTER Bhagwant Mann Tuesday met President Droupadi Murmu and sought the termination of membership of six Rajya Sabha MPs from Punjab who defected to the BJP, saying their act was a "mockery" and "murder" of the Constitution.

Mann's meeting with Murmu came soon after four of the six MPs, including Raghav Chadha, Rajinder Gupta, Ashok Mittal and Sandeep Pathak, called on the President and submitted a representation alleging harassment and "politically motivated" action against them by the Punjab government following their exit from AAP.

The AAP suffered a major jolt on April 24, when seven of its 10 Rajya Sabha members quit and merged with the BJP. The other three included Harbhajan Singh, Vikramjit Sahney and Swati Maliwal. Barring Maliwal, all others were from

Punjab. Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan later officially accepted their merger with the BJP, reducing the AAP's strength in the Upper House of Parliament to three. Mann, who reached Delhi accompanied by more than 85 of the party's 94 MLAs, submitted a memorandum to the President carrying 95 signatures.

During the meeting, he emphasised the need for an amendment in the Constitution, to allow people to exercise the right to recall their elected representatives. He said the President assured him she would consult Constitutional experts before responding. Incidentally, it was Chadha who, as an AAPMP, had called for such a measure.

Speaking in Parliament in February, Chadha had argued for the introduction of a 'right to recall' mechanism, which would empower voters to remove elected representatives before the expiration of their five-year term if they do not perform effectively.

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F. No.2-3(7)/R&P/2026 Dated: 5th May 2026

**VACANCY NOTIFICATION**

Thirteen (13) contractual positions of Data Recorder/Enumerator in the different Project/Scheme/Division are proposed to be filled through walk-in-interview on 26.05.2026 from 10:00 AM onwards. Corrigendum if any will be published/ uploaded on the Institute website/e-office only. Interested candidates may visit our website [www.cirg.res.in](http://www.cirg.res.in) for further information.

Sd/-  
Head of Office

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल  
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

**// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //**

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14/09/2006 (यथा संशोधित) के अन्तर्गत सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स एस.ई.सी.एल. (केतकी अपडर/एडर/एडर कोल माईन) ग्राम- जोबगा, केतका एवं लाछा, तह. व जिला - सूरजपुर (छ.ग.) में क्षमता विस्तार के तहत प्रस्तावित अपडर/एडर कोल माईन क्षमता - 0.42 मिलियन टन/वर्ष से 0.87 मिलियन टन प्रतिवर्ष, माईनिंग लोड एरिया- 548.65 हेक्टेयर के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्तियां / सुझाव / विचार, टीका-टिप्पणियां, इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के भीतर क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मण्डल, कन्या परिसर रोड, शासकीय आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सालय के पास, नमनाकला गंगापूर, अंबिकापुर, जिला- सूरजपुर (छ.ग.) के कार्यालय में लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 12/06/2026 को समय 11:00 बजे स्थल- स्वामी आत्मानंद शासकीय उत्कृष्ट हिंदी माध्यम उ.प्र. विद्यालय केतका, विकासखण्ड एवं जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14/09/2006 (यथा संशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार डाकूट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार की प्रतियां (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु डॉयरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, साईटिस्ट 'डी' एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला - रायपुर, कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी, सूरजपुर जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), कार्यालय कलेक्टर (खनिज शाखा), जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), संचयन / संचयन, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत-गैला, लाछा, मानी, जोबगा, पोडी, केतका, सपकच, सलका, डेडरी एवं कुरवा, तह. व जिला - सूरजपुर (छ.ग.) एवं संचयन / संचयन, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत-साल्ही, तह. -रामानुजगर, जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.), सदस्य सचिव, मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मण्डल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला - रायपुर (छ.ग.) एवं क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मण्डल, कन्या परिसर रोड, शासकीय आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सालय के पास, नमनाकला गंगापूर, तह.-अंबिकापुर, जिला-सूरजपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

सदस्य सचिव  
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,  
नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

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# Cong seems willing as Vijay reaches out; Mamata returns Rahul gesture

Manoj CG  
New Delhi, May 5

HAVING SUFFERED morale-sapping defeats in the recent Assembly elections, bickering INDIA bloc allies Congress and Trinamool Congress sent out first signals of rapprochement Tuesday. At the same time, a rupture in ties between the DMK and Congress in Tamil Nadu seems to be on the cards.

After a meeting chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, and attended by Rahul Gandhi and AICC in-charge of Tamil Nadu Girish Chodankar, Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal indicated Tuesday evening that the party was ready to support TVK president Vijay, the surprise winner of the Tamil Nadu elections, to form a government. Venugopal said the party was "clear that the mandate in Tamil Nadu was for a secular government committed to protecting the Constitution", and that it should keep out "BJP and its proxies".

"Thiru Vijay has spoken about drawing inspiration from perunthalaivar Kamaraj also. Accordingly, the Congress leadership has directed the TNCC to take a final decision... keeping in view the sentiments of the state reflected in the electoral verdict," he said. Soon after, a meeting of the "TNCC was called by Chodankar over Zoom



A TVK supporter displays a printed T-shirt featuring Vijay. PTI

on Tuesday night to decide on the matter. Gandhi is known to have been in favour of a pre-poll alliance with the TVK, and is reported to have made his unhappiness with Kharge known for having pushed the party to stay on with the DMK, which lost power to finish a distant second in the state. With 108 seats, the TVK is 10 short of a majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly; Congress has 5 MLAs.

Sources said a section of the Congress leadership in Tamil Nadu as well as newly elected MLAs favour extending support to the TVK. While a TVK-Congress deal may prompt an irate DMK to distance itself from the INDIA bloc, those in the pro-Vijay camp say the Congress can't "go against the sentiments of youths" in Tamil Nadu, or ignore the reality of the 2029 Lok

congratulating Vijay, he posted: "Assam and Bengal are clear cases of the poll being stolen by BJP with the support of the EC. We agree with Mamata ji. Over 100 seats were stolen in Bengal."

Linking it to the Congress's previous claims, which incidentally not all INDIA bloc allies have been on board with, Gandhi said: "We have seen this play-book before: Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Lok Sabha 2024 etc." Gandhi, who followed up this post with a phone call to Mamata as well as Vijay, was silent on the DMK's defeat, including the loss personally of MK Stalin, with whom he once shared a close rapport.

On Tuesday, in another post, Gandhi signalled to Congress leaders that the electoral wrangling with the TMC was to be put behind. "Some in the Congress, and others, are gloating about TMC's loss. They need to understand this clearly — the theft of the Assam and Bengal mandate is a big step forward by the BJP in its mission to destroy Indian democracy... This is not about one party or another. This is about India," he said.

In Kolkata, Mamata signalled a turn too, saying in her first post-result press conference, held Tuesday, that she had spoken with both Sonia and Rahul, and that several INDIA bloc leaders, including the SP's Akhilesh Yadav, JMM's Hemant Soren,

RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, AAP's Arvind Kejriwal, and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Uddhav Thackeray, had reached out to her in solidarity. Many of them had campaigned for the TMC during the polls. Akhilesh may travel to Kolkata Wednesday to meet Mamata.

Mamata asserted that she would focus on strengthening the Opposition alliance at the national level — a tie-up she has earlier expressed unhappiness with often. In 2024, the TMC chief had hinted that the Congress should not assume itself as the natural leader of the INDIA bloc. "I formed the INDIA bloc, now it is up to those leading the front to manage it... I would just say that everyone needs to be taken along," she said in a TV interview. Asked if she could take charge of the bloc, she said: "If given the opportunity, I would ensure its smooth functioning."

The quick recalibrations by the INDIA bloc parties since Monday show that they realise the alliance is on the brink after the defeat of Mamata's TMC and Stalin's DMK — two of the strongest regional and foundational pillars of the Opposition bloc. Another INDIA constituent, the Left, has no government anywhere in India in nearly five decades. The Congress can barely take solace from the Kerala win as it coincided with a battering in Assam and all of two seats in West Bengal.

## 'Congress was divided over alliance with Vijay... party president took final call'



MANICKAM TAGORE  
CONGRESS MP

THE CONGRESS'S Lok Sabha whip **Manickam Tagore**, who is an MP from Tamil Nadu, weighs in on the Assembly election results. The outcome, he tells **Manoj CG**, was as much a verdict against the DMK-led government as it was a rejection of "entry of hate into Tamil Nadu". Actor Vijay, whose TVK emerged as the single-largest party, did not align with the BJP, he says, and that the Congress "should do whatever it takes to protect the secular space of Tamil Nadu". Excerpts:

### What went wrong with the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu?

The vote was against the government. People voted against the government. And DMK was the ruling party. We were alliance partners. We were not in the government. And people voted us out; collateral damage happened to us. The same alliance that won the Parliament election could not win the Assembly elections. The only difference was the government and the emergence of the TVK.

### Could your alliance and party not sense there was a sentiment against the government?

When the BJP changed its state president in 2025 and sealed the alliance with Edappadi K Palaniswami (AIADMK leader), the style with which Mr Amit Shah did it was not acceptable to the people of Tamil Nadu. And that emergence of Mr Vijay was certain by that time. And the surge on the ground started by that time. And he was able to get a lot of support from the youngsters and from all other sections. He has broken barriers of caste and communities. Age was the only barrier. By that time, he was getting the support of people below the age of 45. And that has translated into votes now.

### Are you suggesting there was a sentiment against the DMK, but the AIADMK could not reap its benefit due to its alliance with the BJP? And was Vijay the beneficiary?

In Tamil Nadu, there was always an alternative to Kazha-

gam politics, a space of around 40% (of voters). Sixty per cent of the space was occupied by both the Dravida Kazhagams. The Congress tried to occupy that (40%) space in 1989. Mr Vijayanth tried for that space sometime back in 2006. After that, nobody has tried for that space sincerely. And this time, we had a popular person and he was able to connect with people en masse. And therefore, he was able to bring that change.

### There was a talk in the Congress a couple of months ago that the party should ally with the TVK. Should that have changed the situation?

I don't think that we should look at it that way. The Congress is a 140-year-old party. We have a process in place. When we take decisions like this, there is a consultative process. That consultative process was there. I agree there was a divided opinion. When our opinions were taken, we expressed our opinions with data. But when some of our colleagues had different opinions and when the Congress president had to take a final call, the Congress president took a call with the true intention that it would help our party. I don't think that we should go into that part now. We are clear that there were two opinions at that time. But when a decision has to be taken between the two opinions, one opinion has to be taken.

### The TVK is short of the halfway mark. Should the Congress support the TVK?

The election has given a clear verdict. There was the NDA where Mr Modi, Mr Amit Shah and Palaniswami were together. People have rejected them and

they have reduced their numbers. The BJP which had four MLAs has now been reduced to 1. The AIADMK tally has also come down. In my view, people have rejected the entry of hate into Tamil Nadu. We fought in progressive alliance with the DMK, Left parties and others. Our alliance has lost now. The TVK has emerged as the single-largest party, which has also not aligned with the BJP. It has also defeated the BJP and the politics of hate in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, we think that the secular space in Tamil Nadu is back. The Congress should do whatever it takes to protect the secular space of Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the MLAs have also been consulted. The Congress chief has spoken to all of us; he and the leadership will take a call.

### If the Congress offers support to the TVK, will that mean a rupture in ties with DMK?

We are fighting against the BJP and the RSS, ideologically. Our fight is against them. In Kerala, Communists and the Congress fight each other. In Bengal, the TMC and the Congress fight each other. But we are together in our fight against the BJP at the national level. Here also in Tamil Nadu, we are seeing a new party which has fought against the BJP. Therefore, we are very clear that that kind of secular politics should also be supported by all kinds of forces.

### So, at the national level, the DMK and the Congress can still be part of the INDIA bloc and in the state, it can support the TVK?

The Congress president has to take that call. I was giving you instances of Kerala and Bengal. We have political differences in states, but we fight together at the national level. In Bengal, we have different spaces, but we are together in Delhi. These are all places and states where we fight among ourselves. But like that, in Tamil Nadu also, there is a new party which is occupying that space. We don't want to suspect that party. We think that the secular space should be protected and we should not compromise on that ideology.

## BJP's Bengal victory promises Rs 5 lakh health coverage for state's poorest, elderly

Anonna Dutt  
New Delhi, May 5

THE BJP'S massive win in West Bengal will ensure that the last state to have stayed away from the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme, the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), will also implement it, providing Rs 5 lakh coverage to the poorest families and elderly persons.

"Today, I want to assure every citizen that the BJP will work day and night for a better future for Bengal... In the first cabinet itself, Ayushman Bharat Yojana will be given a green light," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a speech on Monday evening. The scheme, which was launched in 2018, will cover over 1.24 crore of the poorest and 15.9 lakh elderly aged 70 and above in Bengal. Another 3 lakh ASHA and Anganwadi workers will receive coverage, according to data from the national health authority. The two other states that had refused to join the scheme — Odisha and Delhi — were brought under its ambit similarly after the BJP won the Assembly polls against the Biju Janata Dal in 2024 and the AAP in 2025, respectively.

While Bengal was one of the states that had initially adopted the AB-PMJAY, it dropped out in 2019, stating that the Modi-led government was taking credit while the state had to foot at least 40% of the cost. Instead,

the Mamata Banerjee-led state government continued with its Swasthya Sathi scheme that also provided Rs 5 lakh cover per family per annum. The AB-PMJAY has been modified to allow co-branding, and several states run the scheme, integrating their health programmes. For example, Maharashtra runs PM-JAY-Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, and Uttar Pradesh has a PM-JAY Atal Ayushman Uttarakhand Yojana.

While this was initially one of the contentions of the AAP government in Delhi as well, it later added that its scheme was better as it covered all the citizens instead of just the poorest ones. The Delhi Arogya Kosh scheme of the AAP government offered free diagnostics, free surgeries, free dialysis, and free treatment to victims of road accidents, fires, and acid attacks without any upper cost limit. Yet, its beneficiaries were lower than those of Ayushman Bharat.

States can also add beneficiaries other than the ones identified by the Centre. For the additional beneficiaries, the state has to bear the cost of the entire premium, but the families receive Rs 5 lakh coverage and can use hospitals in the Ayushman Bharat network, including those outside the state. According to National Health Authority (NHA) data, almost 8.6 crore additional beneficiaries have been added to the scheme by different states in this manner.



## The Day After

BJP supporters remove TMC flags in the Tollyganj constituency following the party's win in the West Bengal Assembly elections, in Kolkata on Tuesday. PTI

## After verdict, Rlys hopes to resume stalled projects in Bengal

Dheeraj Mishra  
New Delhi, May 5

AFTER THE unprecedented victory of the BJP in West Bengal Assembly polls, the Ministry of Railways is expected to expedite land acquisition for several key projects in the state which were stalled due to land issues, a senior official said on Tuesday.

For the approved railway projects in the state, the ministry requires a total 4,662 hectares of land, of which over 1,273 hectares (27 per cent) has so far been acquired.

Land acquisition had become a major point of contention between the rail ministry and the Mamata Banerjee-led state government, with the

former accusing the state of not supporting acquisition, and the latter alleging neglect by the Centre in allocating development projects in West Bengal.

"At least 12 major projects have been delayed in the state because of land acquisition. This includes the Sivok-Rangpo new line, which is of national importance, connecting Sikkim with the rail network for the first time. Besides, four metro corridors over 52 km are under construction, of which work on 20-km stretch is stuck due to land acquisition and utility shifting issues. The ministry will soon be writing to the new state government to expedite the process," said the senior Railways Ministry official.

Railway projects worth Rs 98,499 crore are currently ongoing in the state, the official informed. According to the ministry, the delayed projects include the Nabadwip Ghat-Nabadwip Dham new line, where the ministry needs 107-hectare land; 168-hectare land is needed for Kaliyaganj-Buniadpur new line; 18-hectare for Canning-Bagankhal new line; Rukni-Anara rail flyover (35 hectares); Gourinath Dham-Purulia rail flyover (34 hectares); Kalipahari-Bakhtar Nagar fifth line (14 hectares); and Naihati-Ranaghat third line (13 hectares).

Apart from these, the Railways Ministry will also expedite the surveys and detailed project

reports for 17 projects which were recently resumed by the Railway Board in January. These include the 26-km-long Kanthi-Egra new line, Nandakumar-Balaipanda new line (28 km), Bowaichandi-Arambagh new line (31 km), Bankura-Hura-Purulia new line (65 km), Rai-ganj-Dalkhola new line (43 km), Prantik-Siuri new line (34 km), Itahar-Buniadpur new line (27 km), Gazole-Itahar new line (27 km), and Bowaichandi-Khana new line (24 km). The official said these projects were earlier frozen due to reasons such as low traffic, but have now been resumed after public demand.

Another set of 21 major projects that pass through West Bengal is also under execution,

including the 303-km Son Nagar-Andal (EDFC Double line), 177-km Bhagalpur-Dumka-Rampurhat Doubling, 153-km Narayanganj-Bhadrak third line, 132-km Kharagpur-Adityapur third line, 121-km Chandil-Damodar third line, and 111-km Santragachi-Kharagpur fourth line.

Along with this, the survey for 25 major projects, which pass through the state, is also underway. This includes the 546-km Katihar-Kumedpur-Aluabari Road; New Jalpaiguri-Kamakhyia third and fourth lines; 399-km Jharsuguda-Bagdih-Kharagpur 5th and 6th Line; 154-km Sitarampur-Jhajha fourth line; and 199-km Sitarampur-Kiul third line.

## Bengal Advocate General resigns after BJP victory



Advocate General Kishore Datta has sent his resignation letter to Governor R N Ravi

Tanusree Bose  
Kolkata, May 5

WEST BENGAL Advocate General (A-G) Kishore Datta tendered his resignation Tuesday, a day after the BJP secured a historic majority in the Assembly polls. Sources said Datta sent his resignation letter to Governor R N Ravi, marking the beginning of an administrative overhaul as part of the change in power in the state.

While there is no requirement for the A-G to step down during a regime change, it is customary for a state's top legal officer to resign when a new government is elected. The new administration typically implements its own policies, and the A-G is expected to align with these changes. Datta's departure follows a relatively brief second stint in the role.

He was appointed in December 2023, succeeding Soumendranath Mukhopadhyay, who had resigned just a month prior. Datta first took charge as the Bengal A-G in February 2017. In September 2021, after the previous Assembly polls, he submitted his resignation to then-Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, citing personal reasons. The process of appointing the new A-G will begin once the BJP-led Cabinet is sworn in.

## END IN SIGHT TO PROLONGED BENGAL GOVT-CENTRE TENSIONS

# Winds of change may push power tussles, legal battles out of window

Apurva Vishwanath  
New Delhi, May 5

FROM TUSSLES with Governors, frequent face-offs with Central agencies to withdrawal of general consent for investigation by the CBI in the state, the prolonged legal battles between the Trinamool Congress-led West Bengal government and the BJP-led Centre over the last decade have defined federal tensions. Now, with the BJP's decisive victory in the Assembly elections, these issues will be reframed around the benefits of a "double engine".

In 2018, the Bengal government had withdrawn the "general consent" to CBI probes. The consent of a state is mandatory under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946,

for the central agency to begin a probe. The Andhra Pradesh government too had withdrawn general consent for CBI probes when the Telugu Desam Party was at odds with the NDA government. Later, the YSRC government under Jagan Mohan Reddy restored the consent for CBI probes in 2019.

In 2021, the Bengal government filed an original suit before the Supreme Court arguing that the Centre had "unconstitutionally" deployed the CBI despite the state having withdrawn its consent. Amidst concerns that Opposition leaders are being "targeted in the guise of CBI investigations", several other states — Punjab, Jharkhand, Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Telangana, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu and



The Mamata Banerjee government had moved the SC against former Governor Ananda Bose for delaying assent to key bills. FILE

Karnataka — withdrew their consent to the CBI. However, when governments changed, the states too altered their positions on the issue. In 2024, the SC ruled that Bengal's suit was maintainable; a larger bench is

expected to hear the issue.

Apart from the CBI, the Bengal government has had frequent run-ins with other Central agencies, including the ED. The SC is hearing an ED plea against outgoing CM Mamata Banerjee

regarding alleged interference in an investigation at the Kolkata office of political consultancy firm I-PAC. The state police filed FIRs against ED officials in the state, reflecting a pattern of retaliation. The SC stayed the FIRs and ordered that CCTV footage and digital data from the search site be preserved.

### Run-ins with Gov

In a swipe against the then Governor, Jagdeep Dhankhar, the Mamata government had passed a series of Bills to replace the Governor with the CM as the Chancellor of state universities. The clashes continued in courts as the state government moved the SC against another former Governor, Ananda Bose, for sitting on key Bills. The ruling TMC termed the delay in granting as-

sert an attempt to "defeat and subvert" the legislative mandate of the state government.

The SC, in the case of Tamil Nadu, had ruled in favour of the state government. This ruling would have been a template for Bengal as well, but a reference by the President effectively watered down the standard set for the Governor.

The latest face-off in court between the state and the Centre was on the issue of the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. Apart from the procedural aspects, the Bengal government had also challenged the EC's power to conduct such an exercise, which the SC is yet to rule on. In an unprecedented hearing, Mamata, as the sitting CM, made submissions before the

apex court challenging the SIR process. She had filed the case in her personal capacity, separate from the state government's plea, taking the issue head-on.

### Policy paralysis

On policy aspects, in 2022, the Centre stopped the release of funds for MGNREGS in Bengal "due to non-compliance of directives of the central government". In October last year, the SC had dismissed the Centre's appeal challenging a June 18 order of the Calcutta High Court, which directed implementation of the MGNREGS in Bengal prospectively from August 1, 2025. Now, with the BJP's victory in the Assembly elections, funding under key central schemes are expected to resume.

## Owaisi urges Muslims to create 'own leadership'



AIMIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi in Hyderabad on Tuesday. ANI  
Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

A DAY after the Assembly election results were announced in five states and the BJP won a majority in West Bengal for the first time, AIMIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi said Muslims reposing their faith for so many years in these "so-called secular parties" has not ensured eradication of injustice against them.

The Hyderabad MP also hit out at the Opposition parties, including Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress, saying despite West Bengal having a TMC government for 15 years, Muslims continued to live in "abject poverty" in the state. He appealed to Muslims to create their "own leadership".

In a statement on Tuesday, Owaisi said: "I am of the opinion... that these so-called secular parties will not be able to stop the BJP. And we have seen in the past. In Delhi, Mr Kejriwal tried to play footsie with Hindutva, and the same was done in Maharashtra by Mr Uddhav Thackeray's party and also to a certain extent soft Hindutva was also played by the erstwhile NCP. We have seen the same behaviour in West Bengal by Mamata Banerjee and TMC. The net result is that you don't have AAP in power in Delhi despite adopting a real Hindutva."

Attacking the TMC, he said there would have been development in West Bengal had the party treated "Muslims as citizens and not as a vote bank." "If you go to Malda, Murshidabad or read government documents. They show that the most marginalized community in Bengal is the Muslims... Muslims are living in abject poverty over there (Bengal)." He alleged that the "whole creation of Mamata Banerjee as liberal, secular leader is not seen there (Bengal)".

"There was huge anti-incumbency over there. I reiterate my point that the Muslims should try to create their own political, independent leadership. Your vote is getting wasted. You're casting your votes in favour of these so-called secular parties. They are not secular and they have failed to stop the BJP," said the AIMIM chief.

The AIMIM had contested 11 seats in Bengal — mostly constituencies with a sizeable Muslim population — but drew a blank on all of them. Out of the 11 seats, the party managed to get more than 5,000 votes on just two seats — Raghunathganj (5,885 votes) and Kandli (22,976 votes).

# Four killed in Bengal post-poll violence; TMC offices targeted

Sweety Kumari  
Kolkata, May 5

TWO BJP workers were killed in New Town in North 24 Parganas and Udaynarayanpur in Howrah, while the TMC alleged that two of its party members were killed in Belehata in Kolkata and Nanoor in Birbhum amid alleged post-poll violence across the state.

A man identified as a TMC worker was found dead in Birbhum district's Nanoor, with party supporters alleging he was hacked to death by BJP workers. In a separate incident, the BJP alleged one of its workers was killed by miscreants associated with the TMC, while he was celebrating the party's poll victory in Howrah's Udaynarayanpur on Tuesday.

The family members of the TMC worker, identified as Abir Sheikh, alleged he was attacked by BJP miscreants while he was on his way back to his house. On receiving the information, a large contingent from the Nanur police station arrived at the location and cordoned off the area.

The family members of BJP worker Yadav Bor Jadhav Bor (45) alleged that while he was returning home after poll victory celebrations on Monday, he was dragged away by a group of individuals and attacked with sharp weapons, police said, adding one person has been arrested in connection with the incident.

In two other separate incidents, a TMC worker identified as Biswajit Pattanaik (44) was killed, while in New Town, BJP worker Madhu Mondal was killed, allegedly by TMC workers, following an argument when a victory procession of the BJP was passing by the Bhalleguri area, police said.



Office of former minister and TMC leader Aroop Biswas vandalised in Tollygunge on Tuesday. PARTHA PAUL

The TMC MLA-elect from Nanoor, Bidhan Majhi, claimed that Sheikh was an active member of the party and was killed by BJP goons in the area. However, BJP leader Shyamapada Mondal said none of their party members was involved in the attack and police should undertake a free and fair investigation to find out the accused. TMC MP Sagarika Ghosh shared a video purportedly showing the body with a caption "horrifying, chilling". The TMC wrote on X, "Brutal murder of our party worker in Birbhum's Nanoor. Modi's idea of poriborton begins. Deceased name is Abir SK." Tensions also flared in other parts of the state as TMC alleged attacks on its offices and workers following its defeat in the Assembly elections, even as the BJP appealed for calm and denied involvement.

According to TMC sources, party offices in areas including

Tollygunge, Kasba, Baruipur, Kamarhati and Baranagar, as well as districts such as Howrah and Berhampore, were vandalised. In Belehata, a local party office was attacked, and block president Pabitra Biswas was allegedly assaulted, while the office of councillor Sushanta Ghosh was damaged. In the Bijoygarh-Netajinagar area, the election office of former minister Aroop Biswas was ransacked, with visuals showing people kicking broken hoardings.

The TMC also alleged that a party office in Hogg market was vandalised by BJP supporters using a bulldozer. In Jamuria and Siliguri, TMC offices were allegedly set on fire. The party claimed that its Udaynarayanpur candidate, Samir Panja, was assaulted, and that Barrackpore candidate Raj Chakraborty and Noapara candidate Trinankur Bhattacharya were manhandled while leaving counting

centres and needed CAPF escort. Maniktala candidate Shreya Pande also alleged that her election agent was attacked.

The TMC, in a post on social media, accused the BJP of orchestrating the violence. "The BJP has exposed its true face the moment it came to power. In Jalpaiguri Ward 14, BJP-backed miscreants have unleashed vandalism at our Trinamool Congress party office. This destruction and deliberate attempt to create unrest is the real face of the BJP," it claimed.

The BJP rejected the allegations, with leader Rahul Sinha suggesting the incidents could be the result of internal rivalries within the TMC. He added that the situation was not comparable to the violence during the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections and that the police and central forces are now taking prompt action.

The BJP also directed its

workers to avoid provocation, refrain from celebrations near TMC offices, and maintain peace. The BJP wrote on X, "Yesterday marked a moment of freedom for West Bengal — freedom from corruption, scams, political violence, appeasement politics, and injustice. The voice of the people is clear. This decisive mandate stands for development, dignity, and justice. As citizens of West Bengal, it is now our collective responsibility to ensure the state moves forward on a path of progress, leading once again in industry, literature, cinema, and employment, and becoming truly free from political violence... We appeal to all political stakeholders across parties to refrain from any form of violence or retaliation. Let us use our energies to build and strengthen our state. Let us work together to shape the West Bengal our forefathers envisioned: a land of freedom, peace, and opportunity for all."

The Election Commission of India (ECI) sought reports from local authorities and warned of strict action against those involved in violence. State Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal had earlier cautioned officials against any lapses in security.

"Several misleading posts are being circulated on social media by falsely linking unrelated videos and photos from other places to Kolkata after the poll results. Kolkata Police is closely monitoring such content. Strict legal action is being taken against those spreading misinformation and attempting to disturb public peace. The situation in Kolkata is fully under control. Citizens are requested not to believe or share unverified posts," Kolkata Police posted on X.

# Bengal: SIR deletions higher than victory margins in 26 of BJP seats and 21 of TMC

Damini Nath  
New Delhi, May 5

THE WEST Bengal Assembly elections results declared on Monday shows that out of 293 seats, 49 had winning margins lower than the number of electors deleted after adjudication during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that saw removal of over 90 lakh names in the state.

Of the 49 constituencies, 26 were won by the BJP, 21 by the TMC and two by the Congress. The West Bengal Assembly has 294 seats of which results have been declared for 293; one seat (Falta) is scheduled for repolling on May 21. The BJP, which won 207 seats, had 26 such constituencies where the number of deleted electors was higher than the victory margin.

Twenty-five of those seats the BJP wrested from the Trinamool Congress, while it retained Darjeeling from the 2021 elections. On five seats, the number of electors deleted was over 10,000 more than the victory margin — Jangipur's deletions were 26,039 more than the margin; Rajarhat New Town had 23,816 more deletions; Karandighi saw a difference of 11,693; Bhatar 10,953 and Raina 10,450.

Overall, the BJP's average margin of victory in the 207 seats was 27,805, while the TMC, which won 80 seats, had an average margin of 29,095 votes.

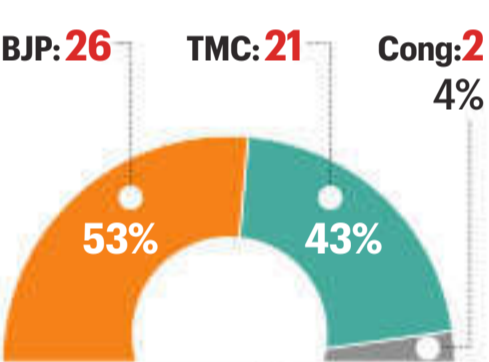
There were 16 seats out of 293 where the difference between the deletions and the margins was over 10,000 votes each. For the TMC, 21 of its 80 seats had recorded more deletions in the adjudication phase of the SIR than the victory margins, ranging from 67,188 more in Samsarganj to just 119 more in Kamarhati. The TMC won nine seats where the gap between deletions and margins was over 10,000 each.

The Congress and the Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) won two seats each, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and All-India Secular Front got one each. Both the Congress wins — Farakka and Raninagar — were in seats where the margin was lower than the number of deleted electors. While over 90 lakh names were deleted from the electoral rolls in West Bengal during the SIR that started last year, 27.16 lakh of those deletions came during adjudication by judicial officers appointed on the order of the Supreme Court.

The SC, which is hearing a batch of petitions challenging the Election Commission's SIR exercise, appointed 19 appellate tribunals in March this year. Over 34 lakh appeals against exclusions and inclusions during the adjudication are pending with the tribunals even now, with less than 2,000 appeals cleared before polling in the state.

## • SIR SHADOW

49 Number of seats where the winning margin was less than the SIR deletions



## 10,000

Where the gap between SIR deletions and winning margin

| Seats             | Winner | Victory Margin | SIR deletions |
|-------------------|--------|----------------|---------------|
| Samsarganj        | TMC    | 7,587          | 74,775        |
| Lalgola           | TMC    | 1,8960         | 55,420        |
| Farakka           | Cong   | 8,193          | 38,222        |
| Mothabari         | TMC    | 10,496         | 37,255        |
| Jangipur          | BJP    | 10,542         | 36,581        |
| Suti              | TMC    | 12,357         | 37,965        |
| Rajarhat-New Town | BJP    | 316            | 24,132        |
| Sitai             | TMC    | 2,721          | 20,213        |
| Raninagar         | Cong   | 2,701          | 17,140        |
| Kumarganj         | TMC    | 6,685          | 20,680        |
| Madhyagram        | TMC    | 2,399          | 14,842        |
| Amdanga           | TMC    | 2,995          | 15,387        |
| Karandighi        | BJP    | 19,869         | 31,562        |
| Narainpur         | TMC    | 1,986          | 13,463        |
| Bhatar            | BJP    | 6,528          | 17,481        |
| Raina             | BJP    | 834            | 11,284        |

SOURCE: ECI

# 'Jittery' SP pulls plug on I-PAC deal for UP 2027 after Bengal, Tamil Nadu poll losses

Pushkar Banakar & Lalmani Verma  
New Delhi, Lucknow, May 5

THE SAMAJWADI Party's (SP) proposed tie-up with political consultancy firm I-PAC for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections has fallen through, amid a mix of legal troubles, electoral setbacks, and internal reservations within the party, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources in I-PAC said the agreement, finalised earlier this year, was now "off the table". The developments come in the backdrop of the ED arresting I-PAC director Vinesh Chandel last month in connection with alleged financial irregularities in the alleged Bengal coal smuggling case that has cast a shadow on the firm's operations. "The EC raids on our offices and the arrest of our director (Vinesh Chandel) had left the deal on shaky ground," a source said.

The move triggered uncertainty among political clients and raised questions about the

firm's ability to execute large-scale election campaigns.

Another source pointed to the broader political context, suggesting that recent Assembly poll outcomes had also contributed to the SP's rethink. "The loss of the TMC and DMK in the Assembly polls had seemingly left the SP jittery... The credibility was gone, especially after (West Bengal CM) Mamata Banerjee lost from her own seat by a huge margin. That was the final nail in the coffin."

The perception of underperformance in key states appears to have influenced SP's internal assessment of I-PAC's effectiveness. The consultancy had been associated with campaign strategies in both Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where electoral outcomes did not align with expectations of the parties it was advising, sources said. In the weeks following the raids, I-PAC is learnt to have significantly scaled down its operations in Bengal, weeks ahead of the polls.

Sources said several offices



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav prefers feedback received from party workers on the ground over inputs from private agencies, says a senior party leader

in the state were either temporarily shut or reduced to skeletal staff, with non-essential campaign work put on hold. The reduced operations deepened wedges between the TMC and I-PAC. Multiple sources in I-PAC confirmed that their relations with TMC leaders soured after the ED raids. "The leaders expected full-scale help from

us, especially in the days ahead of polls. However, our reduced activity on the ground left them fuming," a source said.

The fallout has had immediate organisational consequences. "We have shut our office in Uttar Pradesh and around 30-40 people who were hired have been asked not to report to work," the source added, indicating a complete halt to preparatory work for the SP campaign.

A senior official within I-PAC acknowledged that multiple factors contributed to the breakdown. "Mamata was instrumental in helping I-PAC secure the SP deal, but the arrest of Chandel, who was touted to lead the Uttar Pradesh project, jeopardised the plan," the official said. "Also, there was pressure from the BJP to back out." Despite the setback, the SP is unlikely to entirely forgo professional campaign support. Sources said another firm led by former I-PAC staff is expected to assist the party in the run-up to the 2027 elections.

Within the SP, however,

there appears to have been growing unease over reliance on external consultants. An SP functionary said the decision was expected. "Calling off the tie-up with I-PAC was expected after the ED last month arrested Chandel. That created a sense of uncertainty among SP leaders over the future assignments of I-PAC," the leader said.

Electoral outcomes in states where I-PAC had been active also played a role. "The recent results of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where I-PAC was working for the ruling parties, led the party to rethink its decision. We are not sure how independently that firm would be able to deliver in future," he said. Another senior SP leader pointed to a more structural preference within the party's leadership. "SP chief Akhilesh Yadav prefers feedback received from the party's own workers on the ground over inputs from private agencies," he said, underlining a long-standing emphasis on cadre-based political intelligence.

# Kerala verdict protest against 'style', correction needed: CPM veteran

Nidheesh MK  
Thiruvananthapuram, May 5

THOMAS ISAAC, CPM veteran and Kerala's former Finance Minister, had agreed to speak on the day the Assembly election results came in, and that turned out to be quite a day. "Even giving you this interview is going out, don't embarrass me further," he said with a smile, asking not to be pushed hard on difficult questions.

The results had shocked the Left. The LDF had been reduced to 35 seats. The UDF score had crossed a hundred. Thirteen sitting ministers lost their seats. The scale of it was, as Isaac put it, without a parallel. "This is the heaviest defeat the Left Democratic Front has ever suffered. There are no comparisons anywhere in Kerala's history," the 73-year-old said. Isaac did not try the usual escape hatches such as blaming a political conspiracy. What he kept returning to was a

more uncomfortable argument: that the Pinarayi Vijayan government had performed exceptionally and that the ruling party failed to make that performance count electorally.

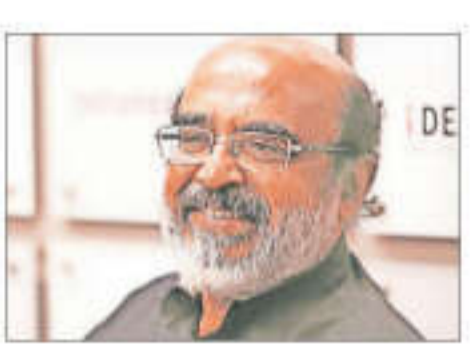
"The assumption was that people would vote on the basis of this progress. But whether the politics of this progress was taught adequately, I don't know." The problem, as he saw it, was that by the 10th year in power, the "extraordinary had become ordinary". Monthly pensions, welfare schemes — all of it had settled into the furniture of daily life. "People were taking it for granted. This pension, isn't it something that comes every month? It had become a routine thing. Very few people remembered it wasn't like this before."

## A 'style' problem

The word that kept appearing in Isaac's answers was "style". In many constituencies, he said, a significant portion of the LDF's confirmed

voter base either voted against them or simply did not go out to vote. "This is not about them going over to the UDF or joining them. This is a disagreement about style. That is what they were saying. And it needs to be corrected. Without correcting this, we cannot move forward." Isaac would not comment on Pinarayi Vijayan trailing in Dharmadam in the early rounds, though he won later. Isaac said that the ten years of governance under the LDF are something Kerala won't easily get back. "This kind of era will be very difficult for Kerala to recreate. There will be a great loss."

Isaac had no answer to why the LDF lost Alappuzha, a constituency he represented for twenty years. He had visited the constituency during the campaign. "The feeling I got was that we would win. Because people were responding the same way they always did. But the result was different." He paused and



CPM veteran and Kerala former finance minister Thomas Isaac

then said, "So that is nostalgia. We were only seeing what was in our echo chamber."

On the BJP winning three seats in Kerala and state party chief Rajeev Chandrasekar defeating sitting minister Sivan-kutti in Nemom, Isaac said the party's vote share had not increased. The BJP recorded an 11.4 per cent vote share in Kerala. "They have been contained throughout this period. They have not grown. Even in this election, they could not achieve a breakthrough." The larger point was one the Left had always made about itself. "Con-

taining BJP and not giving them space is a question of the Left's own survival. We see it that way."

## A Bengal comparison

The CPM had a disappointing day in Bengal, too, so a related question came up. Asked if this is the "beginning of the end", Isaac pushed back. "Kerala has changed back and forth so many times. Ten years of continuous power was the miracle. That was the thing without precedent." He pointed to 1977, asked where the CPM was after that election, and let the implication carry the answer. In the 1977 general election in Kerala, the CPI and the CPM contested separately, and the latter could not even open its account.

Isaac gave the UDF's 'honeymoon' a year at the most. The welfare architecture LDF had built, he said, could not simply be dismantled. The UDF had attacked KIIFB, an out-of-budget escrow mechanism that the outgoing government built to by-

pass the Centre's restrictions on borrowing and funding capital infrastructure, for years. "Pension has to be raised to Rs 3,000 now, free bus travel for women, and Rs 1,000 a month for every girl in college. How are they going to do all this? Just wait six months. That is all I am saying."

## 'Voters have not left Left'

Isaac was not willing to speak publicly about the course correction Left needed in Kerala. That was for the party to decide collectively, he said. What he was willing to say was that the votes had not "permanently left", that what had happened was a "protest against a style of functioning" that the party was capable of changing. "Those votes and those people have not left the Left. Once we correct this and make it clear to them that the correction has happened, they will come back. And then the UDF will not last long," Isaac said.

# Fisherman to MLA: Meet Cong legislator from Alappuzha

Shaju Philip  
Thiruvananthapuram, May 5



AMONG THE winners of the Kerala Assembly election is a 30-year-old from the Congress, who has worked as a fisherman since he was a teenager, and came to state-wide prominence after being allegedly assaulted by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's security personnel.

A D Thomas, who won from the Alappuzha constituency, is from a family of fisherfolk in the Mararikulam coast, and has been venturing into the sea since the age of 17. Currently, he is the district president of the Kerala Students Union (KSU), the student wing of the Congress in the state.

In the Assembly election, he defeated the CPI(M)'s sitting legislator, P P Chitharanjan, by 21,015 votes. The seat had been with the CPI(M) since 2011. During the Nava Kerala Yatra undertaken by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in 2024, Thomas had waved a black flag at the bus in which the Cabinet was touring the state. He was subsequently assaulted, allegedly by security personnel. The blood-soaked face of Thomas later appeared in the media,

A D Thomas defeated the CPI(M)'s sitting legislator, P P Chitharanjan, by 21,015 votes

and the Congress sought to highlight the incident as an instance of the "Vijayan regime's intolerance towards protests".

According to Thomas, he was moved by the struggles of his father, Dominic Jackson, and mother, Akkama, to raise three sons. At the age of 17, he decided to take up fishing, and also used to do other work, such as fuel outlets and even taking tuition classes for school children. On many days, Thomas will be seen setting out early in the morning, along with his father and younger brother, for fishing. Along with his work and politics, he also carried forward his education, completing a degree in History.

## Satheesan, Venugopal, Chennithala? Race heats up in Congress for Kerala's top post

**Shaju Philip**  
Thiruvananthapuram, May 5

AFTER SECURING a decisive mandate in the Kerala Assembly election, the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) is witnessing an intensely contested race for the post of chief minister.

In the 140-member Assembly, the Congress has its best-ever tally of 63 seats within the UDF, which won a total of 102 seats.

The camps of V D Satheesan, who was the Opposition Leader during outgoing CM Pinarayi Vijayan, former Opposition Leader Ramesh Chennithala, and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary K C Venugopal have been making competing claims for the top post. While Satheesan and Chennithala were elected to the Assembly in this election, Lok Sabha member Venugopal did not contest.

The party has appointed CWC members Ajay Maken and

Mukul Wasnik as the AICC observers for legislature party meeting to choose the next CM.

Satheesan has widely been seen as the natural choice due to his performance as Leader of the Opposition and his popularity among party workers, but Chennithala is staking his claim based on seniority.

Venugopal, on the other hand, is relying on his strong connection with the Congress high command, particularly his proximity to Rahul Gandhi.

A senior Congress leader said, "The high command can take a decision, either after hearing the elected party members, or even without that. Also, there is a precedent of the Opposition Leader being the natural choice for the post of Chief Minister. But there have been exceptions. For example, in Telangana, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka was the Opposition Leader when the party contested in 2023. After the Congress won, Revanth Reddy was made Chief Minister and Vikramarka Deputy CM."

Some Congress sources have



Congress leader VD Satheesan being received by supporters at Ernakulam Railway Station in Kochi, Tuesday. PTI

questioned Venugopal's move to join the CM race. "If he is made CM, the party will have to fight by-elections to the Assembly as well as to the Lok Sabha. When the party has several eligible members among those elected, what is the justification for promoting such a move? Days earlier, he was appointed chairperson of the Public Accounts

Committee of Parliament. Then why is he keenly eyeing the Kerala post? In 2024, he fought the Lok Sabha elections from Kerala when he was a RS member from Rajasthan. Later, the BJP won that seat in Rajasthan. Should the party meet every such demand?" asked a leader.

The camps of the three leaders vying for the post have

already started taking a count of the elected MLAs who may support them in case a show of strength is needed. Many Congress MPs, who are disgruntled over the denial of tickets to contest the Assembly election, are also part of hectic lobbying.

"Most of the legislators have been divided between Chennithala and Venugopal. Chennithala banks upon his old group, which he had inherited from K Karunakaran. Most of the young elected members are loyal to Venugopal. While the people's mandate is for Satheesan, he does not have a battery of legislators to parade before the party high command," said a source.

Chennithala, who was the party's CM face in the last election in which the Vijayan-led LDF retained power, said on Tuesday that he believed he had the support of elected MLAs.

"The high command will decide on the CM. If the leadership seeks the opinion of MLAs, I hope I will get the support of a comfortable number of them. In the 2011 elections,

(Oommen) Chandy and I contested. In the meeting of elected legislators, I had said that he should be the Chief Minister, considering his seniority. I did not go for any race," said Chennithala, hinting at his seniority among the contenders.

The Congress's ally in the UDF, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), has put its weight behind Satheesan. "As the Opposition Leader, he has discharged his role in an exemplary manner in the last five years. His Kerala yatra (which took place earlier this year) and the issues he had raised have been well accepted by the people. We hope the Congress high command will take a decision after considering such factors," said IUML president Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal.

On the sidelines of the race for the CM post, the Congress is also facing another tough call - selecting the Cabinet ministers. Despite its numerical strength, the party will be compelled to accommodate all UDF alliance partners in the Cabinet.



Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi addresses the media in Guwahati on Tuesday. ANI

## Stunned by scale of Assam drubbing, Congress cries foul over margins

**Sukrita Baruah**  
Guwahati, May 5

AS OPPOSITION parties in Assam took stock of their poll debacle on Tuesday, Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, who himself lost the election from Jorhat, questioned the role of the Election Commission (EC), pointing to the huge margins of the BJP's victories.

The Congress registered its worst performance in Assam, winning only 19 of the 126 Assembly seats. Of its 19 MLAs, 18 are Muslim leaders who won from seats where minority community voters make up a bulk of voters, reflecting the party's inability to appeal to the rest of the electorate. The electoral loss suffered by Gogoi, who had made his state poll debut, was the biggest individual defeat among the party's candidates, along with the defeat of Debabrata Saikia, who was the Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly.

While stating that the party accepts the public verdict and that he accepts moral responsibility for the defeat, Gogoi on Tuesday targeted the EC. "Our leader Rahul Gandhi has been raising questions about this election. We have seen the behaviour and character of the Election Commission. We have been saying this as various parties on the floor of the House in Delhi. We even tried to bring a no-confidence motion against the Chief Election Commissioner," he said.

"The people cannot believe the results of this election. The margin of votes is such that people cannot trust the outcome. We also cannot believe the results, and the public shares this disbelief. In many constituencies, people thought a candidate would win by a small margin, but the difference has been huge. People, journalists, and intellectuals were discussing that many constituencies

would see a 50-50 fight. We expected neck-to-neck fights. People thought the results in many seats would be within 5,000 to 10,000 votes, but the gap is vast. We will have to review the results of several seats in the coming days," he said, adding that the party would hold a special meeting on May 9 to review this.

With the Congress left without its most prominent faces in the Assembly and finding itself pushed into the image that is not able to represent the interests of the state's broader population, something it had actively tried to avoid, Gogoi said the party would focus on playing the role of a "strong Opposition".

"Whenever this government tries to intimidate or put people in danger, we will stand with the common citizens. That is our promise. We will keep an eye on the government's negligence, mistakes, and corruption. Even if the Congress party has fewer seats, we have not given up. I tell the entire Congress leadership of Assam and the people of Assam that we haven't gained seats as expected, but we have not lost heart mentally," he said.

The Rajiv Dal's Akhil Gogoi, who is one of two Opposition MLAs elected from Upper and North Assam said the result was "hard to believe". Among the factors he attributed to the NDA crossing the 100 mark in the state are delimitation, the Special Revision of voter lists that took place before the election, the outgoing BJP government's cash transfer schemes, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma "holding two to three public meetings in every constituency himself".

He also held the fact that the Opposition alliance of his party with the Congress and other regional parties such as the Assam Jatiya Parishad and the All Party Hill Leaders Conference was finalised less than three weeks before voting.

## Land-grabbing probe: ED issues lookout notice for Kolkata DCP

**Tanusree Bose**  
Kolkata, May 5

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has issued a Look Out Circular against Kolkata Deputy Commissioner of Police Shantanu Sinha Biswas to stop him from leaving the country after he failed to join the investigation in a money laundering case involving Biswajit Poddar, alias Sonu Pappu, a history-sheeter accused of extortion and land grabbing.

According to ED sources, Biswas, DCP, Special Branch, Kolkata, has not responded to summons, and the agency apprehends that he may attempt to flee the country.

Biswas's name surfaced while ED was probing a coal scam case. The sources said that while going through Sonu Pappu's bank transactions, ED officials found several transactions involving the police officer.

In March, ED summoned Biswas for questioning in the coal scam case, asking him to appear in its New Delhi office on April 6. On April 19, ED raided Biswas's residence on Fern Road in Ballygunge and a nearby building where he has five flats, as well as the house of Joy Kamdar, MD of Sun Enterprise, at Behala. A few years back, Biswas faced ED officials in New Delhi while serving as the officer-in-charge of the Kailash police station. He had then submitted several papers, which were examined.

## Decoding BJP's Bengal sweep: 77 seats won in 2021 retained, 129 wrested from TMC

**Anjishnu Das**  
New Delhi, May 5

IN ITS first ever Assembly election victory in West Bengal, the BJP not only managed to retain all 77 seats it had won in the 2021 polls, but it also flipped 129 seats from the Trinamool Congress (TMC), concentrated in the state's southern districts, once known to be the Mamata Banerjee-led party's stronghold.

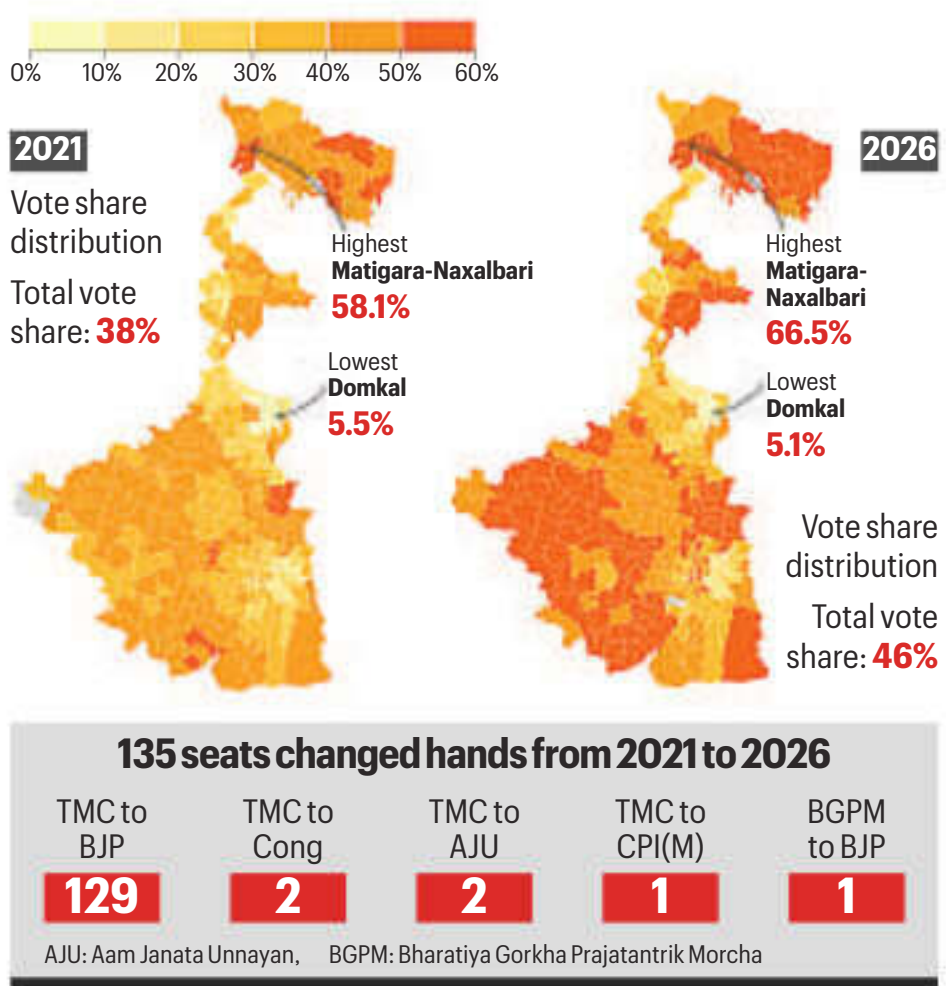
An analysis of the results shows that across all 293 seats where polling has been held, 135 seats have changed hands between the 2021 and 2026 elections. While the TMC ceded 129 seats to the BJP, it also lost 2 seats each to the Congress and Humayun Kabir-led Aam Janata Unnayan (AJU) and 1 to the CPI(M). The BJP also picked up the Kalimpong seat from the Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha. The TMC, however, failed to flip any seats from other parties.

While the BJP was able to retain all 77 seats it had won in 2021, the TMC only retained 80 of the 215 seats it had won five years ago.

In the 77 seats retained by the BJP from 2021, the party increased its vote share in 71 seats. In these 71 seats, the BJP's vote share rose by more than 5-percentage points in 53 seats, including in 20 seats by more than 10-percentage points. The

### Mamata-led party, however, failed to win any seats held by other parties

#### How BJP's vote share changed in 5 years



biggest increases in vote share came in Dabgram-Phulbari (16.2-percentage points), Sili-guri (15.8), and English Bazar (15.7).

Across the 77 retained seats, the BJP recorded an average winning margin of 41,214 votes

this year, up from 14,010 votes in 2021. On average, this amounts to an increased margin of 27,204 votes in each seat. Between the 2021 and 2026 polls, the BJP saw its margins rise in 72 of these 77 seats, and drop in just 5 seats.

#### Where TMC lost

However, the election appears to have been decided in the 129 seats flipped to the BJP from the TMC.

The TMC's vote share dipped in all but one of these 129 seats, including by more than 10-percentage points in 42 seats.

The BJP seems to have capitalised on a weakening TMC, increasing its vote share in all 129 seats it flipped from the TMC, including in 64 seats by more than 10-percentage points.

In 2021, the TMC had won these 129 seats with an average margin of 20,338 votes, ranging from as low as 623 in Dantan to 92,480 in Jangipur. This year, the BJP won these 129 seats by an average margin of 19,852 votes - a significant feat given that the BJP had to overcome its considerable deficits to the TMC in 2021. In Jangipur, for instance, the BJP won this time by 10,542 votes, meaning it overcame a 92,480-vote deficit to the TMC in 2021 by netting an additional 1.03 lakh votes.

Of the 129 seats that flipped from the TMC to the BJP, 77 are concentrated in Bengal southern districts, including North 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Parganas, Purba Medinipur, Howrah, Kolkata, and Jhargram. Across the state, the most flipped seat came in North 24 Parganas at

18, Purba Bardhaman at 14 and Hooghly at 12. The BJP even managed to break into districts swept by the TMC in 2021, including Howrah, Kolkata, Jhargram and Purba Bardhaman.

Among these flipped seats is Bhabanipur, where Mamata Banerjee lost to the BJP's Suvendu Adhikari. Between 2021 and 2026, the TMC's vote share here declined by 15.5-percentage points while the BJP's rose by 17.8-percentage points. Mamata is among 22 TMC ministers who lost their seats to the BJP, including high-profile leaders like Chandrima Bhattacharya and Bratyaabrata Basu. Each of these 22 ministers saw their vote shares decline from 2021. In 2021, they had won by an average margin of 30,775 votes. In 2026, they lost by an average margin of 17,824 votes.

On the TMC front, in the 80 seats it has managed to retain, the party's vote share declined in 67 seats, including by over 10-percentage points in 18 seats. The TMC did see its vote share increase in 13 seats, including by over 5-percentage points in 6 seats. The biggest vote share increase was 11.5-percentage points in Chapra, while the steepest decline came in Murarai at 27.3-percentage points. In these retained seats, the TMC's average winning margin fell from 48,628 votes in 2021 to 29,095 votes in 2026.

## How delimitation pushed NDA over 100-seat mark in Assam

**Sukrita Baruah**  
Guwahati, May 5

THE BIGGEST outcome of the Assam election is not the NDA's hatrck, but the increase in its tally by over two dozen seats. A region-wise breakdown of the results announced on Monday illustrates where the 2023 delimitation exercise may have assisted the NDA in crossing the 100-seat mark in the 126-member Assam Assembly.

Compared to the 2021 outcome, the only seats that the NDA has conceded in Assam - barring two won by Rajiv Dal's Akhil Gogoi in Sibsagar and the Congress's Joy Prakash Das in Nowboicha - are those in which minority voters form a bulk of the electorate.

With the NDA riding on a pitch against "illegal immigration", a focus on development; Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's popularity; a slew of welfare

schemes; and ally Bodoland People's Front (BPF)'s reigning dominance in Bodoland territories, the Congress-led alliance largely failed to present an appealing counter-narrative. While a mix of these factors sealed the NDA's victory among the Hindu, ethnic Assamese, and tribal voters, the significant redrawing of Assam's electoral map in the 2023 delimitation exercise has influenced the sheer number of constituencies in which their appeal has translated into a win.

The Upper and North Assam region, largely home to ethnic Assamese, tribal and tea-tribe voters, has steadily grown into a complete BJP stronghold. In 2021, this region accounted for 42 seats, of which 30 were won by the BJP, 6 by the AGP, and only 5 by the Congress and 1 by the Rajiv Dal.

The BJP's near consolidation of this region - where the number of seats has increased to 43 after delimitation - is reflected in it winning 38 of its seats this time. Its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) won 3 seats here. The Opposition won 2 seats here - one each by the Congress in Nowboicha and Rajiv Dal's Akhil Gogoi in his Sibsagar seat.

The region where there has been a complete BJP sweep is the tribal-majority hill belt of



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma being felicitated by AGP president Atul Bora in Guwahati, Tuesday. PTI

#### Region-wise delimitation impact

| Region                  | Seats before delimitation | Seats after delimitation | NDA tally in 2021 | NDA tally in 2026 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Upper and North Assam   | 42                        | 43                       | 36                | 41                |
| Tribal and Hill belt    | 5                         | 6                        | 5                 | 6                 |
| Bodoland                | 11                        | 15                       | 8                 | 14                |
| Kamrup Metropolitan     | 4                         | 5                        | 4                 | 5                 |
| Central and Lower Assam | 49                        | 44                       | 16                | 27                |
| Barak Valley            | 15                        | 13                       | 6                 | 9                 |

SOURCE: EC

Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. Here, the number of seats increased from 5 to 6 after delimitation, and the BJP won all the seats here in 2021 and this year.

The Bodoland region saw a significant increase in the number of seats, from 11 to 15 after delimitation. This area had presented a more mixed picture in 2021: the BJP had then allied

with Bodoland-based party, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), which had won 6 seats here, while the BJP won 2. At the time, the Congress had allied with the BPF, which had won 3 seats.

With the BPF in alliance with the BJP this time, it was the BPF that led with 10 seats here, and the BJP at 4, while the Congress won 1 seat - Parbatjhora, where Bengali-origin Muslim voters constitute the majority.

In the Kamrup Metropolitan area - comprising Guwahati city and surrounding areas, and considered a BJP-AGP - the number of seats increased from 4 to 5 after delimitation, with the NDA again winning all of the region's seats in 2021 and this year.

The Central and Lower Assam region, and the Barak Valley region - both with significant Bengali-origin Muslim populations and where the Opposition had cornered most of its seats in 2021 - is where the "delimitation effect" is most stark. In the Central and Lower Assam region - where the Congress won 20 seats in 2021, AIUDF 11 and CPI(M) 1 - the total number of seats has been reduced from 49 to 44.

The seats in this region have been redrawn considerably with political commentators observing that they have been carved in a way that belts where minor-

ities live have been clubbed together and concentrated into fewer seats.

Some seats in the region, such as Goalpara West and Barpeta, where Muslim candidates have won in the past, have been notified as reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates, respectively. A combination of these factors has resulted in the BJP winning 21 seats and AGP 6, compared to 14 and 2, respectively, in 2021. And though this is the region where the Opposition has performed the best, their tally has gone down to 13 for the Congress, 1 for ally Rajiv Dal, 2 for AIUDF, and 1 for Trinamool - all in "minority seats" with Bengali-origin Muslim leaders.

Similarly, the primarily Bengali-speaking Barak Valley - where the Bengali Hindu voters have been a traditional support base for the BJP - has been drastically redrawn with the number of seats reduced from 15 to 13 after delimitation. In 2021, the region had yielded 6 MLAs from the BJP, 5 from AIUDF, and 4 from Congress. A similar pattern of carved-out constituencies and binary voting patterns has now resurfaced in 9 MLAs from the BJP and 4 from the Congress, again all in "minority seats" with Bengali-origin Muslim leaders from the region.

**APPLICATION FOR ALLOTMENT OF CAMERO SI REGIMENTAL SHOPS**

- Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Central Accounts Office, Subroto Park, New Delhi-10 invites applications from War Widows/ Widows of Defence personnel killed while on duty, Disabled soldiers/Ex Servicemen and spouses/Widows of Ex-servicemen etc for allotment of under mentioned shops in Subroto Park Complex at New Delhi.
  - Sweet Shop at Peter Complex- For Ex-Servicemen
  - Frozen Foods & Non Veg Shop at Sangam Complex - For Ex-Servicemen
- The applicable terms and conditions are mentioned in application form.
- The application form is available from **06 May 26** at Service Institute, AFCAO, Subroto Park, New Delhi-10 between 0800 hrs to 1400 hrs on every day except Saturday, Sunday and holidays (Tele No. 011-25690477/ 23307359). The application form for tendering may be collected on payment of Rs. 500/- per application. The last date of deposit / receipt of completed application is **20 May 26** by 0900 hrs along with EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) of Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only). The EMD should be in the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of OIC SI Fund, Payable at New Delhi. After scrutiny of documents, eligible candidates will be intimated about the date and time of auction through candidate provided E-mail and telephone number (both).

**GOVERNMENT OF MADHYA PRADESH ENERGY DEPARTMENT MANTRALAYA, VALLABH BHAWAN**

The process to fill up the vacancy of Chairperson, MP Electricity Regulatory Commission has been initiated. In order to invite applications from eligible candidates fulfilling the qualifications for the post of Chairperson, M.P. Electricity Regulatory Commission, a public notice No. 3001/2195683/2024/13/04 dated 5th May, 2026 has been issued containing the information related to service conditions and qualifications for the post of Chairperson. The above public notice is available at the web portal of Energy Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh <http://energy.mp.gov.in> Interested candidate(s) may submit application(s) latest by 19.06.2026 at the following address:-

Additional Chief Secretary,  
Government of Madhya Pradesh,  
Energy Department, 2nd Floor,  
Mantralaya, Vallabh Bhawan-II,  
Bhopal-462004 (M.P.)

Sd/-  
**Officer on Special Duty,  
Govt. of Madhya Pradesh,  
Energy Department**

G-12474/26



**New Recipe for Success**

**CABINET BRIEFINGS** by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw are often loaded with regional flavours, including street food, from different states. Tuesday was no surprise after the BJP's thumping victory in the West Bengal Assembly polls a day before. Reporters who attended the briefing were served traditional Bengali sandesh and jhalmuri, the snack which grabbed the nation's attention after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to a jhalmuri stall in Jhargram during his election campaign in the state. As poll results from West Bengal rolled in on Monday, several BJP leaders were seen celebrating the historic mandate with jhalmuri.

**Guests from Himalayas**

**DAYS AFTER** the Capital hosted a group of journalists from Nepal, a team of diplomats from the neighbouring country arrived in Delhi for a 10-day programme being conducted by the Ministry of External Affairs. As many as 35 diplomats from Nepal are participating in the event which kicked off on Tuesday.

**Delhi HC quashes LOCs against former MP, businessman Ratul Puri, others**

**Sohini Ghosh**  
*Delhi, May 5*

**DISPOSING OF** a batch of 33 petitions, some pending since 2022, moved by individuals challenging lookout circulars (LOCs) issued by various authorities against them, the Delhi High Court quashed 13 LOCs issued by financial institutions and 16 others issued by ministries and investigating agencies, permitting the petitioners to travel without court permission. Reiterating earlier judicial precedents, the court in its April 17 order underlined that LOCs are not "a routine tool for law enforcement or debt recovery" and cannot be issued mechanically without providing reasons. Justice Purushendra Kaur, in the order made public on May 5, disposed of four other petitions relegating the petitioners to approach the competent authority, the court before which the chargesheet/complaint is pending, seeking modification or cancellation of LOCs, without quashing the existing LOCs against them. Among those relegated to the LOC-issuing authority are former promoter of Bhusan Steel Neeraj Singhal and his wife Ritu Singhal.

Justice Kaurav made it clear that for the 29 petitions where the court has quashed the LOCs, the individuals shall have to provide their itinerary to the concerned authority, that is the authority at whose behest the LOCs were issued — be it financial institutions, ministries or investigating agencies — prior to their departure abroad. Among those who had challenged the LOCs were former directors of Moser Baer India Ltd Ratul Puri and his mother Nita Puri, directors of M/s Wave Megacity Centre Pvt. Ltd. Manpreet Singh Chadha and Charanjeet Singh, several position holders in real estate firm Asso-tech Limited.

Those who challenged LOCs issued at the request of financial institutions included Raghu Rama Krishna, former YSRCP MP and now Deputy Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Assembly.

**STRANDED IN ARABIAN SEA SINCE FEBRUARY 9**

**Bombay HC orders release of 50 seafarers: 'Life comes only once'**

**Omkar Gokhale**  
*Mumbai, May 5*

**THE BOMBAY** High Court on Tuesday ordered the immediate release of 50 crew members, all Indians, stranded on three vessels in the Arabian Sea since February, observing that "for them life comes only once".

Calling themselves "victims of a high-seas humanitarian crisis", the seafarers had claimed that they had been stranded inside the vessels since February 9, and the owners had "practically abandoned" the ships and deserted the crew.

The three motor tankers, MT Asphalt Star, MT Stellar Ruby and MT Al Jafzia, had been intercepted by the Indian Coast Guard in February, about 11 nautical miles from Mumbai, for alleged illegal transfers of fuel oil and bitumen. While the ships were placed under arrest, only one of the 50 crew members was named as an accused in the case.

Some of the crew members, represented through the Maha-



Rescued crew members arrive at the Yellow Gate Police Station after their release, in Mumbai on Tuesday. AKASH PATIL

rashtra Navnirman Navik Sena Union, had filed a habeas corpus plea in the High Court. Alleging that they were held in wrongful confinement for nearly three months, they sought directions from the court to allow them to "sign-off, disembark" and be repatriated.

On Monday, a bench of Justices Ravindra V Ghuge and Hiten S Venegavkar had expressed concern over their safety and sought the presence of all the crew members in court,

observing that they cared for humans, not the dead vessels.

As the crew members appeared before the court on Tuesday, the lawyers representing the owners of the vessels raised apprehensions about the ships being unmanned if all of them were released without any replacement.

"We will release all of them today itself. You take care of your vessels and commercial activities. We will take care of human life. You can read their

faces. The happiness of breathing free air and being on Mother Earth. And they must be feeling so relieved to be on land. We will allow them to be happy for some time. And we are sure that when you replace them with another complement of staff, you will stop the petitioners' salaries and you will start paying them (the replaced crew) the salaries," Justice Ghuge said in oral remarks.

"For them, life comes only once, and they have to feed their family members. There must be at least four other mouths who are dependent on them, including wife, children and old parents. You will not think of that. It is only the court of law that will think of that. For you, the monies are very important, not the human lives..."

"Now we cannot hold them back. Now the owners have to decide how the ships have to be taken care of, whether temporarily you will bring them closer to the inner anchorage or move the vessels to the Alang ship breaking yard," Justice Ghuge

further added.

The Coast Guard officer present in the court said that the three vessels cannot remain in the Arabian Sea as they would cause "national security concern" and maritime and navigational hazards; therefore, they should be towed to Alang yard in Gujarat.

The petitioners, represented by advocate Padmavati Vaishya, claimed they were supplied only 300 millilitres of drinking water per person daily, and were making rotis by burning wood.

The judges asked if anyone wanted to return to the vessels. "Kisi ko nahii jaana hai (nobody wants to go)," they responded.

"Since all these 50 are adults, we have no reason to detain any of them under any compulsion as may be voiced by the owners of the vessels, keeping in view that they claim to have suffered starvation and thirst while on the vessels," the court held, directing the authorities to complete the formalities to set them free.

**DETAINED FOR 'ANTI-BJP POST'**

**HC clears path for UK doctor to rejoin family, patients in England**

**Omkar Gokhale**  
*Mumbai, May 5*

**NEARLY FOUR** months after he was detained for allegedly posting objectionable content against a BJP leader, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the Maharashtra government to modify the Look Out Circular (LOC) against UK-based doctor and YouTuber Sangram Patil (49) in the case, so that he can fly back to England by or after May 11.

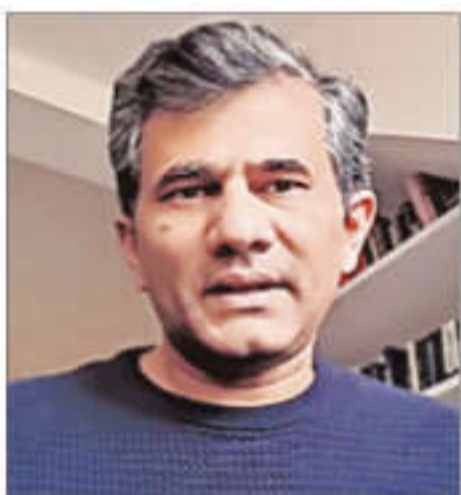
A single-judge bench of Justice Ashwin D Bhobe took on record undertakings filed by Patil and his parents, assuring his appearance as and when required during the probe and his cooperation with the investigation agency.

He was booked for allegedly posting objectionable content against a BJP leader and was detained on January 10 upon his arrival at the Mumbai airport. On April 15, Advocate General (AG) Milind Sathe for the state government had said that it had no objection to lifting the LOC against Patil if the investigation reports pertaining to the case against him were not made available within three weeks.

The HC had then admitted Patil's plea challenging the FIR and LOC. He had denied the allegations of posting the objectionable content.

Patil's lawyers had claimed he was virtually "in an open-air jail" and his detention "resulted in there being a possibility of him being removed from his job" in the UK and he has a family including wife and a child in the UK and patients to look after.

Justice Bhobe had then told the government that it cannot hold a person for a longer time



Sangram Patil

and sought completion of the investigation at the earliest.

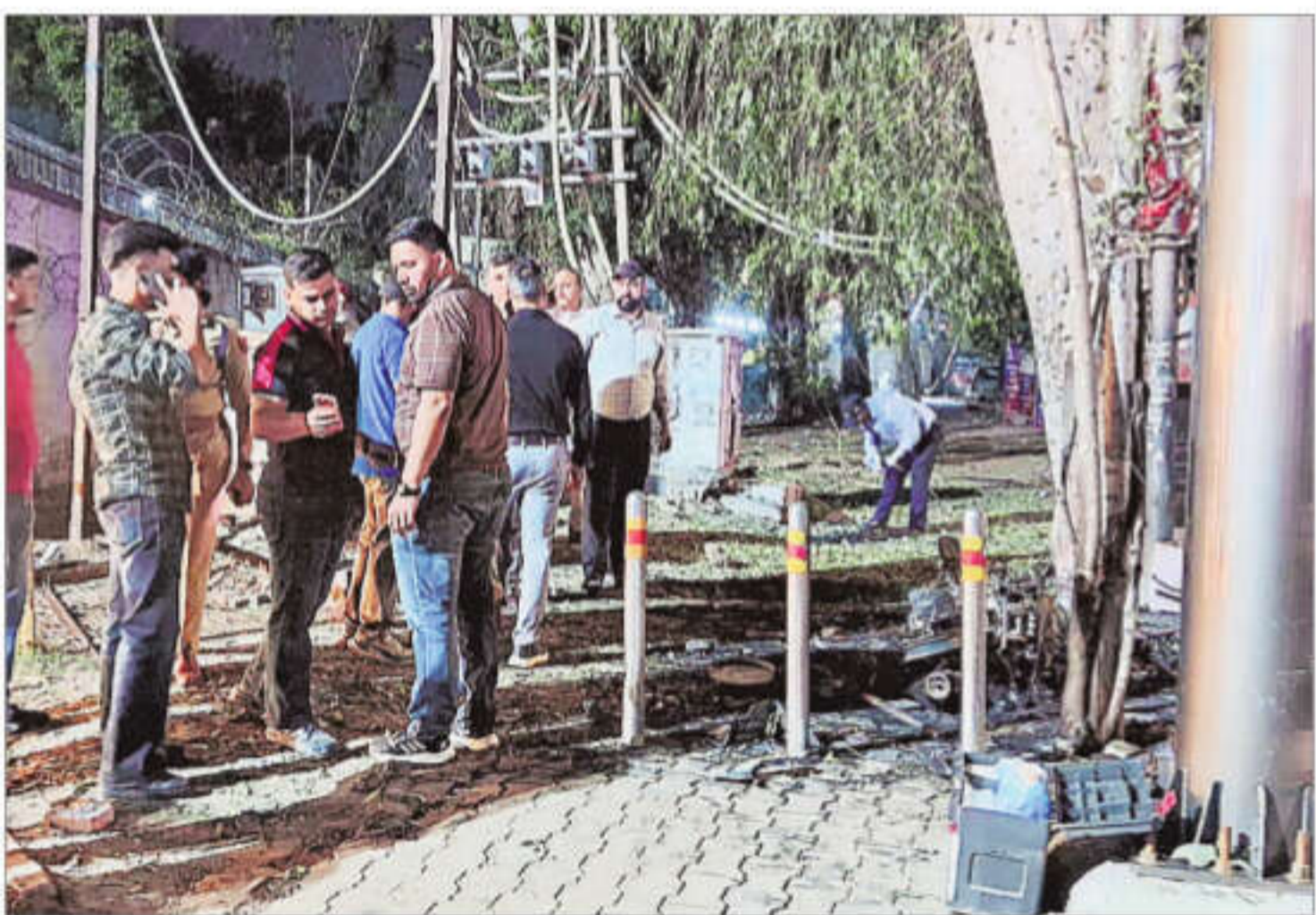
On Tuesday, senior advocate Rajiv Shakdher and advocates Ujjwalkumar Chavhan and Aditya Hire for Patil told the bench that he had filed an undertaking stating that he will "not evade or avoid the process of law and shall participate in the investigation proceedings in good faith and as required."

Patil, a UK citizen employed in the National Health Service (NHS) UK as a consultant doctor, had added that "travelling back to India requires reasonable prior intimation to enable compliance without compromising his professional duties and obligations." However, he said that 15-day notice was "sufficient for him to travel back to India again to join the probe."

The court accepted Patil's statement on undertaking, after AG Sathe said that the authority was satisfied with it and will modify the LOC to enable his UK travel, as the probe is still on.

"By virtue of this, he would be able to travel outside India and instructions will be issued to competent authorities on or before May 11," Sathe stated.

The court then ordered modification of LOC and is likely to hear Patil's main plea next in June 2026.



Officials at the site of explosion outside BSF headquarters in Jalandhar on Tuesday. EXPRESS

**Blast outside Jalandhar BSF HQ sparks panic, two detained**

**Express News Service**  
*Jalandhar, May 5*

**A DELIVERY** package kept in scooter parked outside the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters in Jalandhar "blew up" leading the vehicle to burst into flames late on Tuesday, prompting an immediate response from authorities who cordoned off the area and detained two persons for questioning.

Police Commissioner Dhanpreet Kaur said that the incident took place around 8 pm. The two wheeler — a Honda Activa — belonged to a delivery boy, identified Gurpreet Singh, a resident of Garha in Jalandhar.

"Gurpreet and one more persons has been taken into custody for preliminary investigation," she said.

According to the police Gurpreet had come to deliver a parcel at the BSF headquarters complex. As he was reportedly

not allowed entry into the premises for not wearing a helmet, he parked his scooter outside and proceeded on foot. The blast took place while he was returning and was around 50 to 60 metres away from the parked scooter. The explosion was so powerful that it was heard about a kilometre away.

Gurpreet's father Kashmiria Singh, a retired BSF personnel, said his son had been working as a delivery boy with an e-commerce giant for the past 2-3 months. He told the media that his son called him shortly after the incident, informing him that his scooter had caught fire following an explosion and that the police had taken him into custody. "He is my only son and regularly goes to the BSF headquarters to deliver parcels. I do not know what exactly happened or how the explosion took place," he said.

Kashmiria Singh said he has been trying to contact police officers to speak to his son, but

has not been allowed yet. "I am completely in the dark about the situation," he said.

Meanwhile, police cordoned off the area and collected samples for forensic examination. Officials said it was too early to draw conclusions and the exact cause and nature of the blast would become clear only after a detailed investigation.

Reacting to the incident, senior Congress leader Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said that the ongoing tussle between the Centre and the state government was affecting peace in Punjab. He said an explosion near a highly sensitive installation raised serious questions over intelligence gathering and security arrangements.

Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa said, "The explosion... points to serious lapses in safety and vigilance. The government must stop reacting after the fact and start taking proactive, visible steps to secure lives and restore public confidence."

**BRIEFLY**



At the crash site in Thane district on Tuesday. EXPRESS

**MAHARASHTRA**

**Four killed as SUV collides with state transport bus in Thane**

**FOUR PEOPLE** were killed after a sport utility vehicle (SUV) collided with a state transport bus in Maharashtra's Thane district on Tuesday, officials said. The crash occurred around 11.30 am at Tokawde in Murbad taluka on the Murbad-Ahilyanagar Road, said Sagar Palsule, Divisional Commissioner of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) Thane division. Deputy Superintendent of Police (Murbad) Anil Lad informed that four people died in the accident though they were yet to be identified. The bodies were sent to a government hospital for post-mortem examination, said the police officer. PTI

**Ex-GST official gets 10-yr RI for wife's death**

**A COURT** in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district on Monday sentenced a Goods and Services Tax (GST) assistant commissioner to 10 years rigorous imprisonment after holding him guilty of "culpable homicide not amounting to murder" and "cruelty" in connection with the death of his wife who purportedly fell from the terrace of their residence in November 2014. The convict, Ashwani Singh (35), who was posted in Saharanpur at the time, had been attached with the Central GST Commissionerate in Meerut. He was convicted under Sections 304, 498A and 201 of the IPC. ENS

**Tiger rescued a week ago found dead in Panna**

**A TWO-YEAR-OLD** male tiger, rescued barely a week ago and declared fit, was found dead inside the Panna Tiger Reserve on Tuesday, raising the tiger death toll in Madhya Pradesh this year to 28. The animal had been captured on April 26 from Tara village in the Amanganj buffer range after it strayed close to human habitation. According to forest officials, veterinarians had assessed the tiger as healthy before releasing it back into the reserve with a radio collar to track it. Despite this, the carcass was discovered near a nullah in the Rampura beat. ENS



Passengers being evacuated from the IndiGo flight. RHYTHM ACHARYA/X

**Power bank catches fire inside IndiGo plane, five injured**

**Jasbir Malhi**  
*Mohali, May 5*

**AN EMERGENCY** evacuation carried out on an IndiGo flight on Tuesday afternoon after a passenger's power bank caught fire. The Ahmedabad-Chandigarh flight, operating as IndiGo 6E-108, had landed safely at 3.29 pm when the incident occurred during taxiing at Shaheed Bhagat Singh International Airport. "After landing during taxi into the bay at Chandigarh, a power bank kept in a pouch in the seat pocket by a passenger seated on 39C caught fire. Aircraft was stopped in the bay," aviation watchdog DGCA said in a statement.

IndiGo confirmed that the aircraft was stationary after landing when the passenger's personal electronic device caught fire.

"On 5 May 2026, while IndiGo flight 6E 108 from Hyderabad to Chandigarh was stationary after landing, an incident involving a customer's personal electronic equipment catching fire was reported. In the interest

of safety, an immediate evacuation was carried out, and all the relevant authorities were immediately informed," an official statement read.

"In the interest of safety, an immediate evacuation was carried out and all relevant authorities were informed. All customers were safely escorted to the terminal and are being attended to."

According to an airport official, a passenger seated on 39C, identified as Devansh, alerted the crew after noticing fire in his power bank. Sensing the gravity of the situation, the cabin crew promptly used onboard fire extinguishers to douse the flames.

However, smoke had already spread inside the cabin, the official said. After the aircraft reached Bay No. 1, the crew declared an emergency around 3.35 pm and opened the emergency exits. Passengers were evacuated using inflatable slides. The situation briefly turned chaotic during the evacuation. Five people, including two children, sustained minor injuries.



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@indianexpress.com](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

## GOVERNANCE

# Rs 50 crore and counting: Inside Jharkhand's 'treasury scam'

Shubham Tigga  
Ranchi, May 5

A DIGITAL system meant to bring transparency in government spending has come under the scanner in Jharkhand, with investigators suspecting a treasury-linked fraud that runs into tens of crores. Officials say the figure may rise as more transactions are scrutinised. What has raised concerns is not just the scale but the manner in which alleged fraudulent withdrawals were routed through a computerised financial management system meant to prevent exactly such manipulation, prompting comparisons to the infamous Fodder Scam of the 1990s.

### The alleged scam

The alleged fraud involves government officials and staff handling accounts and treasury-related work across departments in Jharkhand, who are suspected to have siphoned crores of rupees by misusing the state's Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS). IFMS is a computerised platform implemented by the state government for budgeting, bill processing, treasury operations, e-disbursement of public funds, including salaries through the Kuber portal (treasury payment) module.

The alleged treasury scam, however, did not involve external hacking or system breach. It involved internal manipulation wherein the authorised employee "illegally withdrew" the amounts in the name of salaries, taxes, arrears, etc., of those employees who had either retired or died. For many years, in some cases for around a decade, the diversion of funds went undetected into various associates' accounts of the accused, also called "ghost" accounts.

Last month, during the state Finance Department's routine analysis and audit of the treasury accounts, attention was drawn to the financial irregularities. The first case emerged from Bokaro SP's office, with the alleged initial fraud of around Rs 3.15 crore. This gradually increased to other districts after the probe began.

Owing to the ongoing investigation, investigators from the Crime Investigation Department (CID) and the Finance Department's Principal Accountant General refused to share any details. Despite no official statement, the amount stands at nearly Rs 50 crore. After the Bokaro case, Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore initiated a probe across 24 districts.

Sources indicated that suspected irregularities may span 14 district treasuries, with over a dozen arrests reported so far. While officials have pegged the detected amount at about Rs 50 crore across five districts, some senior officials and political leaders have suggested that it could rise to Rs 100-150 crore or more.

### Why it went undetected

While investigators have not yet publicly detailed how the alleged fraud continued undetected for years, an officer posted in one of the 14 affected treasuries, requesting anonymity, outlined the system and its vulnerabilities.

According to the officer, bills — particularly salary bills — originate at the department level, where a billing clerk prepares them, an accountant or head clerk checks them, and the drawing and disbursing officer (DDO) certifies details such as employees' names, bank accounts, and IFS codes. Once signed, the bills move to the treasury, where they pass through clerical staff and a head assistant before reaching the Treasury Officer for final approval and payment through the Kuber portal.

The officer, however, admitted that in practice, scrutiny is largely limited to the summary sheet like gross and net amounts, deductions, bill number, month, and the DDO's certification — especially in bulk submissions that can run into hundreds of bills a day. "No one checks each individual account or amount in such volumes; we rely on the DDO's certification," the officer said.

This reliance, coupled with high volumes and multiple DDOs across departments, creates a systemic blind spot where manipulated entries can pass through layered approvals without detailed verification.

Interestingly, a 2025 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General detailed information technology control failures in the IFMS that have facilitated financial irregularities and unauthorised payments.

While the report covered the period from 2007 to November 2022, it noted that its findings remain relevant for subsequent periods.

## HISTORY

# Bengal to J&K: The life & politics of S P Mookerjee



VIKAS PATHAK

IN HIS victory speech at the BJP headquarters on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said "the soul" of Syama Prasad Mookerjee "must be at peace today". As the party won West Bengal for the first time ever, the PM recalled Mookerjee, the Bengali leader who founded the BJP's predecessor, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, in 1951.

A year after its formation, the Jana Sangh made a modest electoral debut, winning just three Lok Sabha seats (two of them from Bengal). The party merged with the Janata Party in the 1977 election to defeat Indira Gandhi, but the Janata experiment soon collapsed. It was in 1980 that the Jana Sangh's successor, the BJP, was founded, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had once been associated with Mookerjee, as its first president.

### Early life and career

Born on July 6, 1901, Mookerjee — son of Ashutosh Mookerjee, Calcutta High Court judge and vice-chancellor of Calcutta University — studied at Presidency College, Calcutta, and Lincoln's Inn. He became the youngest vice-chancellor of Calcutta University at just 33.

He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1929 and 1930, first as a Congressman and then as an independent. From 1941 to 1942, he joined the Progressive Coalition government of Fazlul Haque as Finance Minister. The government was formed in opposition to the Muslim League. Mookerjee justified his decision by saying that the need of the hour was to organise Hindus and cooperate with Muslims who believed in working together.

A controversial letter decrying the Quit India Movement, purportedly written by Mookerjee to the British, has often been a topic of discussion.

From 1943 to 1946, Mookerjee was the Hindu Mahasabha president. He took up the cause of Bengal's Hindus in the run-up to Partition, opposing Muslim League leader and Bengal Prime Minister H S Suhrawardy's "United Bengal" plan — which called for an independent state separate from India and Pakistan. Mookerjee



saw this as an attempt to ensure domination of Hindus by a Muslim majority. He called for the partition of Bengal, with Hindu-majority West Bengal staying with India.

### His brand of Hindutva

After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, Mookerjee made the Hindu Mahasabha's Working Committee adopt resolutions that "expressed shame that Gandhi's assassin had been connected with the organisation, and declared support for the government in its efforts to suppress terrorism or subversive activities in any shape or form", writes BD Graham in *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics* (2007).

In November 1948, Mookerjee resigned from the Hindu Mahasabha after it rejected his suggestion to broaden its membership if it wanted to be a modern political party.

### Bengal's Hindus

When riots broke out in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, in 1949-50, large numbers of Hindu refugees came to India. Mookerjee, the minister of industry and supply in the Jawaharlal Nehru government at this time, spoke out for them.

In April 1950, Nehru and Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan signed a pact calling upon both countries to provide equality, freedom and justice to their minorities.

Mookerjee resigned from the cabinet as the pact did not include a clause sought by him — sanctions against any side that failed to honour the agreement. It was after this that Mookerjee formed the Bharatiya Jana

Mookerjee backed partition of Bengal and 'complete integration' of Jammu & Kashmir with India.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

### Jana Sangh to BJP

In its electoral debut in 1952, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh won three Lok Sabha seats (two of them in Bengal).

It merged with the Janata Party in the 1977 election. But this experiment soon collapsed.

In 1980, the Jana Sangh's successor, the BJP, was founded.

Sangh with the help of RSS volunteers.

### The Kashmir issue

The princely state of Kashmir acceded to India in 1947. Article 370 of the Constitution gave Parliament powers in the fields of defence, foreign affairs and communication in the case of Kashmir. People from outside required a permit to visit the state and were barred from buying land there.

The state's Prime Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, abolished big land holdings in Jammu and Kashmir in 1951 under the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act without compensation. He also adopted Urdu as the official language. Dogra Hindu landlords resented these steps. Prem Nath Dogra, a former Swayamsevak and civil servant from Jammu, launched an agitation against the Sheikh Abdullah government through his Praja Parishad, seeking the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. Mookerjee joined the movement in 1952.

### Mookerjee and Kashmir

The Jana Sangh took up in Parliament the arrest of Dogra and his followers after a clash with the police in the state.

Both parties also opposed its adoption of a state flag, adopting a slogan: "*Ek desh mein dovidhan, do pradhan aur do nishan nahin hosakte* (one nation cannot have two constitutions, two Prime Ministers and two flags)."

In July 1952, the Nehru government and the Jammu and Kashmir government signed the Delhi Agreement, under which the state accepted the jurisdiction of the Su-

After the West Bengal victory, PM Modi invoked the Bengali leader who founded the BJP's predecessor in 1951. A look at what he stood for

preme Court. It also accepted the supremacy of the Indian flag, though the state's flag would also remain in use. It accepted the President of India's power to declare a state of Emergency, subject to its concurrence, in the event of internal disturbances.

The Praja Parishad, however, rejected the Delhi Agreement. In November 1952, Dogra and other leaders were again arrested amid protests.

### Mookerjee calls for agitation

At its first annual session at Kanpur in December 1952, Mookerjee's Jana Sangh passed a formal resolution supporting the Praja Parishad's Jammu Satyagraha for the complete integration of the state with India.

Nehru saw the Jana Sangh's orientation as 'communal' on this question. His condition for talks was that the Praja Parishad should stop its agitation.

The Jana Sangh then decided to launch its agitation. Vajpayee, who became private secretary to Mookerjee in early 1953, was sent across Hindi-speaking states, including Uttar Pradesh, to popularise the movement. Of the 1,200-odd agitators who came to the capital, 500 were from UP. Mookerjee then travelled to Madhya Bharat — the Gwalior-Indore region of erstwhile princely states — and Rajasthan, along with Vajpayee.

### Mookerjee's Jammu visit

In May 1953, Mookerjee decided to go to Jammu without a permit — a symbolic rejection of the state's special status — with Vajpayee. They went by train to Pathankot in Punjab, and addressed multiple public meetings across the state for three days. Mookerjee was informed at Pathankot that he would be allowed to enter Jammu and Kashmir without a permit.

On May 11, 1953, Mookerjee crossed into Jammu and Kashmir over the Ravi. However, the state police had put up barricades for his arrest. Mentally prepared for this, Mookerjee did not turn back and was arrested. He told Vajpayee to return to Delhi and tell everyone that he had entered Jammu and Kashmir without a permit, if only as a prisoner, writes Abhishek Choudhary in his biography of Vajpayee.

Mookerjee was kept in a cottage about 12 km from Srinagar. However, the heart patient who had a blood pressure problem could not cope well in the conditions of his detention. On June 23, he suddenly fell ill and died. The RSS family of organisations views his death as "*balidaan*" or sacrifice for the cause of Kashmir's integration.

## POLICY

# Why UP stepped back from mandatory prepaid smart meters

Maulshree Seth  
Lucknow, May 5

FACING protests, the Uttar Pradesh government on Monday stepped back from its push for mandatory prepaid smart electricity meters. The decision is seen as the result of several factors: protests, regulatory push-back, shifting policy signals from the Centre, and political calculations ahead of next year's Assembly elections.

### Why the policy was brought

The policy was initially aimed at improving billing efficiency and reducing losses. Sources said that the state's aggressive rollout of prepaid smart meters over the past year-and-a-half was rooted in its interpretation of the Central Electricity Authority's (CEA) 2022 regulation notification.

According to Avadhesh Verma, Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Electricity Consumers Forum and a member of the Central Electricity Advisory Committee, the move can be traced to clause 3(b) of the notification. It said consumers in areas with communication networks "shall" be supplied electricity through smart meters op-

erating in prepayment mode.

Verma said the government interpreted this as a mandate, and began rolling out prepaid smart meters as the default for new connections and converting existing consumers. About 85 lakh smart meters have been installed so far, but implementation quickly ran into friction.

### Why it ran into trouble

The rollout triggered protests across districts. Consumer complaints ranged from higher or inconsistent billing to automatic disconnections and a lack of transparency in prepaid deductions. The state initially dismissed the concerns as being fuelled by misinformation and political motives.

As protests continued, the government held review meetings and issued directions to resolve issues. The Uttar Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPERC) also took suo motu cognizance. In some instances, consumers removed or damaged the installed meters.

"At the heart of the controversy was the issue of consumer choice. Under the Electricity Act framework, consumers are generally entitled to opt between prepaid and

### Shock to consumers

The policy was initially aimed at improving billing efficiency and reducing losses.

But the rollout led to complaints ranging from higher billing to automatic disconnections.

Prepaid smart meters also led to protests in Gujarat and Rajasthan in 2024 and 2025, respectively. The issues were similar: implementation, consent and fears of power cuts once the balance ran out.

postpaid systems. The state's attempt to enforce prepaid meters — especially for new connections — without explicit consent became a central point of contention, strengthening both protests and regulatory objections," said Verma.

The government first announced a temporary halt to the conversion of existing postpaid meters into prepaid smart meters, but protests continued. Meanwhile, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar clarified in Parliament last month that prepaid smart meters are not mandatory, undercutting the interpretation that had driven Uttar Pradesh's policy.

Subsequently, the CEA issued a fresh amendment in its 2026 gazette notification, revising the earlier provision. The amended clause removed the explicit requirement of "prepayment mode", while allowing flexibility in implementation.

Adding to the pressure, the UPERC also intervened by flagging concerns and seeking explanations from the state power utility. In a separate notice, UPERC pointed out non-compliance with standards related to the timely reconnection of supply in prepaid systems, even raising the possibility of penalties.

In its April 23 order, it noted that reconnections within the mandated two-hour window were achieved in only 77% of cases, far below the 95% benchmark, and questioned why a Rs 1 lakh per day penalty should not be imposed on the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd.

According to government sources, these developments prompted a course correction before any adverse direction from regulatory authorities or courts could come. The government began recalibrating its approach in two phases, on April 19 and 24. It first introduced immediate relief measures, including a limited pause in disconnections. SMS alerts were made mandatory, giving consumers time to respond.

### Politics in an election year

The timing of the rollback is also significant. With state elections due next year, the issue had begun to gain political traction.

Ultimately, the decision does not end the smart metering programme, but removes the mandatory prepaid billing aspect. The broader challenge for the government now lies in ensuring accurate billing, reliable systems and responsive grievance redressal.

## LAW

# 'Ecocide': Where international law stands in tackling war toll on environment

Bhaskar Sarma  
New Delhi, May 5

A RECENT report by Lebanon accused Israel's military of committing "ecocide" during its 2023-24 invasion of southern Lebanon and reshaping both its "physical and ecological landscape".

Earlier, Iran's foreign minister said Israel's bombings of fuel depots in Tehran, which led to "black rain", violated international law and constituted "ecocide".

Researchers and environmental organisations have invoked the same term to describe the effects of Israel's war on Gaza.

Environmental groups have called for the inclusion of 'ecocide' as an international crime under the Rome Statute that governs the International Criminal Court (ICC).

### What is ecocide?

Ecocide refers to the worst harms caused to the environment by human actions, usually on a major scale or affecting a huge area. The term was coined in 1970 by

Prof Arthur W Galston, a Yale plant biologist whose early research contributed to the development of the herbicide Agent Orange, which the US Army used to devastate effect in the Vietnam War. Galston used 'ecocide' to describe the massive, long-term environmental devastation particularly caused by the herbicide's use.

Two years later, at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme used the term in context of the Vietnam War.

Indeed, Vietnam became the world's first country to codify ecocide in its domestic law in 1990. Since then, the use of the term has become more widespread, with many countries — such as Russia, Ukraine, Chile, France and Belgium — incorporating ecocide (or its equivalent) into their laws.

### How does 'ecocide' differ from provisions in international law?

Many international conventions and statutes deal with widespread environmental damage, even if they don't ex-

plicitly mention 'ecocide'.

For instance, under the Rome Statute, it is a war crime to intentionally launch a disproportionate attack knowing that it will cause "widespread, long-term and severe" damage to the natural environment that directly impacts humans, such as causing displacement, inflicting great suffering or injury on victims, or causing death.

The Geneva Conventions, which establish standards for treatment of non-combatants, require that warring parties not use methods of warfare that cause "widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment".

The widely adopted Environmental Modification Convention (ENMOD), in force since 1978, prohibits the deliberate manipulation of natural processes when it causes "widespread, long-lasting or severe effects".

So how does 'ecocide' differ from the present international law framework? Delhi-based senior advocate Avi Singh, who has extensive experience in international criminal law, told *The Indian Express*

that the difference is in the focus. "The laws we have are anthropocentric. They put human beings at the centre of harm, while ecocide puts the environment as a separate entity that is being damaged."

### Where do current laws stand?

The Rome Statute recognises four serious crimes — the crime of genocide; crimes against humanity; war crimes; and the crime of aggression. It classifies serious damage to the environment under "war crimes" — meaning it would be considered only during war.

Another hurdle is jurisdiction. Iran and Lebanon, for instance, are not State Parties to the ICC, which could complicate the prosecution pathway, pointed out Mrinalini Shinde, Visiting Lecturer of International Environmental Law at the University of Cologne, Germany. ICC jurisdiction, however, could still arise through a UN Security Council referral or ad hoc acceptance.

One more issue is criminalisation. Most existing international instruments do not

establish enforceable international criminal liability for environmental destruction.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a global body on environmental policy, limited itself to "recognising the crime of ecocide" in October 2025. "It will hopefully encourage more States Parties to push for inclusion of the crime domestically and within international law," said Shinde.

This is what is behind the advocacy to include 'ecocide' as an international crime in the Rome Statute.

Inclusion, however, is easier said than done. "For inclusion into the Rome Statute, a State Party to the Rome Statute would introduce the amendment of the Statute at the Assembly of States Parties, and would require 2/3rds majority of States Parties to be successful. There will be further conditions for such an amendment to come into effect," said Shinde.

**What's the enforcement challenge?**  
The Council of Europe adopted the

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• WORDLY WISE

The more the state 'plans' the more difficult planning becomes for the individual. — Friedrich A Hayek

The Indian EXPRESS

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IN 1932

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## Weakening rupee points to challenges ahead

THE INDIAN rupee continues to weaken. On Tuesday, it hovered around 95.36 against the dollar during early trading. Since the beginning of this year, the currency has fallen by around 5.64 per cent. Sentiment continues to be weighed down by the conflict in West Asia, with fresh attacks rattling investors. But the pressure on the Indian currency predates the Iran war. Last year, the rupee fell by roughly 5 per cent against the dollar. The problem is on both the current and capital accounts.

Global crude oil prices remain elevated due to energy market dislocations, exerting pressure on the current account. Brent crude is currently around \$113 per barrel. In April, the price of the Indian crude oil basket averaged \$114.48 per barrel, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. There is the possibility of the current account deficit widening to around 2 per cent in 2026-27. While this is considerably lower than that around the period of the taper tantrum — the deficit had widened to 4.8 per cent of GDP in 2012-13 — financing it will be challenging in the current environment. Capital flows are under pressure. So far in the calendar year, foreign portfolio investors have taken out around \$21.2 billion from the stock markets. This comes after outflows of \$18.9 billion last year. While the central bank has been taking steps to ease the stress on the rupee, its short dollar book has swelled, the pressure on the currency continues. In previous episodes of such stress, the RBI attempted to facilitate capital inflows through various instruments. For instance, during the taper tantrum, funds were mobilised through the FCNR-B deposits.

So far, retail fuel prices have not been adjusted to reflect the higher global prices. But there are limits to the burden that can be borne by the oil companies and the government — the war has been going on for more than two months. Higher prices at the pump will push up retail inflation across the country — retail inflation edged up to 3.4 per cent in March. A few days ago, the price of the commercial LPG cylinder was raised by Rs 993, which will translate to higher input costs for restaurants, hotels, commercial kitchens etc, feeding price pressures. A prolonged conflict will impact economic momentum, worsening the growth-inflation dynamics. The macroeconomic situation calls for deft and delicate management.

## On being left out and left behind

IN 2015, the late Sitaram Yechury wrote in *The Marxist*: "We [communists] have, for many decades, been repeating the Leninist dictum that the 'concrete analysis of concrete conditions is the living essence of dialectics'... An incorrect estimation of the concrete conditions, naturally, will lead to an erroneous political line and consequent tactical line." The CPI(M)'s current political nadir — in fact, the seemingly interminable decline of all of India's communist parties — is evidence, among other things, of a prolonged "incorrect estimation". With the defeat of the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF in Kerala, the communist parties are not part of a single government in the country for the first time in nearly 50 years. This decline was not one foretold by "historical forces". It is, rather, a function of a series of interconnected failures and complications.

Vijayan's return to power in the last election bucked the trend of anti-incumbency verdicts in Kerala, and it is conceivable that the LDF may return in 2031. Even if that is the case, however, a party that, at its height, was the third-largest in Parliament with a government in three states, is now a contender in one. The decline is not merely electoral; it is also reflected in the depletion of ideas and organisation. Take the changing nature of work and the ways in which workers' rights can be undermined in the "gig economy". Parties and movements that claim to stand for those left behind by the system should be at the forefront of articulating their concerns. Yet, an absence of "concrete analysis of concrete conditions" has meant that the CPI, CPI(M) and others are merely playing catch-up. There is also a fundamental organisational question. For a long time, the tension between the popular leader and the party — as with Jyoti Basu in Bengal and VS Achuthanandan in Kerala — has deepened factional faultlines. If the left is to recover, it must decide who is best placed to lead that recovery: Those with their ears to the ground or those who fear "revisionism" more than political extinction.

Over the last four decades — beginning with the fall of the Soviet Union — the obituary of the Indian left has been written many times. The difference in the last decade is the rise of a political force that, like the communists, is cadre-based and ideologically driven. The left, unless it comes up with fresh ideas, is bound to be left behind.

## In the name of country, away from home

WAR-SCARRED women footballers from Afghanistan living in exile across the world, can finally play in FIFA tournaments. After eight long years, they can proudly bear their country's name, and not compete under the Afghan Women United banner. Although FIFA has not officially recognised the Afghan Football Federation, as the ruling Taliban has banished all women's sports, the world football governing body's council voted on Tuesday to circumvent the rule. It's a resonant moment.

This moment offers hope and fires the imagination of athletes who fled the country when the Taliban returned to power in 2021. When it started restricting women's sports, 70-odd women fled their country just so that they could continue playing football, with the help of expats around the world. Their captain, Shabnam Mobarez, who was raised in Denmark, reached out to the community across the world and soon they found refuge in Australia, England, where the women's youth team trains, in partnership with the Premier League side Leeds United, Portugal and Italy.

The team will have success stories like Mobarez, Nadia Na-deem and Khalida Popal to emulate. They have rising talents like Fatima Foladi, who sneaked into the airport, showed her football credentials to the US military retreating from the country and managed to board the flight to the US. Manoozh Noori buried her medals in her backyard and escaped to Australia, where she plays for a club in the top division. Nilab Mohammadi, the women's team captain, left her post in the Afghanistan Army and fled to Australia. Some of their tales are stranger than fiction. They might never be as famous as Brazil's Marta or Spain's Alexia Putellas, but no law or custom could stop them from turning up for their country and fulfilling their dream.



THAROORTHINK

BY SHASHI THAROOR

FOR NEARLY a century, the image of the hammer and sickle has been more than just a relic of the Cold War in India; it has been a governing reality. While the Soviet Union collapsed and China pivoted to state-sponsored capitalism, India remained a peculiar outlier — a vibrant democracy where card-carrying Communists didn't just protest in the streets, but sat in the halls of power, winning elections and running states — West Bengal, Tripura, and most enduringly, Kerala.

But today, as the news of the decimation of the Communists in the Kerala Assembly elections sinks in, that historical anomaly faces a Francis Fukuyama moment: Is this "the end of history" for Indian Communism? With the rout of the incumbent Left Democratic Front (LDF), India will, for the first time in nearly 50 years, be without a single Communist-led state government. For a movement that once positioned itself as the inevitable future of the Global South, this isn't just an electoral dip; it seems the sun has set on Indian Communism.

To understand the gravity of this moment, one must examine the Left's rapid collapse. As late as the middle of the first decade of the century, the Communists were the kingmaker of Indian politics, holding over

60 seats in the Lok Sabha and providing the crucial outside support that kept the central UPA government stable. They were the ideological guardians of the welfare state, taking a share of the credit for MNREGA, vetoing aggressive privatisation and pulling support to the government over India's nuclear deal with the United States.

The decline was swift and brutal. First came the fall of West Bengal in 2011, ending a record-breaking 34-year reign. Then, in 2018, their second stronghold of Tripura collapsed to the BJP. In both cases, it wasn't just a defeat but a decimation: The party was reduced to a cipher in states it had ruled with such authority. This left Kerala — the first state in the country to elect a Communist government in 1957 — as the last redoubt, bolstered by the fact that despite a half-century practice of Kerala voters turfing out incumbent governments every five years, the Left won a historic re-election in the midst of Covid, in 2021. So what happened to reduce them to 35 seats out of 140 today?

Today's crisis isn't merely one of arithmetic; it's one of language. The Indian Left has struggled to find a new vocabulary for a "New India". They have never quite come to terms with the economy of aspiration. Historically, the Left drew its strength from organised labour and agrarian reform. But since the 1990s, India's growth has been driven by services, gig work, and a soaring middle-class aspiration. To a young coder in Gurgaon or a delivery driver in Kolkata, rhetoric opposing liberalisation or capitalism can sound less like protection from exploitation and more like a barrier to opportunity.

At the same time, the Commu-

nists have long ceased to hold the trademark on social welfare. Every other party is matching or beating the Left at its own game. The Congress had its "Indira Guarantees" in Kerala; even New Delhi has re-packaged welfare as targeted delivery. By providing gas cylinders, toilets, and digital cash transfers directly to the poor, other parties and the central government have overtaken the traditional class-based mobilisation of the Left.

Nationally, the Communists also became victims of the far-reaching change in the patterns of political mobilisation from class solidarity (in the era of strong unions and the allure of global Communism) to other forms of identity politics — the latter both caste-based and religious, as well as, in some states, regional and cultural. While the Left spoke of universal class-consolidation, regional and caste-based parties spoke a more intimate language of social dignity. Indian Communism, dominated largely by an ageing and mostly upper-caste leadership, failed to reorganise its internal hierarchy to reflect the rising power of subordinated castes nationwide.

Despite the national trend, Kerala has always been different. Its Communists had a strong lower-caste and OBC base and were not above stigmatising the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by the Congress, as a party of minorities. But that kind of appeal to the Hindu majority waned with the rise of the BJP in the last decade.

Finally, governance failures took centre stage. The "Kerala Model" — prioritising healthcare and education over industrial output — earned the state international praise, helping win re-

election during the pandemic for its robust public health response. However, by 2026, the Communists carried a heavy burden of anti-incumbency. The UDF attacked the government on rising state debt, corruption and the exodus of youth seeking opportunities elsewhere. With the LDF's rout, the arc that began in 1957 has finally begun to close.

Is this the final chapter for Marxism in the world's most populous democracy? Not necessarily. Unlike the stagnant administrations of the past in Bengal, the Communists in Kerala have proven to be more adaptive and competent. And we can't forget the state's political pendulum: Kerala has habitually swapped its government every five years. The LDF's loss now after a second successive term might not be a rejection of Marxism so much as a return to the state's democratic rhythm. Unless a game-changing UDF government ensures otherwise, the "Red Sunset" could just prove to be a scheduled eclipse before the next cycle.

In the end, the "Communist" label in India is less about Cold War ideology and more about a unique brand of social-democratic welfare. Even if the hammer and sickle disappear from the map this month, the questions the Left raised — about inequality, the unstable indignity of labour, and the need for a social safety net — will continue to haunt "New India" for years to come. The red flag may be lowered, but the grievances it raised will have to be addressed by others.

Meanwhile, the issue for the Indian Left is no longer whether history has ended, but whether it still has a compelling story to tell.

The author is a fourth-term Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram and co-chaired the party's campaign in 2026

## A student's grit, a Lucknow school's lesson in inclusion



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

THE DECLARATION of school passing-out results often brings to light accounts of remarkable grit and fortitude — of young people taking important steps in their aspirational journey despite formidable odds. Among this year's exceptional graduates is Sarah Moin, who scored more than 98 per cent — the highest among 258 students at Lucknow's Christ Church College. But her achievement is much more than academic excellence in conventional terms. It is a testament to the 19-year-old's resolve in the face of layered challenges, one that was nurtured by an ecosystem that responded with empathy and imagination.

Sarah's life took a difficult turn early. Diagnosed at the age of four with a rare condition that gradually dimmed her vision, she would, within a few years, lose her hearing as well, followed by the onset of speech difficulties. The youngster's parents formed the first circle of resilience around her. They chose a school that gave wings to her dreams. Christ Church College arranged individualised classes, ensured that textbooks were scanned and converted into accessible digital formats, and enabled her to engage with them through a Braille-based device. Question papers were adapted so she could read them through touch, and her responses were transcribed into standard text for evaluation.

In recent years, students' enrolment has increased appreciably. Yet, survey after survey has shown that this achievement remains incomplete in the face of rigid pedagogies that are not sensitive to varied learning experiences. Sarah's journey shows that inclusion is not just about bringing the child to the classroom but also a result of creative efforts to transform institutional culture to respond to diverse needs.

Therein also lies an irony. Sarah's story is compelling because it directs attention to a larger, more uncomfortable question. Is India's educational ecosystem, as a whole, equipped — or even willing — to become an enabler in the way her school did?

Flagship programmes and legislative frameworks, such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education Act, have sought to institutionalise the idea that education is a right, not a privilege. At the level of policy, the government acknowledges that

education must respond to diversity — of ability, gender, caste, language, and socio-economic background. The National Education Policy 2020 has foregrounded inclusion, flexibility, and multidisciplinary learning; it has spoken of teachers' autonomy. Yet, teachers like Salman Ali Qazi, who stood by Sarah, enabling her to use the assistive technologies and build bridges between curriculum and cognition, are rare.

The scattered, but significant, instances of schools and educators rising to the challenge of diverse learners also underline the flipside — overworked, disempowered and undertrained teachers and curricula that often privilege rote learning. For every student who gets adaptive support, a large number of children at intersections of disadvantage — from marginalised castes, minorities, girls, to those with disabilities — struggle to navigate structures which do not recognise their needs. India stands at a demographic crossroads, with one of the youngest populations in the world. This dividend can only be earned if the education system equips young people — not a privileged subset, but all of them — with the confidence and capabilities required to participate meaningfully in the economy.

There is, of course, no template to address diversity and inequality. And, it may not be correct to replicate Christ Church College's programmes in another context. However, Sarah's story is illustrative of what an inclusive system can achieve. The question, then, is whether the choices she had can be scaled — whether the sensitivity and creativity demonstrated by the Lucknow school can become the norm rather than a rarity. Can classrooms across the country be reoriented to accommodate diverse learning needs? Can teacher training programmes equip educators to engage with difference not as a challenge to be managed, but as an opportunity to enrich the learning environment?

These are not easy questions, and they do not admit quick answers. Today, as Sarah stands at the threshold of a major transition, let's all wish her the best. And, hope her story becomes the catalyst for expanding the horizons of many others.

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## At Met Gala, a refusal to edit the artisan out



NIRBHAY RANA

LUXURY FASHION has perfected a paradox: It celebrates craftsmanship while depending on the invisibility of the craftspeople. At the 2026 Met Gala — where the theme invited fashion to be seen as art — this contradiction was staged, illuminated, and, in one rare moment, disrupted. An Indian designer did something the global fashion system rarely allows: He made labour visible.

When filmmaker Karan Johar appeared in a Raja Ravi Varma-inspired ensemble, he translated Indian visual culture into the language of global couture. The garment functioned as a canvas, layering history, mythology, and identity into a form legible to the West. But if Johar's appearance expanded what could be seen as fashion, designer Manish Malhotra used his appearance to question who gets to be seen within it.

His now widely discussed "Mumbai" cape did something the global fashion system rarely permits: It named its makers. The artisans behind the garment were credited directly on the piece. For decades, fashion has relied on an illusion. Craft is elevated as heritage, skill, even artistry. But the artisan is kept at a distance. The value of luxury depends not just on labour, but on its invisibility. This is systemic. In global fashion, visibility is curated — and labour is what gets edited out. Events like the Met Gala do not produce fashion, but they define how fashion is understood. They are stages of symbolic power, where garments are detached from their conditions of production and reintroduced as art, fantasy, or cultural capital. In this translation, labour disappears.

In recent years, the industry has adopted the language of sustainability, craft revival, and ethical fashion. Yet much of it remains aesthetic. The language has evolved faster than the system itself. Craft becomes a signifier of authenticity; sustainability becomes a visual cue. The deeper structures — wages, attribution, and working conditions — rarely enter the frame. This is not always outright deception. It is something more insidious: A system in which ethics can be performed without being redistributed.

Seen this way, Malhotra's gesture acquires a significance. By naming artisans, he collapses the distance between creation and creator. He challenges the idea that design belongs to a single author. It also showed that Indian designers and celebrities are no longer peripheral participants; they are shaping the narrative itself, bringing textile histories and artistic vocabularies into the centre of global fashion discourse. At the same time, it revealed the limits of this visibility. India may export craft at scale, but it has yet to export the right to authorship that should accompany it.

If the future of fashion is to be sustainable — not just environmentally, but socially — it will require more than the celebration of craft. It will require a redistribution of credit, visibility, and value. Until then, fashion will continue to display craft, without ever truly acknowledging the hands that make it possible.

The writer is associate professor and programme coordinator for fashion design at IILM University, Gurugram

## 40 YEARS AGO

May 6, 1986



## Muslim Women Bill passed

THE CONTROVERSIAL Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha along with the six official amendments. A major section of the opposition pressed for a division on the amendment moved by many of them. But all the amendments were overwhelmingly voted out (370 to 61) with just one abstention, whereupon most opposition members staged a walk-out.

## Efforts on to solve Akali crisis

AS THE Akali Dal dissidents lay low, the Punjab CM, Surjit Singh Barnala, gained some

more ground with Kulwant Singh Quadran, the Akali MLA who had signed the dissidents' statement denouncing the police action, pledging support to Barnala.

## Amendment to Muslim Bill

THE MUSLIM Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha through an official amendment, gives the choice of seeking protection under sections 125 to 128 of the CrPc to the husband and wife. Accordingly, the amendment introduced by the Law Minister, Asoke Kumar Sen, seeks to insert the following sentence: "4A. If, on the date of the first hearing of the application under sub-section (2) of Section

3, a divorced woman and her former husband declare by affidavit or any other declaration in writing in such form as may be prescribed, either jointly or separately, that they would prefer to be governed by the provisions of Sections 125 to 128 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and file such affidavit or declaration, the magistrate shall dispose of such application accordingly."

## Tokyo summit for East-West

LEADERS OF the seven main industrialised democracies called for a "high level dialogue" to settle East-West differences while vowing to maintain "strong and credible" military capability in the Western alliance.



# Our AI question: How to become producer of intelligence rather than its tenant?



ROHIT LAMBA  
AND RAGHURAM RAJAN

**L**AST WEEK, on a 600-acre site near Visakhapatnam, Google broke ground on what is being dubbed as India's largest AI hub. The infrastructure partners are AdaniConneX and Airtel's Nxta. The silicon will be designed in California and fabricated in Taiwan. The model weights, when the data centre lights up, will be Google's. India's contribution is the land, the power, the construction, and the operations. It is a triumph of sorts. Alas, we have done something like this before.

Thirty years ago, the IT-services boom began with a related bargain. India offered low-cost engineering labour, fluent in English, to American firms that needed someone to write and maintain the systems they had designed. The arrangement worked. Infosys, Wipro and TCS came of age. A middle class emerged. A reputation was earned. Indian services climbed the value chain, and the global capability centres in Bengaluru and Hyderabad now do genuine research and product work for the world's largest firms. We were not wrong to celebrate this. But the task was incomplete.

What we did not do was use the proceeds to build the next layer. We did not fund research universities of global rank. We did not raise national R&D intensity from below 1 per cent of GDP, where it has remained for decades. We did not develop deep-tech venture capital, manufacturing depth, or patient state-aligned industrial finance. Korea built Samsung. Taiwan, smaller than Karnataka, built TSMC, which now sits at the chokepoint of the global AI economy. India built outsourcing. We

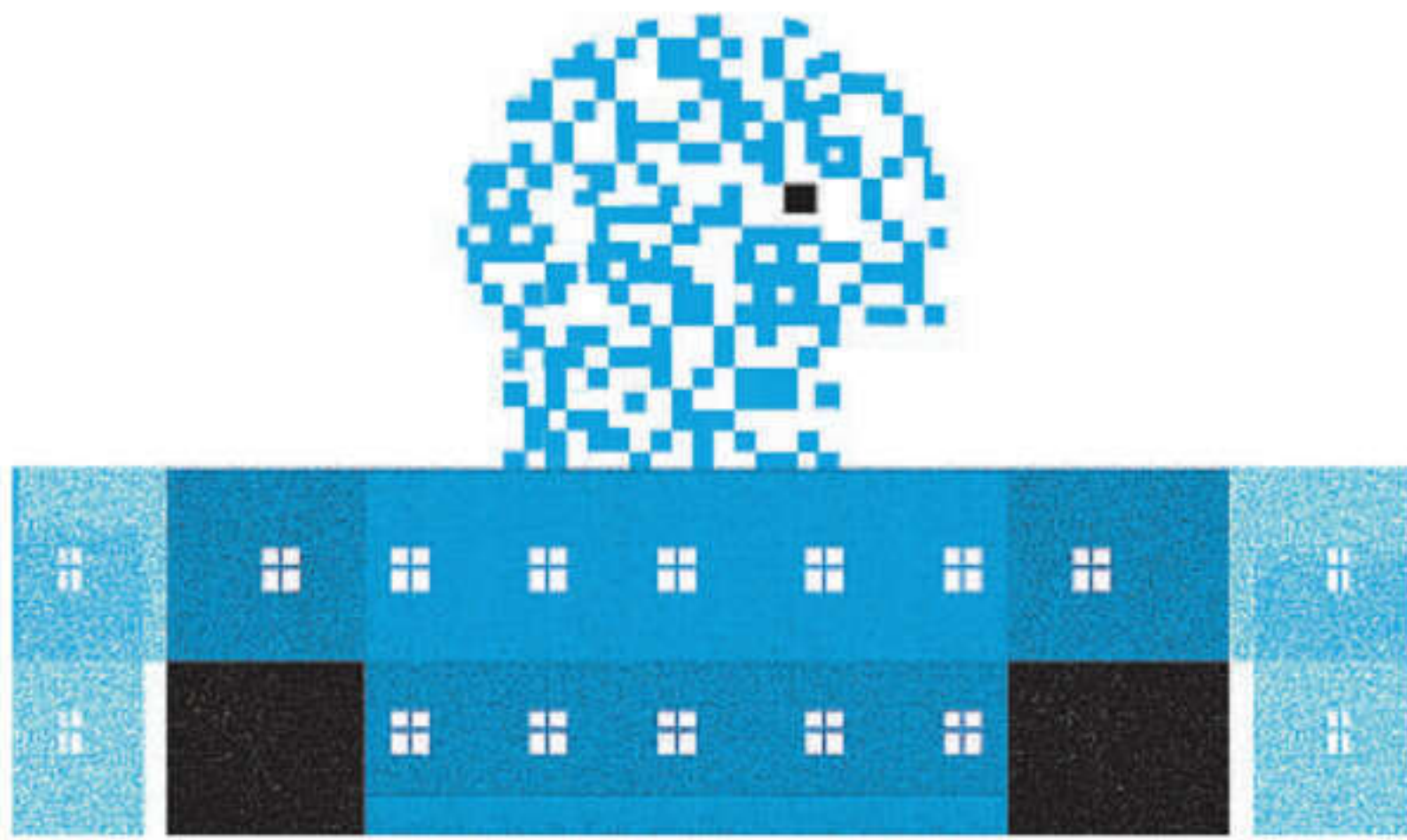


ILLUSTRATION: C.R SASIKUMAR

learned magnificently to deploy systems that other people had designed. We postponed the work of designing them.

The bill on that postponement is now arriving, in the form of artificial intelligence. The leading edge of AI demands capital, research depth, and concentrated talent at a scale India has not built. A frontier model costs hundreds of millions of dollars to train, draws on decades of accumulated research, and depends on a talent pipeline that runs through a few dozen universities in the United States, China, the United Kingdom, and Canada. India has none of this.

In the past fortnight, two voices have read this moment differently. Ruchir Sharma, at the Express Adda, warned that global investors now see India as the "anti-AI play". Nandan Nilekani, in a recent essay with Ravi Venkatesan, argued that India's edge lies in diffusing AI across its small firms and informal economy. Sharma is reading the

high-ent layers and seeing India's absence. Nilekani is reading the diffusion layer and treating it as India's destination. Both stop short of the harder question. Neither asks how a country with talent and ambition becomes a producer of intelligence rather than a tenant of it.

What we are doing in Vizag, and in Hyderabad and Mumbai and Pune, risks making the same trade we made in the nineties, with stronger lock-in this time. The data centres are real and useful. They will be optimised, for the next decade, to serve foreign models efficiently rather than to train Indian ones at scale. Every Indian-language inference running on a foreign model from a server in Vizag is a small recurring rent paid to Mountain View, on infrastructure built by Adani. The arrangement is not new. The technology is.

The stakes go beyond productivity. As AI diffuses into military systems and strategic decision-making, this gap will bear on India's

strategic autonomy in a world where security partnerships cannot be assumed. India does not need to beat OpenAI at frontier reasoning today, but it needs to learn to compete. Alternative model architectures and approaches at meaningful scale, sovereign compute, and foreign deals structured around expanding Indian capability rather than only power and land. The Indian state knows how to create a gigawatt of power for a foreign data centre. It needs to learn how to create a research department, a laboratory, a generation of scientists. Concrete it understands. Cognition it does not.

The Economic Survey of 2025-26 noted that only 2 per cent of the world's AI training-data startups are based in India, against 40 per cent in the United States and 21 per cent in the European Union. The state knows the gap. The announcements still say far more about infrastructure than about capability.

The deeper danger is that India's public conversation is too quick to convert constraint into strategy. Because we cannot yet win at the frontier, we tell ourselves the frontier does not matter. Because we are good at diffusion, we tell ourselves diffusion is enough. Some of this is an honest assessment of what India can do. Some of it is an alibi for what we will not do.

We must not forget, however, that even diffusion rests on uneven foundations. UPI worked because Indian banking had spent 30 years digitising, Aadhaar because the state had been identifying citizens for 60. Where those rails were missing, in health, in school education, in agricultural extension, the same stack thinking has produced architecture without adoption. AI diffusion may run into the same problem.

This past week in Visakhapatnam, we poured the foundations of buildings that will host someone else's intelligence. The buildings will be ours. The intelligence will not. Whether that is enough this time is the question we should ask before the concrete sets.

Lamba is assistant professor, Cornell University and Rajan is professor, University of Chicago and former governor, Reserve Bank of India

# In Tamil Nadu, mandate against party that lost touch with people



A KALAIYARAN

**T**HE SURPRISE victory of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) under the leadership of Joseph Vijay in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections has, for the first time since the DMK's rise to power in 1967 and the launch of the AIADMK in 1977, broken the duopoly of Dravidian parties. It also appears to have upended electoral arithmetic, moving beyond tactical alliances, money, and caste. In that sense, the verdict is a break from the past.

It signals an anti-incumbency sentiment against the DMK-led government. The scale of the upset is reminiscent of the historic 1967 election, when K Kamaraj — once hailed by Periyar as a "trueborn Tamilian" — was defeated by a relatively unknown student leader in Virudhunagar. TVK may not have a long history of grassroots mobilisation that characterised the DMK's rise. But, M K Stalin's defeat is no less significant than that of Kamaraj.

The DMK often highlighted Tamil Nadu's relative success compared to BJP-ruled states, but did not do enough to address concerns such as job creation, wage stagnation, and governance deficits. Disillusionment with the DMK also stemmed from what many, particularly the youth, perceived as an alienating style of governance.

Historically, the DMK rose by mobilising ordinary people. In the 1960s, amid allegations of vote-buying by Congress, C N Annadurai urged voters to accept whatever was offered but vote for DMK. Something similar seems to have happened this time.

Vijay's rise is often compared to that of M G Ramachandran (MGR). This comparison has its limits. MGR's stardom in politics and cinema was organic. His association with the Dravidian movement gave MGR a strong ideological foundation. Vijay's political journey is relatively shorter. His appeal seems to derive less from ideology and more from the dissatisfaction of a younger electorate frustrated by unfulfilled promises.

Vijay operates within the broad contours of Dravidian sensibilities — Tamil identity, secularism, state autonomy, and social justice. He talks of drawing inspiration from Kamaraj, Periyar, Ambedkar, and Anjalai Ammalaiyar. However, unlike the DMK, which built a sustained political movement over nearly two decades before coming to power, TVK lacks a comparable foundation. In that sense, it is wrong to think of the TVK as an ideological alternative to the Dravidian parties. The verdict still calls for serious introspection. It appears the DMK has used ideological tropes at the expense of probity in political life.

Respective of its political regime, Tamil Nadu's industrial policy has been consistent since the 1990s. The state's recent double-digit (11.2 per cent) economic growth was celebrated by the government. However, the earlier phase of industrialisation was more closely linked to small-scale industries, generating broader employment opportunities. In contrast, new investments have created fewer jobs. The shift is reflected in labour market trends. Contract-based employment, which once accounted for around 10 per cent of formal jobs, has risen to approximately 25 per cent, approaching levels seen in states like Gujarat.

The DMK's emphasis on national politics, secularism and federalism might be important in itself, but it's irrelevant when it does not resonate with people's lives. The party's narratives and carefully curated (some say controlled) rhetoric didn't resonate with the people, especially the youth, Dalits and women.

The verdict should, however, not be seen as a rejection of the DMK's social schemes or the Dravidian model of development. Vijay is yet to articulate a new vision. The mandate reflects dissatisfaction with the way DMK exercised power. By focusing heavily on intellectual and ideological narratives, it appears to have neglected the everyday concerns of people. The party seems to have fallen into the trap of intellectualism. In some cases, supporters of the ruling party dismissed Vijay's voters as "ignorant," further deepening the disconnect and alienating younger voters. The party also seemed to have ignored the anxieties of Dalit communities, who have been victims of violence of late.

Every achievement contains the seeds of its destruction. The Dravidian model is no exception. Despite notable success, it must be sensitive to the concerns of those who have been excluded from its benefits. State autonomy, secularism and Tamil identity are important ideals. But they must be grounded in the lived experiences of people and their needs.

The writer is associate professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### What the verdicts say

THE EDITORIAL rightly notes that voters in states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Assam are signalling a demand for better governance rather than simple revenge against ruling parties ("Verdicts frame people's push for change — BJP seized that impulse, rivals paid for their standstill", *IE*, May 5). Yet the gap between electoral verdicts and delivery remains wide. Parties on all sides would do well to invest in steady local work instead of constant national posturing. Clear accountability mechanisms, regular public reporting on promises, and greater space for state-level innovation could turn these mandates into real progress. Indian democracy has shown maturity; it now needs adequate political will.

Abbharna Barathi

THE ASSEMBLY outcomes across four states and one UT underscore how decisively voters can reshape political narratives ("Verdicts frame people's push for change — BJP seized that impulse, rivals paid for their standstill", *IE*, May 5). Actor Vijay's victory signals that many voters were seeking a change and responded to a new option. Mamata Banerjee's defeat reflects public fatigue with corruption and violence. The lesson is evident: Sustained credibility, grassroots connection and responsiveness matter more than broad slogans.

S S Paul, Nadia

### Maintain unity

THE INCREASING use of regional identity, polarisation, and aggressive political strategies may strengthen electoral gains for parties, but it also risks weakening democratic harmony and national unity ("Assam-Bengal template will go national. It fuels support for BJP, not resistance", *IE*, May 5). While political success is important, governance should prioritise inclusive development over divisive tactics. India's diversity is its greatest strength, and political parties must ensure that electoral ambitions do not overshadow constitutional values and social cohesion. Constructive leadership, rather than confrontation, is essential for a healthy democracy.

Krish Bareja, Haryana



AVANI BANSAL

"KHELA HOBE" — the game will be played — once rang out as a slogan of defiance. In the quiet after an electoral defeat, it begins to sound like something else: A reminder that for women, the game has never been played on equal terms.

In this election cycle, across four major states, leadership contests were largely defined by men. In Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the faces of power remained overwhelmingly male. West Bengal stood apart because it placed a woman, Mamata Banerjee, at the centre. That difference matters because when a woman is central to power, the terms of evaluation shift.

A day after a political loss, the instinct is to reduce a leader to numbers. Seats won, seats lost, margins that shifted. The harder task is to ask what a political life reveals about the system it inhabits — not the individual alone, but the conditions under which women are allowed to lead.

Across the world, the relationship between women and power remains uneasy. In Iran, women have risked imprisonment and violence to assert control over their bodies and identities. In democracies elsewhere, women in politics navigate a narrower band of acceptable behaviour, where strength is recast as excess and ambition as overreach. The question persists: How much space is a woman allowed to occupy before she is seen as too much?

**When a woman insists on occupying space, she is not merely participating in politics; she is altering its terms. The test is not how women win or lose elections, but how we choose to read them when they do**

## Didi has paid the price of staying in the game

India reflects this tension in its own way. From Indira Gandhi to President Droupadi Murmu, women have exercised power in different registers. Sonia Gandhi shaped a national party through restraint and institutional endurance. Sushma Swaraj commanded admiration through a style that made authority feel accessible and humane.

Within this spectrum, Banerjee's political life is a case study in what it takes for a woman to enter and survive a space that does not easily accommodate her. Her confrontational, highly visible methods reflect a structural reality: Entry without inherited networks demands a different political language. She has often been described as volatile, shrill, and difficult — traits that are more readily read as conviction or strength in male readers. That difference shapes how authority is perceived.

Banerjee's party, the Trinamool Congress, has been accused of political violence and misgovernance in West Bengal. The electorate has spoken. In the aftermath of defeat, however, it is worth noticing whether the critique remains focused on systems and accountability, on performance and failure or whether it collapses into a personalised reading of her flaws. The distinction matters because for many women watching, especially young girls, such moments carry

an unspoken lesson. They are not only watching a result, but how quickly authority becomes failure, confidence excess, and persistence defiance.

In that sense, "khela hobe" offers a metaphor beyond politics. It asks: Who gets to play at the centre? What leaders like Banerjee signal is that entry is possible, but it comes at a cost — part of a broader moment in which women are renegotiating their relationship with power.

It is also a moment to reflect on how easily women are positioned against other women. Competing claims are inevitable in a democracy. But when one woman's legitimacy rests on diminishing another's, something more limiting is at work. Women in politics will differ in ideology, temperament and method. They need not be reduced to opposites.

Elections will come and go. Parties will win and lose. That churn is essential to democracy. But something else must endure: When a woman insists on occupying space fully, she is not merely participating in politics; she is altering its terms.

Banerjee's defeat belongs to electoral arithmetic, and there will be analyses on that. But the questions her career raises belong to a wider landscape. The real test is not how women win or lose elections, but how we choose to read them when they do.

Bansal is a Supreme Court advocate and national spokesperson, Congress



GURU PRAKASH

THERE ARE election results, and then there are verdicts of history. What the people of West Bengal have delivered in this assembly election belongs to the second category. The trends leave little room for ambiguity: Bengal has not merely changed its government, it has altered the direction of its political destiny.

This is not an ordinary electoral victory for the BJP. It is a landslide and a historic mandate that signals the complete rejection of a political order built on fear, patronage, appeasement, and institutional intimidation. The TMC once appeared electorally invincible. It now finds itself humbled by the democratic will of a people determined to reclaim their future. "Andhera chatega,

## Bengal has spoken with remarkable clarity: Enough

suraj niklega, kamal khilega." The promise made at the BJP's founding has found one of its most symbolic fulfilments in Bengal. A land that gave India Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and Sri Aurobindo had, for decades, remained trapped in a political culture where violence too often overshadowed vision, and power was preserved through division rather than delivery.

The Left institutionalised a long culture of cadre-based coercion. What followed was not renewal, but its mutation, a politics packaged as welfare but sustained through intimidation, selective inclusion, and systematic erosion of democratic confidence. The Marichjhapi massacre, where Dalits became victims of state-sponsored violence, is an example of Left violence against the socially marginalised.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee, founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and one of Ben-

gal's most distinguished sons, dedicated his life to the cause of national unity and constitutional integrity. A BJP government in Bengal carries with it the symbolism of ideological homecoming, an overdue tribute. Bengal is the land of renaissance, reform, and resistance. From the Brahma Samaj to the Swadeshi movement, from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay to Tagore, Bengal has shaped India's intellectual and national consciousness.

What made this victory possible is the BJP *karyakarta*. No political organisation in India matches the scale, discipline, and

**The TMC once appeared electorally invincible. It now finds itself humbled by the democratic will of a people determined to reclaim their future**

year-round commitment of the BJP's cadre. Much of the organisational credit belongs to Amit Shah, whose political clarity, booth-level precision, and ability to energise the cadre transformed aspiration into execution. This victory also strengthens the expanding arc of governance and development under the BJP-NDA framework.

The transformation of Assam and the wider Northeast under PM Narendra Modi has already demonstrated what political stability, infrastructure expansion, connectivity, and developmental focus can achieve in regions long neglected by Delhi's political establishment. This momentum is no longer geographically confined. In Tamil Nadu too, the politics of cynical division, cultural hostility, and selective antagonism towards Hindu identity has begun facing serious democratic resistance. Simultaneously, the BJP's steady organisational rise in Kerala reflects an unmistakable truth: Politics rooted

in development, governance, and national integration is finding resonance even in states once considered electorally impermeable. At the centre of this expanding mandate remains PM Modi, whose politics has fundamentally reoriented governance toward direct delivery, welfare inclusion, and aspirational citizenship.

For Bengal's women, youth, Scheduled Castes, backward communities, and economically marginalised populations, this mandate reflects a desire to be seen not as fragmented vote banks but as equal stakeholders in India's growth story. The people of Bengal have endured decades of political violence, broken promises, and stalled aspirations. This election was not merely a transfer of power; it was a democratic correction. Bengal has spoken with remarkable clarity: Enough.

The writer is national spokesperson, BJP

UAE SAYS STRIKES THREATEN NATIONAL SECURITY, RESERVES FULL 'RIGHT TO RETALIATE'

# US says Iran ceasefire holds despite exchange of fire; UAE faces attacks

IRGC warns ships to follow routes or face 'response'

Reuters

Dubai, Washington, May 5

THE UNITED Arab Emirates said it was under attack from Iranian missiles and drones on Tuesday, even as Washington said a shaky ceasefire was intact despite an exchange of fire the previous day as US forces attempted to force open the Strait.

The US military said it had destroyed six Iranian small boats, as well as cruise missiles and drones, after President Donald Trump sent the navy to escort stranded tankers through the strait in a campaign he called "Project Freedom".

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the operation to protect commercial ships was temporary and the four-week-old truce was not over. "We're not looking for a fight," he told a press conference. "Right now the ceasefire certainly holds, but we're going to be watching very, very closely."

Iran had fired missiles at US ships on Monday and also attacked the UAE, a key regional ally of Washington, with missiles and drones.

After issuing a new map of the Strait of Hormuz with an expanded Iranian area of control, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned vessels on Tuesday to stick to the corridors it had set

or face a "decisive response".

Trump said Iran's military had been reduced to firing "pea-shooters" and Tehran wanted peace, despite public sabre-rattling. "They play games, but let me just tell you, they want to make a deal," he said.

Shortly after Hegseth spoke on Tuesday, UAE's defence ministry said its air defences were again dealing with missile and drone attacks coming from Iran.

The Gulf Arab state's foreign ministry said in a statement that the attacks were a serious escalation and posed a direct threat to the country's security, adding that the UAE reserved its "full and legitimate right" to respond.

There was no immediate comment on that from Iran, though earlier its parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf, had said breaches of the ceasefire by the US and its allies endangered shipping through the strait, which carries a large share of the world's oil and fertilizer supplies.

"We know well that the continuation of the current situation is unbearable for the United States, while we have not even begun yet," he said in a social media post.

The Strait of Hormuz has been virtually shut since the United States and Israel began attacks on Iran on February 28, triggering disruptions that have pushed up commodity prices around the world.

Iran has effectively sealed off the strait by threatening to deploy mines, drones, missiles and fast-attack craft.



An Iranian demonstrator waves a Hezbollah flag beneath an anti-US billboard depicting the Strait of Hormuz during a pro-government rally in downtown Tehran on Tuesday. REUTERS

## At UN, Bahrain and US seek Hormuz action as Washington seeks coalition

Reuters

Paris, May 5

UN SECURITY Council members will begin talks on Tuesday on a US- and Bahrain-backed draft resolution that could lead to sanctions against Iran, and potentially authorise force, if Tehran fails to halt attacks and threats to commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, three Western diplomats said.

Fresh exchanges of fire on Monday underscored the stakes as the US and Iran struggle for control of the nar-

row waterway, a vital artery for global energy and trade, shaking a fragile four-week-old truce and reinforcing rival maritime blockades.

The US diplomatic push at the United Nations is in stark contrast to recent months during which it has largely acted outside the UN framework, launching military strikes against Iran without seeking council authorisation and pressing allies to join ad hoc naval patrols to enforce freedom of navigation.

That approach drew resistance from partners wary of

open-ended conflict and legal exposure, prompting sharp criticism from US President Donald Trump against countries he accused of failing to align with US-led efforts.

An earlier Bahraini resolution that was backed by the United States and appeared to open a path to legitimise its military action against Iran failed after Russia and China blocked it. The new draft takes a more cautious approach, avoiding explicit language authorising force while still operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

## China fireworks factory blast kills 26, Xi orders probe

Associated Press

Hong Kong, May 5

AN EXPLOSION at a fireworks plant in a central Chinese province killed at least 26 people and injured 61 others, state media reported Tuesday, prompting the halting of all fireworks manufacturing near the site.

The blast occurred at a fireworks plant in the city of Changsha in Hunan province on Monday afternoon, China's official news agency Xinhua said.

State media China Daily said that the plant was operated by the Huasheng Fireworks Manufacturing and Display Co. in the Changsha-administered, county-level city of Liuyang, a prominent fireworks powerhouse in the country.

Changsha mayor Chen Bozhong said at a media briefing that a search and rescue operation at the scene had largely

been completed, but verification of the casualties and identification of the victims was still underway.

Chen said that the local government expressed condolences for the victims and apologized to society, including the families and injured people. "We feel extremely pained and deeply remorseful," he said.

All fireworks and firecracker manufacturers in Liuyang have been ordered to halt production, local media reports said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged "all-out efforts" to search for people who are still unaccounted for and to save the injured. He called on authorities to investigate the cause swiftly and pursue serious accountability, the report said. Xi also ordered effective risk screening and hazard control in key industries and the strengthening of public safety management.



Firefighters work to extinguish a fire following a blast at a fireworks manufacturing factory in Liuyang, China, on Tuesday. REUTERS

## Russian drone strikes kill 22 as Kyiv ceasefire deadline nears

Associated Press

Kyiv, May 5

RUSSIAN DRONE and missile strikes carried out overnight and later on Tuesday killed at least 22 people and wounded more than 80 others, Ukrainian authorities said, hours before Kyiv was due to enact a ceasefire and three days before Moscow promised its own pause in hostilities.

On Tuesday afternoon, powerful Russian glide bombs smashed into the eastern city of Kramatorsk, the southern city of Zaporizhzhia and the northern city of Chernihiv, killing at least 17 civilians and wounding 45 others, officials said. Attacks the previous night killed five people and wounded 39.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuked Moscow for what he said was its "utter cynicism" in launching the attacks after Russia announced a unilateral ceasefire over two days later this week while it marks the 81st anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

"Russia could cease fire at any moment, and this would stop the war and our responses," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

The Russian Defence Ministry declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday, but said that it would strike back at the country if it tries to disrupt the festivities on Victory Day, which Russia marks annually on May 9.

## US intel says Iran nuclear program saw little damage

Reuters

Washington, May 5

US INTELLIGENCE assessments indicate that the time Iran would need to build a nuclear weapon has not changed since last summer, when analysts estimated that a US-Israeli attack had pushed back the timeline to up to a year, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

The assessments of Tehran's nuclear program remain broadly unchanged even after two months of a war that US President Donald Trump

launched in part to stop the Islamic Republic from developing a nuclear bomb.

The unchanged timeline suggests that significantly impeding Tehran's nuclear program may require destroying or removing Iran's remaining stockpile of highly enriched uranium, or HEU.

The war has stalled since the US and Iran agreed an April 7 truce to pursue peace. Tensions remain high as both sides appear deeply divided, and as Iran has choked traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, blocking some

20% of world oil supplies and igniting a global energy crisis.

Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth has said publicly that the US aims to ensure Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon via ongoing negotiations with Tehran.

US intelligence agencies had concluded prior to June's 12-day war that Iran likely could produce enough bomb-grade uranium for a weapon and build a bomb in around three to six months, said two of the sources, all of whom requested anonymity to discuss US intelligence.

Following the June strikes by

the US that hit the Natanz, Fordow and Isfahan nuclear complexes, US intelligence estimates pushed that timeline back to about nine months to a year, said the two sources and a person familiar with the assessments.

The attacks destroyed or badly damaged the three enrichment plants known to have been operating at the time. But the UN nuclear watchdog has been unable to verify the whereabouts of some 440 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60%.

It believes that about half was stored in an underground tunnel

complex at the Isfahan Nuclear Research Center, but it has been unable to confirm that since inspections were suspended.

The International Atomic Energy Agency assesses the total HEU stockpile would be enough for 10 bombs if further enriched.

"While Operation Midnight Hammer obliterated Iran's nuclear facilities, Operation Epic Fury decimated Iran's defence industrial base that they once leveraged as a protective shield around their pursuit of a nuclear weapon," said White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales.

## WHO: Human to human hantavirus spread on ship pose low public risk

Reuters

London, Amsterdam, May 5

THE WORLD Health Organization said on Tuesday that it suspects some rare human to human transmission of the deadly hantavirus took place between very close contacts on board a cruise ship hit by seven confirmed or suspected cases.

Human to human transmission is not common, and the UN health agency reiterated that the risk to the wider public was low from a disease typically spread from contact with infected rodents.

A Dutch couple and a German national have died, while a British national was evacuated from ship and is in intensive care

in South Africa, officials said.

Two crew members require urgent medical care, the Dutch-flagged *MV Hondius* ship's operator, Oceanwide Expeditions, said. Another person on board with a suspected case has only reported a mild fever.

The Dutch foreign ministry said it was preparing the medical evacuation of three people to the Netherlands. It was not yet clear when or where the nearly 150 other people still on-board would disembark.

The cruise ship hit by the deadly outbreak is moored off Cape Verde. The island nation off West Africa was meant to be its final destination but it has not allowed the vessel to put passengers ashore because of outbreak.

## Nepal govt calls House session after President clears ordinance

**Kathmandu:** The Nepal cabinet on Tuesday recommended to President Ram Chandra Poudel that the budget session of Parliament be convened from May 11, shortly after he promulgated the last of eight ordinances that give the government sweeping powers on multiple fronts.

Government spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel said the cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Balendra Shah, took the decision after the president approved the final ordinance on Monday.

The House session had originally been scheduled to begin on April 30 but was cancelled after the government opted to go ahead with ordinance rule. YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

## Pirelli Calendar 2027 to be dedicated to India, feature Raghu Rai works

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, May 5

THE PIRELLI Calendar 2027 will feature India as the protagonist, showcasing original works by renowned Indian master Raghu Rai along with Norwegian photographer Solve Sundsbo, Pirelli has announced. The company said Rai had dedicated himself to developing the project over the last three months, "through an original series of photographs that reflect his heritage and his vision of India for the Calendar".

The calendar, known and trademarked as 'The Cal', will be brought to completion with the help of Rai's daughter and acclaimed photographer Avani Rai, whose works will also fea-



Raghu Rai. EXPRESS

ture in the upcoming edition to "realise her father's intentions for the series". "The work my father created for Pirelli was a tribute to India -- bringing together his lifelong vision with a more contemporary expression of its people... something he was deeply drawn to..." Avani said.

## MET GALA 2026



## Stars make sartorial statements at Met Gala, protesters target Bezos

Reuters

New York, May 5

PROTESTS TOOK centre stage outside the Met Gala on Monday as demonstrators targeted Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, a first-time sponsor of the annual fundraiser for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. Bezos and his wife, Lauren Sanchez Bezos, reportedly donated \$10 million and were named honorary chairs, prompting boycott calls over wealth inequality, workers' rights and Amazon's labour practices.

Protesters held giant "TAX THE RICH" letters and signs reading

"Resistance Red Carpet," while one demonstrator was detained trying to enter the event.

Actor Sarah Paulson also made a statement, wearing a dollar bill over her eyes and saying her look represented the "1 percent."

Inside, the gala leaned heavily into this year's "Costume Art" theme, with many guests arriving in elaborate, unrecognisable looks. Bad Bunny came dressed as an elderly man, Heidi Klum as the Statue of Liberty and Katy Perry in a silver mask.

Indian attendees also stood out, with Isha Ambani in a sari-inspired ensemble, Sudha Reddy in a USD 15 million necklace and Ananya Birla in a glittering steel mask.

Karan Johar, Natasha Poonawalla and others drew on Indian art, heritage and traditional craft for their outfits.

• THE COMPLAINT ACCUSES META & ZUCKERBERG OF ILLEGALLY USING MILLIONS OF COPYRIGHTED WORKS TO TRAIN THEIR A.I. PROGRAM LLAMA

## Five publishers and top author sue Meta and Mark Zuckerberg

Alexandra Alter

May 5

FIVE MAJOR publishers — Hachette, Macmillan, McGraw Hill, Elsevier and Cengage — and bestselling novelist Scott Turow have filed a class-action copyright infringement lawsuit against Meta and its founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg.

The complaint, which was filed Tuesday in US District Court for the Southern District of New York, accuses Meta and Zuckerberg of illegally using millions of copyrighted works to train their artificial intelligence program Llama, and of removing copyright notices and other copyright management in-

formation from those works.

The lawsuit asserts that Meta's engineers relied on pirated books and journal articles to train the program by downloading unlicensed copies through websites like Anna's Archive, an open source search engine for piracy sites including LibGen and Sci-Hub.

The suit also claims that "Zuckerberg himself personally authorized and actively encouraged the infringement."

Representatives for Meta did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The plaintiffs argue that Meta's AI program poses a threat to the livelihoods of writers and publishers because the technol-



Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg delivers a keynote speech during an event, at company's headquarters in California on September 25, 2024. FILE

ogy can be used to quickly produce AI-generated copycat books and to summarize the plot and themes of copyrighted

books in such great detail that readers don't have to buy them.

"These AI-generated books are already flooding the world's

largest book marketplace, Amazon, in volumes that materially displace human-authored works," the complaint states. The filing cites several authors whose works the plaintiffs claim were used to train Llama, including V.E. Schwab, N.K. Jemisin, Lemong Snicket and Turow.

Some of the evidence cited in the complaint purportedly comes directly from Llama. When asked to produce a travel guide in the style of the writer Becky Lomax, Llama rapidly produced "a convincing rendition of Lomax's local insider voice," the complaint says.

Then, when asked how it was able to reproduce Lomax's

style so accurately, Llama allegedly replied, "While I don't have personal interactions with Becky Lomax, I've been trained on a vast amount of text data, including her published works."

Llama is also able to summarize books in detail. When asked to give a synopsis of Turow's "Presumed Innocent," Llama confirmed that it had "been trained on a digital version of the book, which allows me to access and analyze its content," according to the complaint.

In an email to *The New York Times*, Turow said Meta's use of pirated works amounted to "shameless, damaging and unjust behavior." NYT

• BRIEFLY

SRI LANKA

### Leaders hail Vijay's TN election victory

SRI LANKAN leaders on Tuesday congratulated actor-turned-politician Vijay, who led Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam party to a historic victory in Tamil Nadu's assembly elections. Vijay-led TVK on Monday created a record of sorts in the electoral history of TN by securing an impressive 108 seats in assembly elections. Celebrations were reported in Sri Lanka's Tamil-dominated Northern Province, where youths hailed his victory. PTI

COLOMBIA

### Explosion at coal mine kills nine labourers, hurts 6

AN EXPLOSION in a coal mine in central Colombia killed nine miners and injured six others who were recovering in a hospital Tuesday, officials said. There were 15 miners inside the Carbonera Los Pinos mine in Sutausa, about 80 kilometers north of Bogota, when the blast occurred, Cundinamarca provincial Gov. Jorge Emilio Rey said. Three escaped on their own, and the remaining three survivors were rescued. AP

'STRONG INTER-AGENCY SCRUTINY &amp; SECURITY CHECKS MEAN COMPLIANCE WILL REMAIN DEMANDING'

# New SOP for FDI nod: 12-week deadline & fully digital process

Each ministry to have a dedicated FDI Cell with a nodal officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary

Ravi Dutta Mishra  
New Delhi, May 5

MONTHS AFTER easing investment curbs on land-bordering countries, the Centre has issued a new standard operating procedure (SOP) for foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals aimed at accelerating inflow into priority sectors by capping processing time at 12 weeks.

As per the new SOP, the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) is expected to disseminate the proposal to ministries concerned, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) within 2 days.

The ministries concerned, along with MEA, RBI and MHA, are expected to submit comments within 8 weeks after internal scrutiny of the application is disposed of within 12 weeks, as per the new SOP.

Delays in inter-ministerial responses will be treated as no objection as per the SOP.

However, an additional two weeks "shall be given to DPIIT" for consideration of those proposals which are proposed for rejection or where additional conditions are proposed, the guidelines said. Experts said that the new process aims to eliminate duplication and ensure time-

bound decisions, with timelines ranging from initial scrutiny within two weeks to final approvals in about 12 weeks.

"The SOP will improve ease of doing business by making FDI approvals faster, transparent, and fully digital, with clear timelines boosting investor confidence. However, strong inter-agency scrutiny and security checks mean compliance will remain demanding. While a welcome step, India must go further—simplifying regulations, cutting compliance costs, and reducing the cost of doing business—to attract high-quality, long-term investment into manufacturing and advanced sectors," Global Trade Research Initiative said.

## Monitoring & fast-tracking

The guidelines further said that "no prior approval of the competent authority shall be required for an increase in the amount of foreign equity, provided that there is no change in the percentage of foreign/NRI equity already approved and total foreign equity is up to Rs 5000 crores".

"The Investee shall only be required to notify such increase to the Competent Authority within thirty days of receipt of funds, as also allotment of



India saw net FDI inflows in February after a gap of 6 months. REUTERS

shares to the non-resident shareholders," DPIIT said.

The guidelines said that each ministry "should have a dedicated FDI Cell with a nodal officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary" and that regular review meetings with the concerned administrative ministries "on the pendency of FDI proposals" shall be convened by the DPIIT Secretary every "four to six weeks".

Under the new SOP, investments in broadcasting, telecommunications, space, private security agencies, defence, civil aviation, and mining & mineral separation of titanium-bearing minerals and ores, its value addition, and integrated activities shall require security clearance from MHA.

## Investment climate

While India saw a net FDI inflow of \$4.62 billion in February—the most in nearly four years—it was the first time in seven months that it was in positive territory, with investor sentiment reversing after India and the US signed an interim deal early that month, eliminating the penal 25% tariff and cutting the reciprocal tariff to 18%.

The sharp reversal in fortunes in February took the total for the first 11 months of 2025-26 to \$6.27 billion as against \$1.46 billion in the same period of 2024-25. In 2024-25 as a whole, India saw net FDI inflows of just \$959 million. Weakness in FDI flows, seen as a more stable form of foreign

## INVESTMENT PUSH

• **THE DEPARTMENT** for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade will now disseminate the proposal to ministries concerned, RBI, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs in 2 days

• **THE MINISTRIES**, along with MEA, RBI and MHA, are expected to submit comments within eight weeks after internal scrutiny of the application is disposed of in 12 weeks, as per the new SOP

• **AN ADDITIONAL** two weeks "shall be given to DPIIT" for consideration of proposals which are proposed for rejection or where additional conditions are proposed

investment, has contributed to the sharp depreciation in the Indian rupee over the last year or so. After falling past the 90- and 91-per-dollar levels in December amid a delay in the finalisation of a trade agreement with the US, the war in West Asia has led to a global aversion to risky assets such as those of emerging markets like India. The new SOP comes against the backdrop of a scramble of FDI globally, amid heightened global uncertainties due to the ongoing energy crisis, disruption due to tariffs that have slowed down global trade and global trade growth. Developing nations are the worst hit.

FULL REPORT ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

# Tata Sons listing, board seats on menu of key May 8 meet

George Mathew  
Mumbai, May 5

THE STAGE is set for a crucial Tata Trusts board meeting on May 8, where key issues on the agenda include its representation on the board of Tata Sons, differing views among trustees regarding the potential listing of Tata Sons and the issue of perpetual trustees.

Ahead of this highly anticipated meeting, Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh have been voted out of the Tata Education and Development Trust (TEDT)—a relatively smaller entity within the Tata Trusts group—after fellow trustee Mehli Mistry opposed their reappointment during the voting process.

Singh voted for reappointment of Srinivasan and the latter voted in favour of Singh, according to Tata group sources. However, as the reappointment needs unanimous voting in favour of the candidates, the tenures of Singh and Srinivasan will not be extended as per the rules of the trust.

Noel Tata, Chairman of Tata Trusts, and JN Mistry are the other trustees of TEDT and they will be the only three trustees of this trust after the voting. Tata Trusts CEO Siddharth Sharma and Chairman Noel Tata did not respond to mails from *The Indian Express* about the changes in Tata Education and Development Trust and the May 8 board meeting



Ahead of the meeting, Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh have been voted out of the Tata Education and Development Trust. REUTERS

of Tata Trusts. Tata Trusts board meeting will review the Tata Trusts' board representation in Tata Sons as per the agenda of the meeting. As of now, Noel Tata and Venu Srinivasan are on the board of Tata Sons as representatives of Tata Trusts. Sources indicated Noel Tata's directorship in Tata Sons is unlikely to be reviewed.

Tata Trusts board will also discuss the position of two trustees and the listing of Tata Sons on the exchanges. Two of the trustees—Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh—had recommended the listing of Tata Sons. Their argument is

contrary to the resolution passed by Tata Trusts to retain the company as an unlisted entity a year ago. Following a RBI directive that requires upper-layer NBFCs to list, Tata Sons repaid its debt and sought de-registration from that category;

a decision from the regulator is awaited. Noel Tata is opposed to a listing as it could dilute the trusts' veto powers.

The meeting will also discuss a complaint filed in the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner's office about the perpetual/life-term trustees. The petition, filed by lawyer Kalyani Agrawal of law firm SV & Co, has sought urgent intervention, alleging that Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT), which has three lifetime trustees in a board of six members, violated the provisions of Section 30A of the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, 1950. This section, introduced through an amendment in September 2025, says perpetual or lifetime trustees can make up only 25% of a public trust's board. The ratio is now 50% in SRTT.

FULL REPORT ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

# Two new chip plants get Cabinet approval

ENS Economic Bureau  
New Delhi, May 5

THE UNION Cabinet Tuesday approved two new semiconductor plants in India, including one that could be the country's first commercial display facility, in a fresh boost to New Delhi's chip ambitions.

These plants are likely to be the last ones to receive clearance under the first iterations of the Rs 76,000 crore India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), with ten other plants having previously received approvals.

Crystal Matrix Ltd (CML) will establish an integrated facility for compound semiconductor fabrication and assembly based on GaN (Gallium Nitride) technology for manufacturing Mini/Micro-LED display modules.

The integrated facility, which will come up in Dholera, Gujarat, will also provide GaN foundry services.

The proposed products will have applications in large displays for TVs and signage/commercial displays, medium-sized displays for tablets, smartphones, and in-car displays, and micro-displays for extended reality (XR) glasses and smart watches.

The project will cost Rs 3,068 crore, with approximately 50% of capex costs covered by the government under the incentive scheme.

Suchi Semicon Pvt Ltd (SSPL) will set up an Out-

sourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Surat, Gujarat worth Rs 868 crore for manufacturing discrete semiconductors.

The proposed production capacity of this plant is 1 billion chips per annum.

Its target applications include power electronics, analog ICs, and industrial systems, serving end markets such as automotive, industrial automation, and consumer electronics. With these two approvals, the total number of approved projects under the ISM reaches 12, with cumulative investments of around Rs 1.64 lakh crore.

Launched in 2021 with a Rs 76,000-crore outlay, ISM 1.0 was conceived as a state-backed push to build a full-stack chip ecosystem, from fabrication and packaging to design and display manufacturing. The government is understood to be working on the next iteration of the plan, and could approve a scheme with an outlay of around \$11 billion, *The Indian Express* had earlier reported.

However, under the revised scheme, the priorities of the government might change. While ISM 1.0 focused on attracting chipmaking infrastructure to India, ISM 2.0 is likely to offer greater support to ancillary industries such as gases, chemicals and capital goods, among others.

FULL REPORT ON  
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# Expect some fuel price hike: MPC's Ram Singh

Siddharth Upasani & George Mathew  
New Delhi/Mumbai, May 5

WHILE SOME pass-through of higher global energy prices due to the West Asia war has happened through a weaker rupee, the conclusion of state elections should lead to retail fuel prices being raised, according to Ram Singh, one of the three external members on the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee.

Speaking on Tuesday at the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Singh said that not raising fuel prices so far had been a "prudent" move.

"Now that state elections are over, I expect some pass-through happening at the retail price level. Therefore, to that extent, we are moving in the direction where the right price signals will be sent out to households, commercial sector to optimise the energy mix," Singh said, adding that there were already signs of a shift in the energy mix towards electricity through reports of higher use of inductions.

"With the retail price pass-through happening, we will see more of this nudge materialising and taking concrete form."

Singh's comments come amid speculation that pump prices of petrol and diesel may be raised, although the petroleum ministry has been assuring over the last two months that there was no proposal to hike prices in the wake of international oil and fuel prices persisting at supernormal levels.

In April, the average price of India's crude oil basket was \$114.48 per barrel, little changed from March's \$113.49/bbl, but sharply higher than February's \$69.01/bbl. State-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) are incurring heavy losses on the sale of petrol and diesel, whose prices have been frozen for over four years now.

According to Singh—who is the Director of the Delhi

School of Economics—had there been a full or substantial pass-through to pump prices, it could have led to second-round inflationary effects and unanchored inflation expectations. "But the pass-through has to happen; the effect of a staggered pass-through will be that the second-round effects will be more manageable."

## Inflation framework

Speaking at the same event, RBI Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta said India could perhaps consider tweaking its flexible inflation targeting framework if the economy's growth-inflation mix evolves as it has in the past ten years, with growth robust and inflation lower and stable.

"But if the global environment remains as challenging as it has been during the past six years, it would warrant both predictability and flexibility inherent in the existing framework," she said.

In late March, the government—after consultation with the RBI—retained the framework for the next five years through March 2031.

As per the framework—which was adopted in 2016 and is reviewed every five years—the central bank has to keep Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation at 4% in a band of 2-6%.

Gupta said renewal of the inflation targeting framework has come at a moment of considerable global uncertainty, with geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, energy price volatility, and an uneven global growth outlook having made the macroeconomic environment "more complex and less predictable."

As such, the renewal "strengthens the framework precisely when it is most needed", the central banker added.

The retention of the flexible inflation targeting framework has received the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) backing, with Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the agency's Asia

## RBI sees errors in IMF forecasts; IMF says no systematic bias

New Delhi: Commenting on the IMF's economic forecasts, RBI Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta noted that over the last three years, the multilateral agency's projection for India's growth "have always been lower" than the outcomes.

"So, the point I am trying to make is that Indian growth has been robust and resilient in the past few years... I am also trying to make a polite remark on the forecasting (accuracy) of the IMF. I also compared it with what the RBI does around the same time... Yes, RBI also has projection errors, but they seem narrower. So, it's an apple-to-apple comparison and perhaps it will make sense for us to exchange notes more," Gupta said, seemingly tongue-in-cheek.

IMF's Srinivasan responded that studies have shown the Fund's forecasts have no systematic bias. "We make projections every three months. Yes, we can get our projections wrong. It's never intended badly. We work very closely with country authorities... And we will continue to try and see how our numbers can match with that of the RBI going forward," Srinivasan said to laughter. The RBI currently expects India's GDP to grow 6.9% in FY27, while the IMF is forecasting 6.5% growth. ENS

and Pacific Department, saying on Tuesday at the same event that the framework had served India very well and a 4% target in a band of 2-6% is "appropriate" and any change to the target should meet a very high bar given the credibility risks such a revision would entail.

## BRIEFLY

### India well placed to manage shocks: Moody's

New Delhi: India has been the most resilient large emerging market economy since 2020, and its sizeable forex reserves have helped check currency volatility and reinforce confidence during global shocks, Moody's Ratings said on Tuesday. In a report on emerging market, Moody's said India is well placed to manage future shocks because monetary policy frameworks are clear and predictable, inflation expectations are well anchored, and exchange rates can adjust when needed. PTI

### SEBI cautions market players on risks from AI tools like Mythos

New Delhi: SEBI on Tuesday issued an advisory cautioning regulated entities against emerging risks from advanced AI tools used for vulnerability detection, including Anthropic's Mythos. SEBI has constituted a task force named cyber-suraksha.ai, comprising representatives from market infrastructure institutions, qualified registrars and transfer agents, regulated entities and other stakeholders. PTI

### Rupee hits record low on renewed US-Iran tensions

Mumbai: The rupee slid to a record low on Tuesday as a fragile truce in West Asia came under strain after the US and Iran launched new attacks to wrestle for control of the Strait of Hormuz, a key artery for global energy supplies. The currency weakened to 95.4325 per dollar, down as much as 0.4% and eclipsing its previous all-time low of 95.33 hit Thursday. REUTERS

### Biocon chair names niece as successor

Bengaluru: Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder and chairperson of Biocon, said on Tuesday that she plans a phased leadership transition over the next five years, with her niece Claire Mazumdar expected to eventually take over as chair. Claire is the founding chief executive of Bicara Therapeutics, an oncology-focused biotech firm incubated with early backing from Mazumdar-Shaw and listed in 2024. "I am not hanging up my boots anytime soon, but I want Claire to succeed me in a very phased manner," Mazumdar-Shaw said Reuters in a phone interview, adding that the transition would move step by step. REUTERS

• MICROSOFT, XAI & GOOGLE WILL GIVE US EARLY ACCESS TO NEW AI MODELS BEFORE THEIR PUBLIC RELEASE

# Tech firms to share AI models with US govt for review

Reuters  
Bengaluru, May 5

MICROSOFT, ALPHABET-owned Google and Elon Musk's xAI will give the US government early access to new artificial intelligence models before their public release to allow checks for national security risks under a new deal.

The Center for AI Standards and Innovation (CAISI) at the Department of Commerce said on Tuesday that the agreement would allow it to evaluate the models before deployment and conduct research to assess their capabilities and security risks.

The development of advanced AI systems including

Anthropic's Mythos has in recent weeks created a stir globally, including among US officials and corporate America, over their ability to supercharge hackers.

The statement did not mention Anthropic, which has been in a dispute with the Pentagon over guardrails on the military's use of its AI tools.

"Independent, rigorous measurement science is essential to understanding frontier AI and its national security implications," CAISI Director Chris Fall said in a statement.

CAISI, which serves as the government's main hub for artificial intelligence model testing, said it has already com-



The development of advanced AI systems including Anthropic's Mythos has in recent weeks created a stir globally. REUTERS

pleted more than 40 evaluations, including on cutting-edge models not yet available to the public.

Developers frequently hand over versions of their models with safety guardrails stripped back so the center can probe for national security risks, the agency said.

Last week, the Pentagon said it had reached agreements with seven artificial intelligence companies to deploy their advanced capabilities on the Defense Department's classified networks.

With this, the US government seeks to broaden the range of AI providers working across the military establishment. Microsoft, Google and xAI did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

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## MARKETS

|  |  |                     |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Sensex<br>77,017.79<br>-251.61<br>-0.33% | NIFTY<br>24,032.80<br>-86.50<br>-0.36% | Gold<br>₹1,47,636   | US Dollar<br>₹95.29 |
|  |  | Silver<br>₹2,40,465 | Oil<br>\$118.70     |

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF APRIL 30, 2026

# The Big Picture

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026

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LONG BEFORE C. Joseph Vijay asked Tamil Nadu for political power, he had already asked, and got, something more intimate: recognition.

For three decades, he had found a space in homes across Tamil Nadu, arriving through first-day-first-show whistles, television reruns, college dance floors, festival releases and YouTube clips.

So by the time he launched Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in February 2024, Vijay could make a political claim that other new entrants would have found impossible to match: "I did not enter homes after launching TVK," he would tell supporters. "I launched TVK only after entering every home through cinema."

In a state where cinema has been a key medium to represent and reinforce Tamil/Dravidian culture and identity politics, Vijay fits into a familiar pattern — from C. N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi, who used theatre and film dialogues to carry Dravidian ideas into popular imagination, to M. G. Ramachandran and later, Jayalalithaa, who commanded both cinematic and political loyalty.

Yet, Vijay also breaks that tradition. While his astonishing electoral success within two years of his political launch has invited the inevitable comparison with MGR, the other superstar who went on to be Chief Minister, there are crucial differences.

While MGR came from inside the Dravidian movement before founding the AIADMK, Vijay's politics did not grow out of party apprenticeship or public agitation. It grew from fandom first, then welfare activity, then carefully rationed political speech. That makes him both less prepared than MGR and, in another sense, more mysterious.

So when his TVK ended up as the single biggest party in the Tamil Nadu elections, Vijay left almost everyone stunned, except perhaps those in whose homes he had existed since much before, as a poster, as a song, as dialogues or as dance moves.

## Romantic hero to Thalpathy

To understand Vijay's politics, one must first understand Vijay the screen figure.

He was not always the swaggering "Thalpathy" or commander, the honorary title bestowed on him by his fans. The early Vijay was softer, leaner, more boyish. In the 1990s, he became a romantic hero with a particular middle-class accessibility. In films such as *Poove Unakkaga*, *Kadhalukku Mariyadhai*, *Love Today* and *Thuladha Manamum Thullum*, he was the young man who suffered politely, loved

**Tamil cinema has produced many macho heroes. But here was a hero who was not merely beating villains; he was convincing mothers, sisters and college girls that he could be trusted**

earnestly and waited long enough for the audience to bless him.

Tamil cinema has produced many macho heroes. But here was a hero who was not merely beating villains; he was convincing mothers, sisters and college girls that he could be trusted.

Then came the transformation. The lover slowly became the mass hero. *Ghilli* gave him speed, comic timing, physical assurance and the velocity of a star who had learned how to move a crowd. *Thirupaachi*, *Sivakasi*, *Pokkiri* and later *Thuppakki*, *Kaththi*, *Mersal*, *Sarkar*, *Master*, *Beast*, *Varisu* and *Leo* built different versions of the same promise: here was a man who could dance, joke, love, suffer insult, explode into violence and then return to the centre of the frame.

But it was his dance moves — fast and uninhibited — that travelled before his speeches did. In Tamil Nadu, dance is more than just an accessory to stardom. If Rajinikanth had style and Kamal had craft, Vijay had a certain rhythm that young men could imitate and children could attempt at school functions.

In his movies, Vijay is often wronged but not broken. He may mock power, but he does not look powerless. He carries on his shoulders a certain Tamil commercial-film ethic: protect the weak, punish the corrupt, respect mothers, distrust arrogant elites, and deliver justice with enough style to make morality entertaining. In Tamil Nadu, this can almost read like a political manifesto.

## Quietly, Vijay

Off-screen, Vijay was almost the opposite of the man who exploded out of screens. He was shy, private, sparing with words and visibly uncomfortable with public life. For years, even when rumours of political ambition followed him, it was his father, director S. A. Chandrasekhar, who often did the talking.

That father-son relationship is central to Vijay's evolution. In 2009, Chandrasekhar helped shape the All India Thalpathy Vijay Makkal Iyakkam, the fan organisation that would later become the basis for Vijay's social and political activity. For long, Vijay seemed like the hesitant son of an ambitious father, a star with political potential but without the appetite to fully claim it.

The rupture came slowly. In 2020, when Chandrasekhar attempted to form a political outfit using Vijay's name without his approval, he publicly distanced himself and later moved legally against several people, including his parents. The son who had long been described as shy had drawn a hard boundary. If politics was to happen, it would happen on his terms.

# A VIJAY BLOCKBUSTER

First came Vijay the actor — the shy, romantic hero of the 1990s who transformed into a mass entertainer who could dance, joke, love and explode into violence. Then came Vijay the politician, but this time, he didn't need to do much. ARUN JANARDHANAN on the man who walked into people's hearts, and came out with a stupendous mandate



## ● Vijay's Screen Presence

**POOVE UNAKKAGA (1996)** was his first major blockbuster, establishing him as a romantic hero alongside hits such as *Kadhalukku Mariyadhai* (1997), which earned a state award. Films such as *Kushi* (2000) solidified his appeal with youthful romance and music

**GHILLI (2004)**, a kabaddi action remake, is his biggest hit yet, running 250 days and shifting his image to action star. *Thirumalai* (2003) initiated this change. Vijay's energetic portrayal in *Ghilli* featured iconic songs and stunts, making it a festival staple even today

That decision explains much of Vijay's later political style: controlled access, few public improvisations and a tight inner circle. "He is not a man who enjoys being handled. He may tolerate advisers, but he does not enjoy being owned by them," said a source who has worked closely with Vijay before and after the launch of TVK.

Vijay has long kept his personal life tightly private. His mother, Shoba Chandrasekhar, is a playback singer and has also worked as a writer and director in Tamil cinema. His wife, Sangeetha Sornalingam, and their two children have largely stayed away from the public glare. The couple's divorce petition is currently being heard by a court in Chennai.

Vijay's private circle is small, mostly from the film industry. He is known to take quiet cycling rides along Chennai's East Coast Road, often masked and unrecognisable. He moves between his East Coast Road bungalow and a seafront residence near Marina Beach, a life both extraordinarily privileged and deliberately sealed.

That privacy has helped his aura. He was available on screen, unavailable in life.

## 'A dangerous boy' in politics

The political confrontation that first sharpened his public image came through cinema.

In 2017, his *Mersal*, an action-thriller directed by Atlee, triggered the BJP's anger over dialogues criticising GST, Digital India and the absence of free medical care. H. Raja, a senior BJP leader, called it "Joseph Vijay's hate campaign against Modi", deliberately foregrounding Vijay's Christian identity. BJP leaders accused the film of



A still from Vijay's *Mersal*, released in 2017; (above) arriving at the TVK headquarters in Chennai on May 4, after his party's big win. ANI VIDEO GRAB

misinformation and attributed political motives. Vijay himself remained largely silent. His father defended him fiercely, asking why his son's religion mattered.

The episode did two things. It made Vijay appear, even without speaking, like a star willing to stand inside an anti-establishment storm. And it gave him an early adversary in the BJP, whose attacks elevated his political profile far beyond the film's box office. *Mersal* became more than a film controversy. It was a rehearsal for what was to come.

In 2023, at the Thalpathy Vijay Education Award Ceremony in Chennai, Vijay addressed high-scoring students. He told them to read beyond textbooks, to learn about Ambedkar, Periyar and Kamaraj, to take the good and leave the rest. He spoke

against cash for votes, asking students to tell their parents not to sell their votes. Rs 1,000 per vote, he calculated, meant crores spent in a constituency, and if a candidate could spend that much to win, how much must he expect to make after winning? It was politics without announcing politics.

By February 2024, Vijay announced the TVK. By October that year, at Vikravandi in Villupuram, he marked his formal arrival with flags, songs, Dravidian icons, Tamil symbols, lakhs of supporters, and a line borrowed from Sangam memory — "*Thalalayanganathu Seruvendra Nedunchezhan*", the young king dismissed as inexperienced who won a great battle.

"*Romba ketta paiyan saar antha chinna paiyan*," Vijay thundered in filmy

style — "that young boy was a dangerous boy".

At the time, it sounded theatrical. Now, it reads like a warning the older parties heard but did not believe.

## The night of the big win

His party, the TVK, had no inherited cadre, no decades-old ideology, no ready bench of seasoned politicians waiting to take positions. What he had instead was something more volatile and, in this election, more effective: a dispersed, emotionally charged, semi-organised network of fans who had been doing small acts of public work for years without calling it politics.

His fan organisation, the All India Thalpathy Vijay Makkal Iyakkam, conducted welfare activities, organised local events, mobilised crowds, and, crucially, gathered data — on voters and their grievances. It was not a party. But it was not merely a fan club either.

When TVK was finally launched, it did not need to build its presence from scratch. What Vijay did next surprised even those who had invested in him. He did very little.

In an election where rivals travelled relentlessly, spoke endlessly and spent massively, Vijay campaigned sparingly — barely a dozen or so major outings across districts. He did not attempt to visit every constituency, did not chase every vote physically, did not behave like a man desperate to prove himself.

To critics, this looked like indifference or inexperience. To supporters, it looked like confidence. Every appearance of his became an event. Every speech, a clip, and every movement, a rumour. He allowed others — especially the young, and their phones — to do the talking for him.

YouTube channels tracked his traction obsessively, influencers analysed his speeches frame by frame, and online betting communities began to treat his rise as a probability. For weeks, they were among the few spaces where a TVK surge was not mocked.

A peculiar narrative took hold: Vijay might not be everywhere physically, yet, he was everywhere. His supporters amplified a simple message: give him one chance. It was not a particularly new promise. But in a state where political choices had, for decades, been variations within the same system, Vijay stood out.

His speeches returned repeatedly to corruption, to dignity, to the idea that he did not need public money because he had already earned enough. It was a risky line, but it resonated with a section of voters.

**In an election where rivals travelled relentlessly, Vijay campaigned sparingly. He did not chase every vote physically, did not behave like a man desperate to prove himself**

He also positioned himself carefully in relation to other parties. He attacked both the BJP at the Centre and the DMK in the state, while largely avoiding a direct, sustained confrontation with the AIADMK. This had a tactical effect: it allowed him to absorb anti-DMK sentiment without immediately alienating anti-BJP voters, while also drawing from spaces where the AIADMK had historically thrived.

The result, when it came, surprised even him. Senior figures within the TVK would later admit that even on the night before counting, the expectation was modest — perhaps 60 seats, perhaps the role of Opposition leader. What unfolded instead was something closer to a rupture.

Yet, Vijay's rise in this election carried its own contradiction. In many constituencies, the TVK finished second, close enough to matter, not always enough to win. As the results settled, the arithmetic pointed to a possibility Tamil Nadu had not seriously entertained in decades: a coalition.

In Panayur, outside Vijay's residence, police officials established contact points and senior bureaucrats prepared for transition. Inside, Vijay's circle remained small — Bussy Anand, Aadhar Arjuna, CTR Nirmal Kumar, K. Sengottaiyan, among the few TVK leaders with administrative experience, and a handful of newer figures who have risen with the campaign. It didn't resemble a war room that had pulled off a victory. Instead, it was closer to a film set after an unexpected box-office success — a team suddenly aware that the next project would be judged differently.

In the moments after the victory, there were surreal events. An astrologer visited Vijay's residence. An actress friend was among the few who were allowed through his gates. Vijay met his parents late at night after a day that had redrawn his life.

But beneath the first flush of victory lay a harder question: What kind of Chief Minister would Vijay be?

His supporters argue that he has already managed something larger than a state: a vast film industry ecosystem, with budgets, labour networks, distribution chains and global markets. That experience, they say, is not trivial. It is governance of a different kind. His critics counter that cinema is not governance. That a state like Tamil Nadu, with its complex bureaucracy and layered social contracts, cannot be run on instinct and image. Both arguments hold some truth.

Tamil Nadu did not vote only for Vijay the actor, or Vijay the outsider, or Vijay the promise. It voted for a possibility that something new, however uncertain, might still be allowed to enter a system that had long seemed closed. Joseph Vijay — shy and elusive — walked in through that door.

## Classifieds

### PERSONAL

**I Nirmal Sharma W/o Hemant Sharma R/o C-665, JI Colony, Camp-2, Nangloi, Delhi-110041,** have changed my name to Nirmala Sharma for all future purposes 0071033636-1

**I Madhumati Banyal W/o Satish Kumar Singh R/o W-75, C-Lane No-10, Anupam Gardens, Saidulajab, Ignoo, Delhi-110066,** have changed my name to Madhu Singh 0071033630-1

**I MANJU BHADANA W/O PRASHANT KASANA R/O HOUSE NO-77, BHAGMALPUR, P-5, GREATER NOIDA, DISTT- GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR UP-201310** have changed my name after marriage to MANJU KASANA for all future purposes 0071033654-1

**I Harjit Kaur W/o Pavitar Singh R/o B-40, Malcha Marg, Chanakya Park, Delhi-110021,** have changed my name to Harjit Kaur Chowdhary 0071033633-1

**I Gopal S/o Kishori Rawat R/o 15/187,Block-15, Kalyanpuri, East Delhi.** Have Changed My Name To Gopal Rawat For All Future Purposes. 0071033664-1

**I Vikash Kumar Dudheria S/o Vijay Singh Dudheria (Jain), R/o, A-17, Flat- No. G-1, Rampur, Chander- Nagar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201011,** have changed my name to Vikash Dudheria. 0040852766-4

**I VINETA AJEET RUPA W/O AJEET S RUPA R/O IPH-2, Jasmine, Niho Scottish Garden, Ahinsa Khand-2, Indrapuram., Ghaziabad (UP)** have changed my name to VINETA A RUPA. 0040852748-6

**I, Shakuntla Rani W/o, Bhagwan Dass Dhamija, R/o, Flat- No.2/301, Third-Floor, Jaypee. C.G.H.S Ltd., Plot- No.2, Sector-22, Dwaraka, New Delhi-110077,** that my father's name is wrongly mentioned as Bhagwan Dass in my Passport- No.N7581538. The actual name of my father is Bhagwan Dudeja. 0040852766-6

**I, Satish Jain, S/o- Late K.S.Jain, R/o G-157, Sector-44, Noida, P.O: Noida, Sector-45, District- Gautam- Budh- Nagar, Uttar-Pradesh-201303,** have changed my name, from Satish Jain to Satish Kumar Jain, for all future purposes. 0040852764-12

**I, Sangeeta Choudhary, W/o Omkar Singh Sardana R/o-1721, Sector-16, Faridabad,** have changed my name to Sangeeta Singh Sardana. 0040852766-8

**I, SUDHA RAMKUMAR W/o- RAMMIAH SUBBIAH RAMKUMAR, R/O- C35, Manas-Vihar Apartment, Mayur-Vihar Phase-1 Extension Delhi-110091,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUDHA RAMKUMAR IYER. 0040852748-3

**I, SHIVA NATH GUPTA S/O, RAMNOHAR GUPTA R/O, H.NO B-32, GALLI NO. 2, VISHNU- ENCLAVE ISMAILPUR- FARIDABAD HARYANA- 120113,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SHIV NATH GUPTA. 0040852764-3

**I, SHAMINA, W/o SHAHIDALI R/o, H-NO.1204 GALLI NO-14 RAJIV GANDHI NAGAR, NEW MUSTAFABAD, DELHI-110094,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SAMRANA 0040852764-8

**I, Rawani Devi, W/o Madhuban, R/o S-184/26, New Sanjay Camp, Okhla Phase-1, New Delhi-110020,** have changed my name to Rabadi Devi for all future purposes. 0040852765-2

**I, Narendre Kumar Verma S/o Late I.S.Verma R/O-QD-22, Pitampura, Delhi-110034,** changed my name to Narendre Kumar Verma. 0040852748-2

**I, Rajendra Gupta, S/o Hira Lal Gupta, R/o Plot. No. A-1, Part of Plot. No.6, Patel Garden, Kakrola, Delhi have changed my name to Rajender Gupta.** 0040852748-1

**I, RUPESH, S/O, VEER KUMAR JAIN, R/O, D-674, UPPER GROUND-FLOOR SARASWATI-VIHAR, PITAMPURA, DELHI-110034,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RUPESH JAIN. 0040852764-4

**I, Omwati Devi, W/o-Late Sh. Chatter Singh, R/o H.No.181/6, Pul Pehladpur, South, New Delhi-110044,** declare that Omwati Rajput and Omwati Devi refer to one and the same individual, who shall hereafter be known and identified as Omwati Devi. 0040852766-1

**I, Priyanka Chauhan D/O, Navratan R/o Vpo Ismaila 9b Tehsil Sampla District Rohtak Haryana** have changed my name to Priyanka. 0040852746-1

**I, ANKITA HARSH, W/O MANISH VYAS, R/O PLOT, NO.9A AND 10 FLAT, NO.303, RD FLOOR, BLOCK-B, BHAGWATI GARDEN EXTN, UTTAM NAGAR, DELHI-110059,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ANKITA HARSH VYAS FOR ALL PURPOSE 0040852767-4

**I, Paramveer Bhati S/O Shri Jagat Singh R/O Salempur Gurjar, Greater Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-203202,** do hereby declare that I have changed my daughter's name from Navya to Navya Bhati. Henceforth, she shall be known as Navya Bhati for all legal and future purposes. 0040852765-3

**I, Ninder Kumar, S/o-Bhan Chand Bansal, R/o-Ward No.17, Ratiya, Fatehabad, Haryana-125051,** have changed my name from Ninder Kumar to Ninder Kumar Bansal, for all purposes 0040852764-1

**I, Neha Chhabra, D/o Yogesh Chander Vij, R/o A-204, First Floor, Sushant Lok-3, Sector-57, Gurgaon, Haryana,** have changed my name to Neha Vij, for all purposes. 0040852748-5

**I, Neetu Singh, W/o Jaiveer Singh, 606, Trump Tower, Omxase Heights, Sector-86, Faridabad,** have changed my name to Neetu Rani. 0040852766-9

**I, Madhuban Prasad, S/o Ram Bahal, R/o S-184/26, New Sanjay Camp, Okhla Phase-1, New Delhi-110020,** have changed my name to Madhuban for all future purposes. 0040852765-1

**I, MOHIT PREM GUPTA, S/O PREM KUMAR GUPTA, R/O-H. NO-12, SHUBHAM ENCLAVE, BALKESHWAR, BELAN GANJ, AGRA, UTTAR PRADESH-282004,** have changed my name for all future purposes to MOHIT GUPTA 0040852764-6

**I, Khushboo Varma, W/o-Sandeep Soni, R/o-2550, Gali No.3, Jawahar Colony, Faridabad,** have changed my name to Khushboo Soni after marriage. 0040852766-11

**I, Karan Punyani, S/o Kanwal Kishore Punyani R/o-16/17, Subhash Nagar, Delhi-110027,** have changed my minor daughter's name Aahana to Aahana Punyani aged-8-years. 0040852766-5

**I, KAVITA RANI, W/O VIJAY BATRA, R/O 4/165 2nd-FLOOR SUBHASH-NAGAR TAGORE-GARDEN DELHI-110027,** HAVE CHANGED MY CHILD NAME BABY TWO OF KAVITA TO KIYAAN BATRA. 0040852748-8

**I, Jagriti, W/o-Mudit Nagpal R/o BS-12E, First Floor, Malibu town, Sector-47, Gurgaon (Haryana)- 122001,** have changed my name to Jagriti Thakkar Nagpal. 0040852766-2

**I, HARI OM PRASHAD, S/O RAMESH PANDIT, R/O 54A SINGLE STOREY, RAMESH NAGAR, WEST DELHI, DELHI-110015,** have changed my name to HARIOM PRASHAD, for all future purpose. 0040852764-9

**I, Gagan Kumar, S/o Suresh, House no.256, Street.no.1, K-Block, DDA Park, Mahipalpur, New Delhi-110037,** have changed my name to Gagan Dahiya. 0040852767-1

**I, Divya W/O Shri Vikrant Sharma, R/O Plot-33-B, New Vikas Nagar, Loni Dehat, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201102,** I swear that my above name is Divya, DOB 25/12/1996, both the names Deepa Sharma and Divya are the names of me. 0040852765-4

**I, Ram Prakash Bhatia, S/o-Tulsi Das Bhatia, R/o-P-804, Park Grandeur, Sector-82, Faridabad,** have changed my name to Ram Parkash Bhatia. 0040852766-10

**I, DOLLY MARGREAT MASHI D/O RAHMAT MASHI R/o-C-56, Second Floor, Panchsheel Vihar, Delhi-110017,** have changed my name to DOLLY MARGARET MASHI. 0040852767-5

**I, Amit Kumar Garg, S/o Shyam Lal Garg, R/o 32, Gurjanwala Town, Part-2, Delhi-110009,** have changed my name to AMIT GARG, for all future purposes. 0040852767-2

**I, Aklema Khatun, D/o Hobibur Rohoman W/o Asrafal Islam, R/o F-368, 2nd Floor, Flook-road, Shalimar Residency, Sushant Lok-2, Sec-57, Gurugram (HR), 122003** have changed my name to Aklima Khatun. 0040852766-3

**I, ASMA D/O Kamaljit, R/O 247, DDA Janta Flat, Group-2, Pocket-C, Hastals, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059,** have changed my name to ANURADHA. I have only changed my name not my religion. 0040852766-7

**I, ARSLAN, S/O-SAJID PARVEZ, R/O-4741, 3RD FLOOR OPP CHHOTI BARADARI, BALLI MARAN DELHI-6,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ARSLAN PARVEZ. 0040852764-10

**I, MURLI MANOHAR MENON, S/O SHAKTI PRAKASH, R/O FLAT NO 79 PLOT NO 19/3 JAGDAMBA APARTMENT SECTOR 13 ROHINI NORTH WEST DELHI - 110085,** have changed my name MURLI MANOHAR for all future purposes. 0071033610-1

**I, MOHIT S/O MADHUKAR WAHI, R/O E-895, SARASWATI VIHAR, PITAMPURA, DELHI-34,** declares that I will use my name as "MOHIT WAHI" for all purpose in future. 0040852741-1

**I, MO NASEEM, S/O HANIF, R/O HALALPUR BAGHPAT UTTAR PRADESH, 250617,** have changed my name NASIM for all future purposes 0071033589-1

**I, ARNAV S/O MANOJ KUMAR 7/123, NAKUL GALLI, WISHWAS NAGAR, SHAHDARA DELHI-110032,** HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ARNAV KUMAR FOR ALL PURPOSE 0040852767-3

**I, ANU RADHA, W/o-Yogesh Saluja, R/o-WZ-154-B, IIIrd-Floor, Gali, No5, Virender Nagar Janakpuri-New, Delhi-110058,** have changed my name to ANURADHA SALUJA, permanently 0040852748-7

**I, AJEET SHEPHARD RUPA, S/O JULIUS WALTER RUPA, R/O-IPH-2, Jasmine, Niho Scottish Garden, Ahinsa Khand-2, Indrapuram., Ghaziabad (UP),** have changed my name to AJEET S RUPA 0040852687-2

**I, ANA D/o-Juginder Sharma, R/o-2818, Urban Estate, Jind, Haryana-126102,** have changed my name to Ana Sharma. 0040852764-2

**I, Sumit S/O Ram Chander R/O H.No- 25 F/F, Satya Niketan, Moti Bagh, Dist: South West Delhi, Delhi- 110021,** have changed my name to Sumit Lukher 0071033628-1

**I, Vidhi W/O-Tushar Tomar, R/O GH3/6C, Gurgaon One Apartments, Sec-22A, Palam-Vihar, Gurgaon Haryana-122015,** have changed my name to Vidhi Singh, for all future purposes. 0040852764-7

**I, Tarun Kumar, S/O Shri Prem Pal residing at C-293, East End Apartments, Mayur Vihar, have changed my name to Tarun Kumar Attri vide affidavit dated 03.05.26 at Delhi 0040852495-2**

**I, Shamim Ahmad R/O G-497, Gali No-12, Jaitpur Extn. Part-2, Badarpur, Delhi-44** have changed my minor son name from MOHD ISHAM to MOHAMMAD ISHAM. 0071033660-1

**I, Shaileendra Kumar S/o Babu Ram Verma R/O A2, UGF, C-211, Chattarpur Enclave Phase-2, New Delhi-110074** have changed my name to Shaileendra Kumar Singh for all purposes 0040852694-1

**I, Sanjay Kumar Sinha S/O Krishna Kumar Sinha R/O SF-03 279 Niti Khand-2, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201014** have changed my name to Sanjay Kumar for all purposes. 0040852690-1

**I, Sahjad Khan S/o Shamsuddin Khan R/O Plot -17, Kh No-19/3, Near Chabra Hardware, Choti Masjid, Begumpur, Delhi,** have changed my name to Shehzad Khan permanently. 0040852715-1

**I, Sahilendra Kumar Srivastav S/o Bhagvant Kishore Lal Srivastav, R/o-360, GF, Shakti Khand-IV, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad,** have changed my name to Shaileendra Kumar Srivastava. 0040852766-12

**I, SANJAY KUMAR PANDITA S/O R L Pandita, 77B, TF, Chirag Delhi, Delhi-17** have changed my name to SANJAY PANDITA. 0071033658-1

**I, Robin Arora S/o Mohinder Kumar Arora R/o 4/57, Road No-57, First Floor, Punjabi Bagh West, New Delhi -110026** have changed name of my minor daughter from Shivanya Arora to Shivaanya Arora permanently 0040852737-1

**I, Richa Saxena D/O Neeraj Kumar R/O A-113 Street no2 Subhash mohalla North Ghonda Delhi-110053,** have changed my name from Richa Richa to Richa Saxena for all Future Purposes (bank A/C-3058401266). 0050288818-1

**I, RAHUL KUMAR MENON, S/O MURLI MANOHAR, R/O FLAT NO 79 PLOT NO 19/3 JAGDAMBA APARTMENT SECTOR 13 ROHINI NORTH WEST DELHI - 110085,** have changed my name RAHUL MANAN for all future purposes. 0071033611-1

**I, No-30032044X, Hav Mohammad Asif Khan, R/O-Harduring Payeen Machli, Tehsil /District- Kupwara.** In my service records name of my spouse has been wrongly mentioned as Fahmeeda Bano instead of Fahmeeda Begum as mentioned in Aadhar card. It needs correction. Objections be filled to concerned authorities within seven days. 0020513133-1

**I, Krishnash Sharma S/o Vijender Sharma, R/o 237 Bank Enclave Laxmi, Delhi-110092,** have changed my name to Krishnansh Sharma. 0071033569-1

**I, KAUSAR BEGUM W/O MOHD KAMIL R/O 3098 GF GALI SUSHILA BEHIND KALAN MASJID BAZAR SITA RAM DELHI 110006,** have changed my name to KAUSER BANO Permanently. 0071033656-1

**I, Imran Khan S/o Imamuddin R/o 155, Maharajpur-1, Ghaziabad,** have changed my name to Imran Khan. 0071033612-1

**I, Gunjan Grover Attri, D/O Shri Peshawari Lal Grover, residing at C-293, East End Apartments, Mayur Vihar,** have changed my name to Gunjan Grover vide affidavit dated 03.05.26 at Delhi 0040852495-3

**I, Bhagirathi Devi, W/O Vikram Singh, date of Birth- 01.01.1943, R/O-Pali Pithoragarh, Kanali China, Uttarakhand-262541,** have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhagrathi Devi 0040852695-1

**I, Shakir S/O Moli Sayeed R/o 185 Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin Delhi** changed name to Shakir Ali affidavit dated 02.05.2026 0130064301-1

**I Yuganshu Uppal S/O Naveen Uppal R/o B-123, Anand Vihar, P/o shakar pur district East Delhi, Delhi-110092** have changed my name to Yug N Uppal for all purposes. 0040852687-1

**I Yogeshwar Dutt S/o Sh. Krishan Kumar Sharma, R/o Brahmin Mohalla, Allahabad Bank Wali Gali, Rajokari, New Delhi-110038** have changed my name to Yogeshwar Dutt Sharma for all purposes. 0040852687-2

**I, Ana D/o-Juginder Sharma, R/o-2818, Urban Estate, Jind, Haryana-126102,** have changed my name to Ana Sharma. 0040852764-2

**I, Sumit S/O Ram Chander R/O H.No- 25 F/F, Satya Niketan, Moti Bagh, Dist: South West Delhi, Delhi- 110021,** have changed my name to Sumit Lukher 0071033628-1

### LOST & FOUND

**I, ADITYA SINGH, S/D SAVITA SINGH R/O FLAT NO.D-003 MAYURDHWAJ APARTMENTS, PLOT NO.60, I.P. EXTENSION PATPARGANJ, DELHI-110092** have lost my original SHARE CERTIFICATE OF FLAT NO.D-003 MAYURDHWAJ APARTMENTS PLOT NO.60 I.P. EXTENSION PATPARGANJ DELHI-110092. Find at 981126150 0040852686-1

**I, Shamim Ahmad R/O G-497, Gali No-12, Jaitpur Extn. Part-2, Badarpur, Delhi-44** have changed my minor son name from MOHD ISHAM to MOHAMMAD ISHAM. 0071033660-1

**I, Shaileendra Kumar S/o Babu Ram Verma R/O A2, UGF, C-211, Chattarpur Enclave Phase-2, New Delhi-110074** have changed my name to Shaileendra Kumar Singh for all purposes 0040852694-1

**Lost my all original Property Documents of my Shiv Muni Yoga Ashram Khasra No.200, 201, Goshid Mohalla, Haiderpur, New Delhi-88.** Finder may Contact-owner Yogrjal S/o-Late Mohd Chand PU-62, Pitampura, Delhi-85 0040852689-1

**I, Sahilendra Kumar Srivastav S/o Bhagvant Kishore Lal Srivastav, R/o-360, GF, Shakti Khand-IV, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad,** have changed my name to Shaileendra Kumar Srivastava. 0040852766-12

**I, Robin Arora S/o Mohinder Kumar Arora R/o 4/57, Road No-57, First Floor, Punjabi Bagh West, New Delhi -110026** have changed name of my minor daughter from Shivanya Arora to Shivaanya Arora permanently 0040852737-1

**I, Richa Saxena D/O Neeraj Kumar R/O A-113 Street no2 Subhash mohalla North Ghonda Delhi-110053,** have changed my name from Richa Richa to Richa Saxena for all Future Purposes (bank A/C-3058401266). 0050288818-1

**I, RAHUL KUMAR MENON, S/O MURLI MANOHAR, R/O FLAT NO 79 PLOT NO 19/3 JAGDAMBA APARTMENT SECTOR 13 ROHINI NORTH WEST DELHI - 110085,** have changed my name RAHUL MANAN for all future purposes. 0071033611-1

**I, No-30032044X, Hav Mohammad Asif Khan, R/O-Harduring Payeen Machli, Tehsil /District- Kupwara.** In my service records name of my spouse has been wrongly mentioned as Fahmeeda Bano instead of Fahmeeda Begum as mentioned in Aadhar card. It needs correction. Objections be filled to concerned authorities within seven days. 0020513133-1

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**I, KAUSAR BEGUM W/O MOHD KAMIL R/O 3098 GF GALI SUSHILA BEHIND KALAN MASJID BAZAR SITA RAM DELHI 110006,** have changed my name to KAUSER BANO Permanently. 0071033656-1

**I, Imran Khan S/o Imamuddin R/o 155, Maharajpur-1, Ghaziabad,** have changed my name to Imran Khan. 0071033612-1

**I, Gunjan Grover Attri, D/O Shri Peshawari Lal Grover, residing at C-293, East End Apartments, Mayur Vihar,** have changed my name to Gunjan Grover vide affidavit dated 03.05.26 at Delhi 0040852495-3

**I, Bhagirathi Devi, W/O Vikram Singh, date of Birth- 01.01.1943, R/O-Pali Pithoragarh, Kanali China, Uttarakhand-262541,** have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhagrathi Devi 0040852695-1

**I, Shakir S/O Moli Sayeed R/o 185 Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin Delhi** changed name to Shakir Ali affidavit dated 02.05.2026 0130064301-1

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
To be known to the public at large that my Client, **SRI. JACOB CHANDER NAGI AND SMT. SANGEETA NAGI**, R/o-77, Bank Park, Indrapuram, New Delhi 110064. My clients with a withdrawal notice dated 04.09.2022, dated 04.09.2022 which was given in the newspapers namely Jansatta and The Indian Express and the notice was not published in any newspaper. My clients have been named as **Chandran Mohan Nagi** and daughter in law namely **Kanchan Nagi** who were not named in the withdrawal notice and treated as withdrawn, and the same shall have no legal effect hereafter.  
Sd/-  
**ANURAG KALRA**  
Advocate  
Ch. No. 525A, 1st & 2nd floor,  
Western Wing, Tri-Human Courts, Delhi-110042

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform to public at large that my client **Smt. Kavita Chatur W/o Sh. Kamal Kumar Chatur, Shikhar Chatur S/o Sh. Kamal Kumar Chatur, Shikhar Chatur D/o Sh. Kamal Kumar Chatur and Diksha Chatur D/o Sh. Kamal Kumar Chatur** all R/o K-12, JI Colony, Shakurpur, Saranwal Vihar, Delhi-110044 have severed all relationship with her husband/father namely **Sh. Kamal Kumar Chatur S/o Late Sh. Bhup Singh Chatur** and disowned and deserted him from all movable and immovable properties of my clients as he has become disreputable and they are not of control of my above clients and my clients have nothing to do with him. My clients shall not be responsible for his acts, deeds. If anyone engages in any kind of transaction, legal disputes, financial matters then he/she will be doing that at his/her own risk and consequences.  
Sd/-  
**Chander Shekhar**  
Advocate  
Off: M-183-182, Meer Vihar  
Hauz Khas Post, Delhi-110081

**कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड**  
(एक महारत्न कंपनी)  
"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd [www.coalindia.in](http://www.coalindia.in) / respective Subsidiary Company, CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/>."

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**E-Tender Notice**  
Dy.CMM/NWR/Ajmer, acting for and behalf of the president of India invites E-tender against tender no. 42265530 Dt.30.04.2026 Closing Dt.01.06.2026 at 14:25 hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and times only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offers received shall be ignored. **Description of work:** 1. Supply and replacement of upholstery in Vande Bharat Executive chair car seats. 2. Supply and replacement of upholstery in Vande Bharat second class Non Executive chair car seats. **Quantity:** 156 Nos., **Date & time for submission of Tender:** Submission of E-Tender up to 01.06.2026 at 14:25 Hrs., **Website particular:** [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) **640-PS/26**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
PROPERTY NO. (14TH SHARE) ONE FOURTH SHARE OF A PIECE OF LAND AREAS MEASURING (4-12), FOUR BIGHAS, TWELVE BISWAS, OUT OF KHASRA NO. 5521(20-18), 5625(23-08), 705 MEN (0-45) & 71(10-01), SITUATED IN THE REVENUE ESTATE OF VILLAGE NIZAMPUR, DELHI STATE, NEW DELHI AS PER THE REVENUE RECORDS OF SUB-DIVISION, SARASWATI VIHAR, NEW DELHI HEREBY REPORT THE LOSS MISPLACEMENT OF MY ORIGINAL PROPERTY DOCUMENTS INCLUDING AGREEMENT TO SELL, GPA AND OTHER RELATED PAPERS CONCERNING ABOVE MENTIONED PROPERTY DISRITE BEST EFFORTS, THE DOCUMENTS COULD NOT BE TRACED. KINDLY RESISTER THIS COMPLAINT AND ISSUE AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR RECORD AND LEGAL PURPOSES.  
Sd/-  
**Babita Garg,**  
House No. 227, East Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi

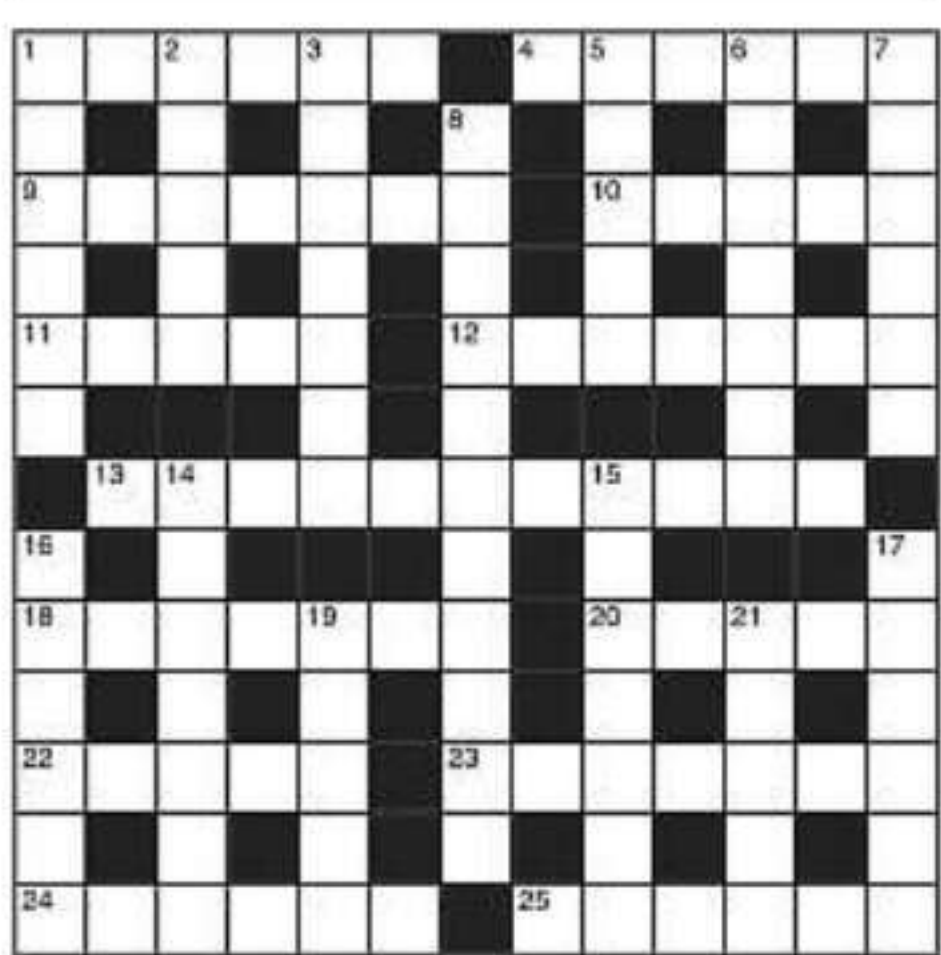
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
PROPERTY NO. (14TH SHARE) ONE FOURTH SHARE OF A PIECE OF LAND AREAS MEASURING (4-12), FOUR BIGHAS, TWELVE BISWAS, OUT OF KHASRA NO. 5521(20-18), 5625(23-08), 705 MEN (0-45) & 71(10-01), SITUATED IN THE REVENUE ESTATE OF VILLAGE NIZAMPUR, DELHI STATE, NEW DELHI AS PER THE REVENUE RECORDS OF SUB-DIVISION, SARASWATI VIHAR, NEW DELHI HEREBY REPORT THE LOSS MISPLACEMENT OF MY ORIGINAL PROPERTY DOCUMENTS INCLUDING AGREEMENT TO SELL, GPA AND OTHER RELATED PAPERS CONCERNING ABOVE MENTIONED PROPERTY DISRITE BEST EFFORTS, THE DOCUMENTS COULD NOT BE TRACED. KINDLY RESISTER THIS COMPLAINT AND ISSUE AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR RECORD AND LEGAL PURPOSES.  
Sd/-  
**Babita Garg,**  
House No. 227, East Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
General public is hereby informed that my client **Smt. Indu Wahi D/o Sh. Shri Lal Channa R/o F-1U/34, Pitampura, Delhi-110034** has lost on 05.01.2026 the Recommendation Letter dated 06.08.2004, bearing Serial No. 001313 issued by Land & Building Department, Vikas Bhawan, New Delhi and Bank Challans of Rs. 77,000/- and Rs. 42,333/-.  
Sd/-  
**A. Alam & Associates (Advocates)**  
Ch. No. 230, Western Wing Tri-Human Courts, Delhi-110054.  
Mob.: 9611428681, 9810575788

**SITUATION VACANT**  
**LEELA EDUCATION SOCIETY'S**  
**ACHARA INSTITUTIONS**  
**NAMRATA ACHARYA ENGLISH SCHOOL & JUNIOR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & COMMERCE, SHELU**  
Approved by Govt. of Maharashtra, Recognised by DHE and Affiliated to Maharashtra State Board  
**REQUIRES**  
**PRINCIPAL**  
**JUNIOR/ SENIOR LECTURER (M.Sc. B.Ed)**  
Subject : English, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Mathematics, Information Technology, Com. Science  
**JUNIOR/ SENIOR LECTURER (M.A. / M.Com. B.Ed)**  
Subject : Economics, Secretarial Practice, Book Keeping  
**ACCOUNTANCY ORGANIZATION of Commerce, English**  
**CLERK CUM TYPIST (B.Com)**  
Computer Knowledge & Two Years Experience  
**LAB ATTENDANT (12 (Sci)/B.Sc.)**  
**RECEPTIONISTS (4) | ACCOUNTANT**  
**P. A. to PRINCIPAL | LIBRARIAN**  
**DRIVER**  
**For School : PRINCIPAL/ TEACHERS**  
D.Ed, B.A./B.Sc, B.Ed in English Medium  
**Highly attractive salaries for deserving candidates.**  
**GURUKUL HOSTEL MAMDAPUR, NERAR**  
**REQUIRES**  
**HOSTEL WARDEN - 1 | CARE TAKER - 4**  
**COOK - 1 | ASSS. COOK - 3**  
**HOUSE KEEPING - 4 | NURSE (Full Time) - 2**  
**SECURITY (Male) - 3 | SECURITY**

• **CROSSWORD**

5981



**ACROSS**  
 1 Address for delivery? (6)  
 4 It never rains but it pours (6)  
 9 Frenchman leaving umbrella unfurled gets complaint (7)  
 10 Possibly the present state of a nervous person (5)  
 11 The chairman's seat? (5)  
 12 Strain seen when a row takes a long time (7)  
 13 Descriptive of a sophisticated geography master? (7-4)  
 18 Bird in box on line (7)  
 20 He's no better off for changing roles (5)  
 22 It's taken for granted at ten to ten in the morning (5)  
 23 One object in rent is investment (7)  
 24 Material backing (6)  
 25 It's accepted as a sin (6)

**DOWN**  
 1 Tension disturbed rest on board (6)  
 2 Be sent up to bed, having gone into a decline (5)  
 3 Officer cut off in pass (7)  
 5 Dispatched to the interior? (5)  
 6 One addresses one's remarks to them (3,4)  
 7 Work's for degrees? The ones here have point (6)  
 8 Laws for well-adjusted non-dancers (11)  
 14 Eggs turn into cheers (7)  
 15 Leaving things late? (7)  
 16 A ship taking trouble in attack (6)  
 17 Put in a box and carted off (6)  
 19 Upright type — like Brutus? (5)  
 21 Kid said to have been influenced (5)

**SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5981** ACROSS: 1 Facades, 5 Judge, 8 Condescending, 9 Sorts, 10 Netting, 11 Skiers, 12 Ragged, 15 Allowed, 17 Sacks, 19 Finishing post, 20 Elsie, 21 Skilled DOWN: 1 Focus, 2 Canary Islands, 3 Dresser, 4 Second, 5 Janet, 6 Driving school, 7 Engaged, 11 Snaffle, 13 Assegai, 14 Admits, 16 Waste, 18 Sited

**JUMBLED WORDS**

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes. — Sherlock Holmes (8)

**HLSEE** ○●●○○○  
**HERON** ○●○○○●

**GLOYSS** ○○○●○○○  
**EINOVB** ○○○●○○○

**SOLUTIONS:** Heron's, Honer, Glossy, Boyne

• **OVER THE HEDGE**

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS



• **CALVIN & HOBBS**

BY BILL WATTERSON



• **MARVIN**

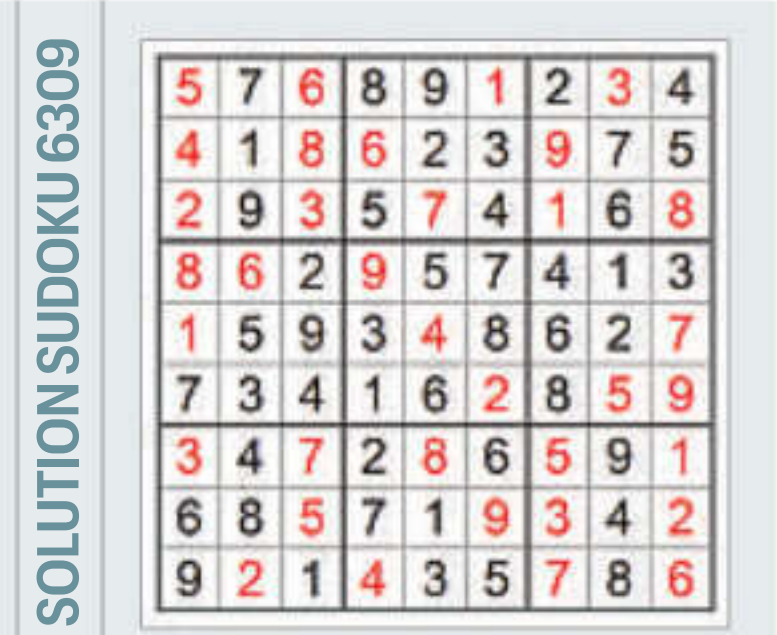
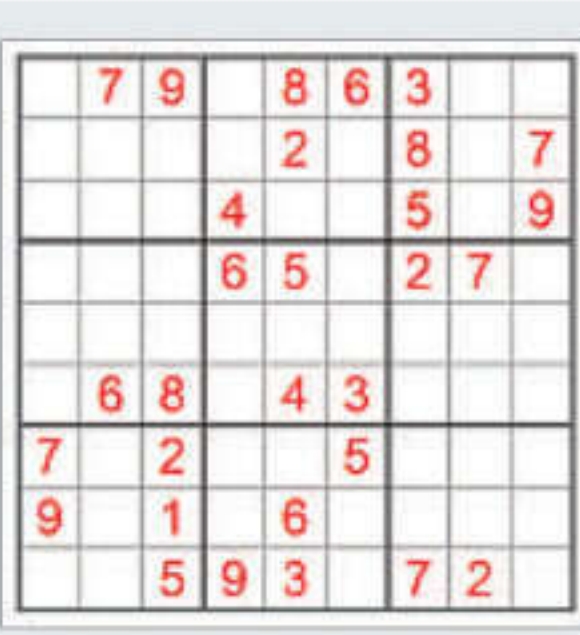
BY TOM ARMSTRONG



**DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2s INSTRUCTIONS**

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL**  
 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



• **ROYAL STARS**

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

**ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20):** Be wise and don't challenge authority figures today. You won't win. This is definitely the day to think for yourself, especially about choosing your battles. Tonight: You're obvious.

**TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21):** This is a tense day for discussions about controversial subjects like politics, religion and racial issues. You also might be challenged in situations related to the law or medicine. Go gently. Tonight: Learn something new.

**GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21):** Financial discussions will definitely present a squeeze play for you today. Someone older, more experienced or in authority will tell you why something can't be done. Do your planning, but play your cards close to your chest. Tonight: Check your finances.

**CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23):** Relations with spouses, partners and close friends might be strained today because people are critical or cold. This makes you feel out of touch with others. Let this go. This is a fleeting dark cloud on your horizon. Tonight: Cooperate.

**LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23):** Health issues, as well as challenges at work, might arise today because someone is critical or uncooperative. Avoid controversial subjects. They will be a bummer. Someone might quit today. Stay busy and positive. Tonight: Get organised; focus on a pet.

**VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23):** This is a tough day for relating to your kids, as well as for romantic relationships, because the vibes are negative. People feel disconnected or disapproving of each other. Your perspective is distorted today. Tonight: Take it easy.

**LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23):** You like to get along with others, which is why this might feel like a challenging day for you. People might not be particularly friendly. You might have to say goodbye to someone. Tonight: Listen.

**SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23):** Be careful about falling into negative thinking about yourself today. This is not real. Things look worse than they are today. If you work hard, you'll feel better. Tonight: Speak clearly.

**SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22):** Financial issues look tight today. You'd rather save your money. In addition to which, your kids might feel like an increased responsibility. The truth is that things are actually better than they look today. Tonight: Check your money and possessions.

**CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20):** Life looks worse than it is today. Keep this in mind and remind yourself to stay positive. Sometimes happiness is a state of mind; it's a choice. You might feel hurt, slighted or separated from a family member today. Tonight: You're strong.

**AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19):** Home and family are your focus, and today you want to socialise. For some reason, you feel cut off from others, which is why you might seek solitude. Don't listen to criticism. It's not real. Things look worse than they are today. Tonight: Solitude.

**PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20):** You might be disappointed in a friend today. They might fail to respond to your needs. You might even feel cut off from someone. Possibly this relates to financial matters or something you own. Let it go, because this is a negative confusion today. Tonight: Friendships.

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
**See Section 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Vijay S/o Bhagwat Kishore R/o Near Police Chowki Farash Khana, Old Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence case FIR No. 121/2021 u/s 379/34 IPC at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Vijay cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Vijay has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita has been initiated in the case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said Vijay accused of FIR No. 121/2021 u/s 379/34 IPC at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 03.06.2026.

By Order: Sh. Vaibhav Garg,  
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-11 (Central)  
 Room No. 138, 1st Floor,  
 Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**  
**(See Section 82 Cr. PC)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely Bhupender Singh S/o Taj Singh, R/o H.No. F-46A, Shyam Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 338/2018 U/s 341/509/352/34 IPC Act at P.S. Tilak Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrants of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Bhupender Singh cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Bhupender Singh have absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Bhupender Singh of FIR No. 338/2018 U/s 341/509/352/34 IPC Act at P.S. Tilak Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 12.06.2026.

By order  
 Vikas Madan  
 Judicial Magistrate, First Class-07  
 (West), Room No. 289, 2nd Floor  
 Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER**

**BORDER SECURITY FORCE**  
 Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Head Constable/Driver Sarat Gogoi on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he made ultimate sacrifice while on operational duty in Satakha, Nagaland.

**CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE**  
 DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Sub Inspector Rajender Singh of 4 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while performing law and order duties in Manipur on 6 May 1963. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

**CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL SECURITY FORCE**  
 CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this brave-heart. On this day, he laid down his life at the altar of duty. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to him for his noblest deed.

**UJVN Ltd.**  
 (An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise)  
 H.Q. - "UJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. ROAD, Dehradun-248006.  
 Phone - 0135-2763508, 2763808 & Fax : 0135-2763507  
 CIN No. - U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

**Short Term Tender Notice**  
 Date: 04.05.2026

Office of the Executive Engineer (M&G) Kuhlhal Power Station, Kuhlhal, invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

**Tender No. 03/UJVNL/EE(M&G)/KPS/2026-27:** "Annual maintenance contract for Operation and Maintenance activities at Kuhlhal Power Station."  
**Tender No. 04/UJVNL/EE(M&G)/KPS/2026-27:** "General cleaning work at Kuhlhal Power House for one year."  
**Tender No. 06/UJVNL/EE(M&G)/KPS/2026-27:** "Servicing & overhauling of Trash Rack Cleaning Machine TRCM at Kuhlhal Power Station"  
**Estimated cost:** Rs. 20,29,584/-, Rs. 10,37,344/- & Rs. 16,00,000/- GST Extra respectively  
**Date of availability of bid document on website:** 05/05/2026 11:00 Hrs  
**Last date for submission of tender:** 20/05/2026 15:00 Hrs  
 For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"

Executive Engineer (M&G) Kuhlhal  
 "AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
 No.: T/D&R/UN.AB./AWG-2025 Dated: 27.04.2026

**ABSENTEE NOTICE**

This is to inform Shri Vipin Kumar Tomar, S/o- Shri Ved Prakash Tomar, Ex-T/IT/TL no SW at AWG, R/o- C9 Mellford City, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, PIN- 250001, Mobile No.- 7417276504, who is running unauthorised absence since 18.12.2024 without any information. It is to inform you that you must report to the office of Sr.DOM(G&G)/PRYJ, Ground Floor, DRM Office, NCR, Prayagraj within Ten (10) days from the date of publishing of this notice. Otherwise, it will be deemed that you are not at all interested to continue in Railway Service and Railway Administration will be compelled to ex-parte the decision against you as Dismissal/Removal/Compulsory retirement from service.

**Name- Shri Vipin Kumar Tomar**  
**S/o- Shri ved Prakash Tomar**  
**R/o- C9 Mellford City, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, PIN-250001, Mobile No.-7417276504**

Sr.Divisional Operations Manager (G&G)  
 North Central Railway, Prayagraj 936/26(A)

North central railways | @CPNCR | www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
**(SEE SECTION 84 BNSS)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) Laxman Sharma S/o Lt. Kishan Mistri R/o F-259, Gali No. 9, Near Durga Mandir, Shastri Park, Delhi has committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No./CC No. 61/2019 U/s 25 Arms Act, PS Shastri Park, Distt. North-East, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) Laxman Sharma can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) Laxman Sharma has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person(s) Laxman Sharma of FIR No./CC No. 61/2019 U/s 25 Arms Act, PS Shastri Park, Distt. North-East, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated 05.06.2026 at 10:00 AM.

By Order  
 Ms. Shruti Saraswat  
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-03  
 Room No. 22, North East Distt.  
 Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
**(See Section 84 Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Sabban S/o Ansar Ul Haq R/o Bure Ka Makan, Gali No. 18, Brahmपुरi, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No.89/2019, u/s 392/411/34 IPC, P.S. Civil Lines, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Sabban cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Sabban has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Sabban of FIR No.89/2019, u/s 392/411/34 IPC, P.S. Civil Lines, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 02.07.2026.

By Order  
 Sh. Kartik Taparia  
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-06  
 Central District, Room No.247  
 Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
**See Section 82 Cr.PC/ 84 BNSS**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person, namely, Vinit Panchal, S/o Ram Kumar R/o H. No. 241A, Gali No. 5, Balram Nagar Extn., Loni UP, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR : 554/2015, U/s: 498A/406/34 IPC, registered at P.S.: Mansarovar Park, Delhi, and the warrant has been returned writing upon that the said accused person, Vinit Panchal, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person, Vinit Panchal, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said, accused person, Vinit Panchal, FIR : 554/2015, U/s: 498A/406/34 IPC, registered at P.S.: Mansarovar Park, Delhi, is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 11.06.2026.

By Order  
 Ms. Nidhi Bala  
 Judicial Magistrate, First Class,  
 Mahila Court-03, Room No. 08, IInd Floor,  
 Shahadra Distt. Karkardooma Court, Delhi

**SUSPECT MALES**

General public is hereby informed that two suspect males namely 1) Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: 40-45 Years, Height: About 5'7", Complexion: Dark, Built: Strong, Face: Round, Wearing: White & Dark Colour Check Shirt, Dark Colour Pant and White Colour Slipper in Feet, 2) Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: 35-40 Years, Height: About 5'7", Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Normal, Face: Oval, Wearing: Blue Colour Shirt and Jeans. These two individuals entered the bank, distracted the complainant, and stole ₹75,000 from the Cash Deposit Machine at the Bank of Baroda, Jahangirpuri. During the investigation, CCTV footage from the bank was procured, and images of the suspects were generated. In this regard e-FIR No. 80022927/26, U/s 305 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita-2023, dated 16.03.2026 has been lodged at Police Station Mahendra Park, Delhi.

If anyone has any information about these two suspect males please inform P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi on the contact number provide below.

**SHO - Police Station Mahendra Park, Delhi**  
 DP/573/NW/2026 Ph: 9319157402, 8750870227

**RAIL WHEEL FACTORY**  
 YELAHANKA, BENGALURU - 560 064.  
 Website: www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in

**TENDER NOTICE NO.RWF/S/P1/002/2026-27 dt.04.05.2026**

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal - www.irps.gov.in. The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

| Sl# | Tender No | Due date   | Short Description  | Qty         |
|-----|-----------|------------|--|-------------|
| 1   | P1261946  | 21.05.2026 | Steel blooms 300 mm square R-43 as per RWF Specification               | 2140 MT     |
| 2   | P1261984  | 25.05.2026 | Water Cooled Roof as per RWF Drawing                                   | 07 Nos.     |
| 3   | P1261944  | 02.06.2026 | H.A. 70% bricks of size 230X115X76MM as per RWF Specification          | 23851 Nos.  |
| 4   | P1261852  | 05.06.2026 | Steel Blooms 300 mm square [Train 18] as per RWF Specification         | 9438 MT     |
| 5   | P1261667  | 17.06.2026 | Steel Blooms 300 mm Square R16 [LHB] as per RWF Specification          | 22843 MT    |
| 6   | P1261952  | 10.07.2026 | SE Drill Modular Body of (3LD) dia 22.5mm                              | 65 Set      |
| 7   | P1261821  | 13.07.2026 | Magnesia Carbon Bricks as per RWF Specification                        | 150000 Nos. |
| 8   | P1261948  | 15.07.2026 | Steel blooms 340 mm square R-43 as per RWF Specification               | 14496 MT    |
| 9   | P1261795  | 29.07.2026 | Bricks Arch High Alumina 70% for Ladle Lining as per RWF Specification | 638 Set     |
| 10  | P1261947  | 13.08.2026 | Steel Blooms 287mm square as per RWF Specification                     | 1608 MT     |

Principal Chief Materials Manager

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
**See Section 82 Cr.PC.**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Parvez Alam @ Munna, S/o Mubarak, R/o Ishrat Jhan, W/o Moni Mirza ka Makan, Satish Chowk, Gali No. 15, Kachachi Khajoori, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 153/2021, U/s 356/379/34 IPC, P.S. Krishna Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Parvez Alam @ Munna cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Parvez Alam @ Munna has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said Parvez Alam @ Munna accused of FIR No. 153/2021, U/s 356/379/34 IPC, P.S. Krishna Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 24.07.2026.

By Order - Sh. P. Bhargav Rao  
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-05  
 East District, Room No. 03  
 Karkarduma Courts, Delhi

## Price tag has nothing to do with Pant's form: Langer



Rishabh Pant has only scored 204 runs this season. PTI

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 5

RISHABH PANT'S returns with the bat continued to lag on Monday even as some of his big-ticket teammates at Lucknow Super Giants finally managed to find some form. The LSG captain fell after scoring 15 in 10 balls as LSG lost by six wickets to Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium, thus sinking to their sixth consecutive defeat.

The innings took Pant's tally for the season to 204 runs at a strike rate of 128.30 and average of 25.50. While this is woefully below par by any standard, it is a continuation of a pattern that was set last season, in which Pant scored 269 runs in 14 matches at a strike rate of 133.17 and average of 24.45. Nearly half of those runs came from his last innings of the season alone, in which he scored an unbeaten 118 in 61 balls.

That innings remains an outlier, with Pant scoring just three 50+ scores in the 24 innings he has played as captain of LSG, having been bought by the side at the 2025 auction for Rs 27 crore, making him the most expensive IPL player of all time. LSG head coach Justin Langer was asked if Pant is still feeling the pressure of being the big-ticket buy for LSG. "Honestly, I don't think the money has anything to do with it; I don't think that has anything to do with it at all. What I do think is that leadership is a tough position, you're carrying lots of pressure, and he knows that," Langer told the media.

"He's carrying a lot of pressure for the team, and he does it, like all of us, with a smile on his face 98% of the time. The other 2% of the time, it's tough. But he's chipping away, he's working hard and, as I say, he's had a match-winning game earlier in the season. We love it when we see him smiling and playing that swashbuckling style of play, and he's not far off," Langer explained.

Despite the loss, Langer backed captain Pant, insisting the wicketkeeper-batter was close to rediscovering his best form. "You know, he's a very good player; we know that. We've seen him in Test cricket destroy teams at number five."

"So yeah, I mean, Rishabh's not far off," the Australian said.

## INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# Sanju is Chennai's Super King as DC slide further after poor show

Samson's 52-ball 87 gives CSK crucial win in playoff quest after Akeal pushes DC back with a probing spell

**SYNOPSIS:** Sanju is the man for the job once again as CSK outclass shoddy DC in mid-table battle for play-off spot.

Tushar Bhaduri  
New Delhi, May 5

AFTER A promising start, Delhi Capitals are meandering towards the familiar territory of irrelevance as the IPL season enters its business end. After a win over Rajasthan Royals, the home game against Chennai Super Kings was a must-win encounter. But the timid manner of their eight-wicket defeat, combined with their poor net run rate, means that a playoff spot is now a long shot. CSK, on the other hand, kept the feel-good vibes going with a third successive win and they had their 'Chetta' to thank again to guide them to what was a comfortable win in the end. There's still little room for error but the five-time champions are trending the right way.

### Sanju is the man

Getting a 100 in around 40 balls is good for a batter's high-light reel. But once in a while, when the pitch is not an ally, one has to find different ways to skin a cat. Sanju Samson, has got two hundred in the first season for his new franchise, but his unbeaten innings of 87 off

### ● IPL table

| Teams | M  | W | L | PTS |
|-------|----|---|---|-----|
| PBKS  | 9  | 6 | 2 | 13  |
| RCB   | 9  | 6 | 3 | 12  |
| SRH   | 10 | 6 | 4 | 12  |
| RR    | 10 | 6 | 4 | 12  |
| GT    | 10 | 6 | 4 | 12  |
| CSK   | 10 | 5 | 5 | 10  |
| DC    | 10 | 4 | 6 | 8   |
| KKR   | 9  | 3 | 5 | 7   |
| MI    | 10 | 3 | 7 | 6   |
| LSG   | 9  | 2 | 7 | 4   |

M: MATCH; W: WIN; L: LOSS; PTS: POINTS.

52 balls on Tuesday showed that he has become a changed player since his heroics in the T20 World Cup.

At Delhi, Samson couldn't go for every ball and had to pick his moments. He had lost his captain early and Urvil Patel, who was threatening to break loose, was gone with 45 on the board in the seventh over. The surface needed some circumspection and Samson played his role to perfection. Rotating strike wasn't easy so the CSK opener focused on hitting every ball in his hitting arc to the boundary and beyond.

His first maximum proved that six-hitting needn't involve violence. Axar Patel had given him just a hint of room in the second over and Samson gave himself some more before lofting the ball, almost apologeti-



Sanju Samson scored 87 runs off 52 balls to single-handedly construct the run chase. PRAVEEN KHANNA

cally, over wide mid-off for a six.

That set the template for the match-winning innings, where Samson didn't fight the pitch but focused on timing to target the short boundaries. And he knew when to put his foot on the gas. When Lungi Ngidi, returning after his scary injury in the game against Punjab Kings, bowled a tight 14th over giving away only a single, the equation read 50 needed off 36 balls. That's when Samson took matters into his own hands. The next over, bowled by T Natarajan, went for 20, including two sixes and a four, and the match was over as a contest. So much so, that the game was done and dusted with two and a half overs to spare. But Samson couldn't have done it all by himself. Young Kartik Sharma played a crucial role in match-winning stand of 114 off 66 balls.

### Spin to win

Sometimes the biggest

quality a captain needs is courage. But then perhaps, if you have a Powerplay bowling expert such as Akeal Hosein, getting him to bowl three overs out of the first six isn't quite that big a risk. But having a spinner to bowl the last over of the Powerplay comes with an inherent risk, when the batters at the crease are proficient against spin and looking to accelerate after a quiet start to the innings.

Delhi Capitals had already lost Pathum Nissanka and were struggling to get away. KL Rahul, the leading run-scorer in the tournament, was at the crease trying to come to terms with a surface that was slow and low, and assisting the spinners.

In short, the typical pitch one would expect at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium.

The home team had managed to reach only 36/1 in five overs and needed to optimise the last six deliveries before the

field spread when Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad took the call. Akeal foxed one of the best players of spin with some traditional skill. The ball was flighted and DC's best batter was foxed in the air as the delivery dipped and turned enough to miss the middle of the bat. The miscue didn't even cross the circle.

The three overs that the left-arm spinner from the Caribbean bowled inside the Powerplay brought returns of 1/15, part of a spell of 1/19 with as many as 14 dot balls.

But the fact that this seemed almost expected and CSK got some stick for leaving him out for a crucial game that really speaks of his importance for his franchise.

**BRIEF SCORES:** DC 155/7 in 20 overs (Rizvi 40 not out; Noor 2/22, Hosein 1/19) lost to CSK 159/2 in 17.3 overs (Samson 87 not out, Kartik 41 not out) by 8 wickets

# Klaasen, Iyer become IPL's most valuable batters

Tanishq Vaddi  
Hyderabad, May 5

NUMBER FOUR is the position nobody wants until the game needs saving. Too early and you're wasting resources; too late and the target is already out of reach. This season, two batters have made it look straightforward: Heinrich Klaasen for Sunrisers Hyderabad, Shreyas Iyer for Punjab Kings.

They are the only two middle-order batters among the top 15 run-getters in IPL 2025. The other thirteen are top-order batsmen — openers, mostly, with Jos Buttler and Ishan Kishan coming in as the odd number threes. The position demands something different: the ability to walk in against fiery pacers when two wickets have fallen early, read the situation in three deliveries, and bat accordingly. Or walk in when 90 have already come in ten overs, and not slow that rate down.

Very few have done it consistently. Suryakumar Yadav was one. Glenn Phillips another. Klaasen was not the designated number four for Sunrisers last year. Nitish Kumar Reddy was, and the biggest issue he faced was timing — either taking too long to get going or starting before he'd read the pitch. Klaasen, with his experience, fitted into the position right away. Against Kolkata Knight Riders, with the team in trouble, he made 52 off 35. Against Lucknow, 62 off 41 — each time build-



Heinrich Klaasen (L) and Shreyas Iyer. FILE/CREIMAS FOR BCCI

ing from nothing, calm head down, laying foundation for the overs that followed.

Some questioned his strike rate during those innings. Klaasen's answer was clean: "I've been in difficult situations, and then you have to take responsibility and be mature about it. You can't just deal with it, and that's not how the game works. I don't care about strike rate. You just have to find different ways to score ten runs, ensuring you still post a good score."



Then, when Sunrisers needed him aggressive from ball one, against Mumbai Indians he made 65 off 30. Against Delhi Capitals, 37 off 13. He had turned a dial rather than changed a philosophy.

While Klaasen had to move from low gear to high, Iyer had to move the other way — from number three down to four — and recalibrate entirely. Unlike Klaasen, who already had the power and needed to work on strike rotation, Iyer had to add power, to match the youngsters around him getting blistering starts. "The way they hit the ball, they clear the boundary so easily — it rubs into me as well," he said early in the tournament. He also wanted to dominate immediately. "I just like to dig into the bowlers when the chips are down. I don't want to get into that mindset where the bowler gets onto me." His three innings — 69 off 33 against Sunrisers, 66 off 35 against Mumbai, 71 off 36 against Delhi

— all came in chases, when Punjab were hunting large totals and the required rate was already climbing. He didn't wait for the game to slow down. He ran at it.

The two share one visible similarity despite their contrasting routes to the position: a strike rate of 139 for Klaasen and 136 for Iyer in their first ten deliveries. Neither charges out immediately. They take a few balls, read the pitch, read the situation — then shift. Once they do, Klaasen maintains a similar tempo against both pace and spin: 155 and 159 respectively. Iyer, who usually goes hard at spinners, has been harder on pace this season — 174 against pacers, dropping to 156 against spin.

Different instincts, different routes. The outcomes have been similar enough to keep both teams in contention for the playoffs.

(With inputs from Lalith Kalidas)

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(With inputs from Lalith Kalidas)

## Players should boycott French Open over prize money dispute: Sabalenka

Reuters  
Rome, May 5

PLAYERS WOULD boycott the French Open if their prize money at the claycourt Grand Slam is not increased, women's world number one Aryna Sabalenka said. The Belarusian's threat came amid a heated disagreement between players and Roland Garros organisers over prize money distribution, despite this year's tournament offering a 9.5% increase to 61.7 million euros (\$72.19 million). Several top players released a statement on Monday saying they were set to receive prize money that would likely still be less than 15% of tournament revenue, well short of the 22% they demanded to match ATP and WTA combined 1000 events.

When asked how far players might push their demands, Sabalenka told reporters at the Italian Open. "I think at some point we will boycott it (the tournament), yeah. I feel like that's going to be the only way to fight for our rights."

"Let's see how far we can get, if it's going to take players for

boycott... Some of the things, I feel like it's really unfair to the players. I think at some point it's going to get to this."

However, the world number one struck a hopeful note about ongoing negotiations.

"I just really hope that all of the negotiation that we are having, we at some point are going to get to the right decision, to the conclusion that everyone will be happy with," she added.

Reuters has contacted the French Tennis Federation for comment. The prize money boost of 5.4 million euros compared to 2025 still leaves Roland Garros trailing its Grand Slam rivals. The U.S. Open offered \$90 million last year while Wimbledon paid out 53.5 million pounds (\$72.51 million) and the Australian Open a record \$111.5 million (\$80.06 million) this year.

Sabalenka said the players deserved more prize money.

"When you see the number and you see the amount the players are receiving... I feel like the show is on us. I feel like without us there wouldn't be a tournament," Sabalenka added.

## ● KVARATSKHELIA: PSG'S X-FACTOR

# Bayern's nightmare, raised in the congested lanes of Tbilisi

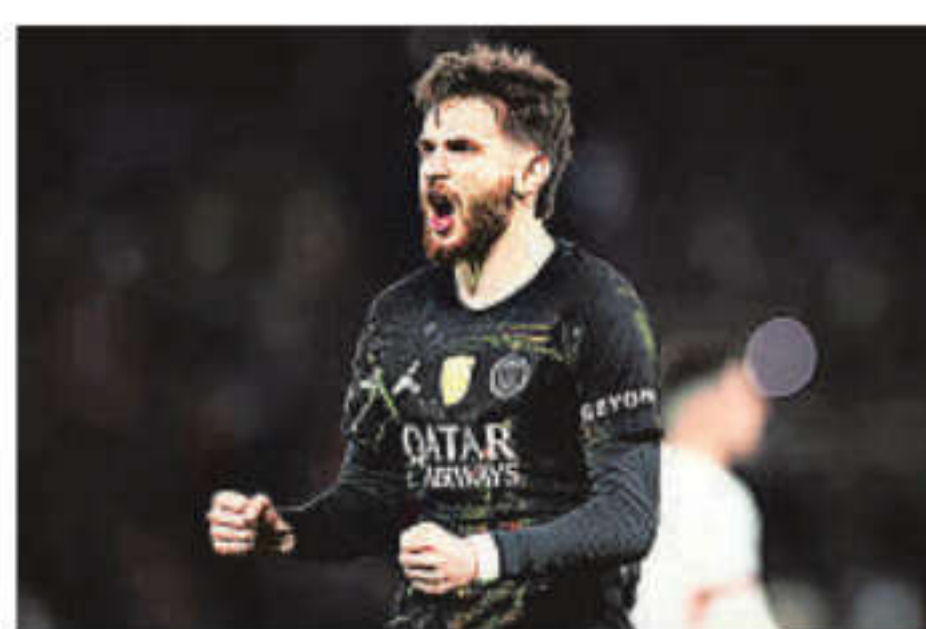
Sandip G  
New Delhi, May 5

APPLES AND geniuses share an eternal bond. Issac Newton is said to have discovered the phenomenon of gravity by watching apples fall in an orchard. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia found the solution to an age-old inconvenience with the help of apples in his orchard. The ground, a converted farmland, he played during summers in his ancestral home in Tsalenjika, Georgia, had an iron gate with sharp edges, resembling the head of a spear, on one side. His father, competent enough to play in Azerbaijan's top league, warned him of the edges that had torn numerous footballs in his childhood. His son glanced around the ground, plucked a few apples and stuck those into the protruding spikes.

The father marvelled at his son's ingenuity. The solution was in plain sight for several generations. But it took a child's observation to find it. Years later, fans, managers, colleagues and defenders marvelled at Kvaratskhelia's wisdom to find simple solutions to

complex problems. He sees the path that no one sees, he charts the route that no one visualises. He zips the balls through channels that exist only in his vision. The PSG man's opponents in the Champions League semifinal, Bayern Munich, knows the key to reaching the final lies in locking the man who flows through the turf like a smooth but unstoppable stream.

He flooded them twice, with two beautiful goals in the first leg. The first would haunt them as the worst nightmare. He ambled down the left-flank — he never runs — slid infield, dribbled past the left-back Josip Stanišić, as if he didn't exist, then spread his body and curled a low shot into the bottom right past two pairs of outstretched legs cannoning onto him and a third just standing hypnotised at an artiste from a different era. Kvaratskhelia belongs to time when football was less processed and mechanical, but more flair and free-spirited, the milieu of short shorts, skinny legs and low-hung socks. The hair is unruffled, the movements are without extreme athletic violence, the demeanour is un-hubristic.



Khvicha Kvaratskhelia will play a crucial role in the away leg. REUTERS

He leaves his markers with hollow eyes and scarred hearts. Like Aston Villa's Axel Disasi last year. With the fresh legs and enthusiasm, he hurtled into the Georgian, who merely rolled his right foot over the ball and swivelled his snake hips to the right. Disasi's attempted tackle met the Parisian air and he slumped backwards. When Disasi turned his head back, Kvaratskhelia had slithered beyond his reach and launched a missile into the near top corner of the near post.

In moments as these, the

moniker Napoli fans struck on him, Kvaradona, after their most famous player Diego Maradona, doesn't sound hyperbolic. His arrival in Napoli was no accident either. His father, Badri, idolised the Argentine.

"From the time I was little, my father always has been always talking about Maradona like a God," he wrote in Players' Tribune. "So when my agent told me Napoli wanted me to come, I was so happy. But my father? Unbelievable. My father says, 'You cannot say no to Napoli! You cannot say no to Mara-

doni's club!'" So we didn't think too much. No debate." His own idol, though, was his father. Some of his goals were videographed in VHS tape he re-watches frequently. "If somebody was speaking about Messi or Ronaldo, I'd say, 'No, no, no... My father is better. I will show you the videos,'" he wrote. But unlike his father's idol, he keeps himself at an arm's distance from scandals. It's perhaps because he can't be taken off the field. In Dinamo Tbilisi's academy, he snuck out of his bed to train alone in the night. The guards would oblige, and soon they would be his friends and nocturnal spectators. He once overheard seniors ridiculing his frail physique. He felt like crying. But he held his tears back and told himself: "I have to show them that I can play good (football)." "My mentality goes hard then. It was motivation. And it made me good," he penned.

He took this mentality to Naples and Paris. Luis Enrique calls him a warrior. His backline colleagues praise his contributions in defending. In the first leg against Bayern Munich, he made three significant defensive contributions and won five

## Rickelton: The weightlifter from Johannesburg



Ryan Rickelton has been a shining light for Mumbai Indians. CREIMAS

Shankar Narayan  
Mumbai, May 5

NEIL MCKENZIE has known Ryan Rickelton since before either of them had heard of the IPL. What he remembers first is not a cricket shot but a weight rack. "He was a weightlifter at around 14, but like many South African kids, he was multi-skilled," McKenzie, former South Africa batter and mentor, tells The Indian Express.

"He played squash, a lot of other sports, and that helped him massively. That base of strength and core stability from weight training has helped his power and balance. He's always been very disciplined about his training. Probably one of the fittest and strongest guys you'll find. It all accumulates into a well-balanced athlete, and that shows in how robust he is in the middle."

That robustness has been Mumbai Indians' one fixed point in an otherwise dissolving season. Rohit Sharma has played three matches, a hamstring keeping him out. Suryakumar Yadav has not found form. Hardik Pandya has not consistently delivered. Three wins in ten matches, playoff qualification hanging by a thread. Rickelton, the wicketkeeper-batsman from Johannesburg, has scored 380 runs in eight matches at a strike rate of 190.95 — and done it without a wobble.

Part of it is a ground that suits him. After his 83 against Lucknow Super Giants, Rickelton explained why the Wankhede feels like home. "Coming from Johannesburg, the Wanderers, where you get a lot of similar pace and bounce. I didn't believe it at first, but I really enjoy it. There's nice pace in it, you get great value for shots, and the ball really flies here. I've adapted my game around this venue. If I can have a good firm base here, I'm quite happy."

The comfort has been most visible on the leg side. Against KKR, 62 percent of his runs came through mid-wicket and long-on — the pick-up shot, the whip, good-length deliveries redirected before bowlers could adjust. Against SRH, where he made 123, it was 76 percent. Anything on his pads was punished; when he tried to move the ball away, he found the same zone

anyway. Even against LSG, 61 percent came from that area. Three innings, same answer.

McKenzie points to one shot Rickelton has quietly made his own. "The flick over fine leg. He's using the bowler's pace, getting inside the line, and picking up that back-of-a-length ball. Or if it's slightly fuller, he's strong enough to just flick it over fine or square leg." Deliberate work, now looking like instinct.

The adaptation runs deeper than one ground or one shot. "Ryan has adapted really well. He's worked hard on his spin play and adapting to different conditions. If you want to play international cricket, you have to adjust everywhere, and he's done that." The mental side has been worked on too. "In T20 cricket, you sometimes value your wicket too much when you've got a strong first-class record. He's learned to back his attacking instincts and adapt that mindset really well."

What McKenzie keeps coming back to is simpler. "He's a run-getter. He loves scoring runs and finds a way. He's not scared to ask questions. He knows his game really well and is always looking to improve. You won't find a harder working cricketer in too many places. That's what good players do."

In a season where MI have searched for steadiness at the top, Rickelton has not needed to search for anything. He has simply batted.



“He was a weightlifter at around 14, but like many South African kids, he was multi-skilled. He played squash, a lot of other sports, and that helped him.”

NEIL MCKENZIE, FORMER SOUTH AFRICA CRICKETER

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INTERVIEW: SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY &amp; CHIRAG SHETTY

# 'Wouldn't want kids to play badminton... sad to see we are not a sporting nation yet'

## Top doubles pair opens up about the frustration of going unnoticed despite world-topping feats

Shivani Naik  
Mumbai, May 5

HS PRANNOY rues that the Thomas Cup isn't called the 'World Cup'. Chirag Shetty says they don't expect airport receptions, just basic appreciation by Indians for a tough medal won. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy is determined he won't let his kids play badminton – the apathy he witnessed after India returned with a bronze medal, as well as gold in 2022, has broken his heart.

Through a media interaction facilitated by SAI, and another later that included Chirag-Satwik together, India's finest doubles pairing, spoke of what is rankling them so intensely.

Excerpts:

**Satwik, what prompted your post that 'nobody cares' about India winning a Thomas Cup bronze medal this time?**

**Satwik:** I never share anything usually. I let go of things. But this time, I exploded. Someone has to speak up. It's okay if I'm seen as the villain. In the last six months, I've been thinking that do only people who do bad things become

popular. (When we crave appreciation), as players, we don't want big things. No, we don't want prize money. Even if a kid walks up to us and says, 'Bhaiyya you played well or we want a picture with you', we are happy.

**What triggered this?**

**Satwik:** We were at the airport, taking a seven-hour flight back from Germany to Hyderabad. Nobody even asked us who we are, what medals we have won. There were so many Indians, many Telugus. We were wearing Thomas Cup jerseys. But everyone was busy with IPL, politics, whatever. Same thing when we won gold in 2022. We should have celebrated much more. People don't realise these chances might not come again. It is very tough to win the Thomas Cup, even medalling is tough. When we landed at the airport, all the players were just booking cabs, Prannoy, Srikanth, Dhruv. Nobody around seemed to notice. My friends came to pick me up, but I felt really sad looking around at that airport scene – top athletes trying to book cabs.

**Chirag, your thoughts?**

**Chirag:** It was that feeling that 'still nobody cares.' See, we



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (L) and Chirag Shetty were part of India's Thomas Cup triumph in 2022. FILE

never expected people would come to the airport to receive us. Last time when we won, we were well received, we met the PM, and we were felicitated. But the way it should be celebrated, it wasn't. Those who watch badminton appreciate it, but the general public just doesn't know the magnitude of the 2022 win. Makes me sad that we are not yet a sporting nation. There's only a little that the government and the federation can do. Their schemes are terrific. But the sporting ecosystem doesn't celebrate achievements.

**Satwik, what does this do to your morale?**

**Satwik:** When Chirag's dancing celebration reel went viral, I was happy. But I remembered how somebody plays some random thing, and it gets 1 million followers. And I ask myself, 'Why?' Here we are fighting to win, and if we get injured, there's no replacement for us. We play without support and under immense pressure in team events. But even a title was not enough last time. Again this time. I told Prannoy I'll not let my kid play badminton. If you are strong mentally, you'll manage, but otherwise it's really tough to keep going on like this (with a large part of the

country oblivious to our performance). Frankly, at the Hyderabad academy, we were felicitated, and that small bouquet and cake cutting was enough. We don't expect anything grand.

**Do you think pre-tie selection discussions or even criticism is actually a good thing – that people care enough to talk about badminton?**

**Satwik:** Those who watch and are really genuine do put out good tweets. I even kept screenshots because I would feel good. But in February, at the Asian Team Champion-

ships in China, I needed to leave after three matches, because there was a puja at home for my father's death anniversary. There were social media comments about, "how could he just leave the team?" These things stay in your head and really affect badly. Not all youngsters are going to be strong, and will struggle badly. I left Twitter (now X), might leave Insta too. And I'm happy that way. Even this time, they said, "Why can't you beat France and why are you shooting reels after bronze?" I wanted to say, even we wanted gold. We are more disappointed than any of you. But I decided not to get into it.

**Satwik, why were you not in the dancing reel of Chirag that became popular? You didn't like the steps?**

**Satwik:** That was the only argument I had with Chirag this time. We had been in the stadium for 4-5 hours, and were to take a bus to the hotel at 7pm and the flight at 3am. I was tired, so I told them let's shoot it later. The thing is, I wanted to finish packing and have a free mind.

**Chirag:** Prannoy sent the trend to me, and we decided to go ahead with it. We dragged Ayush (Shetty) when he was returning from laundry and made him dance. Now, some people (Satwik) are angry, and sitting in the corner sulking about missing out.

## City blink first, title now in Arsenal's hands

Reuters  
Liverpool, May 5

MANCHESTER CITY'S Premier League title hopes were dealt a crushing blow on Monday as they dropped precious points at Everton, relying on Jeremy Doku's strike deep in injury time to salvage a 3-3 draw.

City, with 71 points from 34 games, trail leaders Arsenal by five points but with a game in hand after a chaotic contest that saw Everton fight back after punishing a costly defensive error from City's Marc Guehi.

City now need Arsenal -- who have 76 points after 35 games -- to stumble in one of their final three games to keep their chances of lifting the trophy alive.

"It's better than losing. (But) it's not in our hands," Guardiola told SkySports about the title race. "Before it was, now it's not. We have games left. We will see what happens."

Guardiola's men looked to be heading towards defeat, and City's travelling fans had already streamed toward the exits with their title dreams in tatters when Doku, who also scored City's opener in the 43rd minute, fired into the top corner from the edge of the box in the 97th minute.

The equaliser capped a wild second half that featured a Thierno Barry double and a goal from Jake O'Brien.

City had gone into the break



Erling Haaland looks on in disbelief after Everton score. AP

in control after Doku bent a beautiful strike into the top corner that keeper Jordan Pickford had little chance of saving.

But Guardiola's men unravelled in the second half. It started when Barry intercepted Guehi's horrific pass back to goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to level in the 68th minute.

The offside flag originally went up, but since the ball was not passed to Barry by a teammate, the goal was given. O'Brien headed home a corner to give Everton the lead in the 73rd minute and Barry completed his double in the 81st after another defensive mistake.

"It's always a pleasure to play against a big team like Manchester City," Barry said. "We had to settle for a draw so we need to keep pushing because there are three games left."

## 3 blunders, 1 win mark Gukesh's start



Hans Niemann reacts to Gukesh pressing his clock while two pieces were still rolling on the board. SCREENGRAB VIA SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB YOUTUBE

Amit Kamath  
Mumbai, May 5

ON A wild opening day at the Super Rapid and Blitz Poland tournament on Tuesday in Warsaw, world champion D Gukesh drew a game against Alireza Firouzja, who he was winning, then lost a game to Hans Niemann, which was heading towards a draw and finally ended his day by winning a game against Jan-Krzysztof Duda, where he was under significant pressure.

Three blunders – not all by Gukesh – decided the fortunes of the world champion on the first day of the rapid and blitz tournament in Warsaw. But the big talking point of the day came when the 19-year-old was locked in battle against Niemann in round 2. When making his knight hop on the e7 square on his 27th move, Gukesh, already under severe time trouble at that point, knocked over Niemann's queen. When he tried to pick up the queen, he accidentally knocked over a pawn as well. With his time running down to just two seconds, Gukesh hit the clock to prevent himself from getting flagged. At that point, two of Niemann's pieces were still down on the board.

The American grandmaster hauled over the arbiter who gave him an extra minute, but did not forfeit Gukesh.

"I personally think it should be a forfeit. But it's not my job to decide," Niemann told Saint Louis Chess Club in an interview after the day's games were over.

Niemann pointed out that at the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in Doha, there were instances of players getting handed forfeits because they had knocked over the pieces and then reset the clock before they had arranged the pieces in the right squares. Not that it mattered. With Niemann already up on the clock and then receiving one additional minute as per tournament rules, Gukesh con-

tinued to duel both the American and his clock before making the game-deciding blunder on move 51 (51. Ke4) where he moved his king to e4, thus allowing Niemann's h file pawn to advance down the board and his knight on g4 on a perfect square to offer protection. Gukesh resigned on move 53.

This was his second blunder of the day from Gukesh. In the first game against Firouzja, Gukesh had squandered a winning position in a single move, too.

Since becoming the world champion in December 2024, Gukesh has shown remarkable improvement in the rapid format. And it seemed like he was destined to beat Firouzja. By the 29th move, Gukesh had seized control of the game with black pieces. By move 32, he had three additional pawns on the board. By move 40, Alireza would have started entertaining thoughts of waving the white flag of surrender.

Both players made inaccuracies, but Gukesh maintained a two-pawn advantage and his edge on the eval bar. But on the 68th move, when Firouzja captured Gukesh's rook and offered up his own, Gukesh took the rook with the wrong piece: he opted to take with a pawn instead of with his bishop, which turned out to be a game-changing error. After 20 more moves, the game ended in a draw.

Duda held an edge from the 26th move, and despite inaccuracies, his edge never slipped. But a blunder on move 40 allowed Gukesh to put his king under duress. The Polish GM ultimately resigned on move 45.

The day saw only two players, Gukesh's world championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov and Niemann, stay unbeaten after three rounds. Wednesday will see Gukesh and Javokhir Sindarov square off for the first time since the Uzbek GM confirmed his spot in the world championship as the challenger.

## Van Foreest downs Carlsen in Classical chess

Mayank Chaudhary  
New Delhi, May 5

IT WAS pitch black. Jorden van Foreest woke up in total panic, unaware of his whereabouts. The alarm was deafening and he had no idea what was going on. A fire alarm and just 45 minutes of sleep. That was the chaotic beginning to the Dutch Grandmaster's day in the Swedish town of Malmö, the venue of the TePe Sigan Chess tournament. Van Foreest, along with the rest, was evacuated from the hotel, only to learn later that it was a false alarm. "I had no idea where the hell I am and it was completely pitch black in my room and the sound was so incredibly loud," he told chess.com.

The man who woke up in complete "panic and disorientation" wasn't aware then, but the day was about to deliver the biggest win of his career as he took down Norwegian World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen just a few hours later. A wild fourth round tie between van Foreest and Carlsen carried the same sense of panic, with the evaluation bar forced to dance with each move in the endgame. Beating Carlsen is one thing. Outplaying him in classical chess, that too in the endgame, remains the ultimate goal for most. Wielding the white pieces, van Foreest and Carlsen ventured into the Sicilian Najdorf. Carlsen took an early eight minute think on just the sixth move. By the eighth move, he allowed an exchange of queens. Then burnt 25 minutes on a move. Half his clock was already gone.

The white pieces began enjoying more space on the board. Carlsen's black pieces, suddenly lacked the right squares. Then came Van Foreest's 21st move, knight to c6, brought his piece dangerously close to Carlsen's king. Carlsen faced a brutal choice. He could capture the knight, but that would mean losing his cornered rook. He was forced to take the knight anyway. Van Foreest was now a pawn up. The game had entered rare territory. Carlsen sat in an inferior position with less than two minutes left on his clock. Van Foreest still had over 13 minutes. What followed was Carlsen's signature long grind, the kind where he usually chums water into wine. But this time, the Dutch kept grinding too.

The game ebbed and flowed for the next 60 moves, seemingly heading toward another shared spoil. But then came a final mistake on the 86th move from Carlsen.

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### STATEMENT OF STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2026

The Board of Directors of Hero MotoCorp Limited ('the Company') at its meeting held on May 05, 2026, approved the audited (standalone and consolidated) Financial Results of the Company for the quarter and year ended March 31, 2026.

The Financial Results are available on the website of Stock Exchange at [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com) and [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and also on the Company's website at <https://www.heromotocorp.com/en-in/company/investors/annual-report.html?key1=quarterly-results> and can be accessed by scanning the QR Code.



For and on behalf of Board of Directors  
**Dr. PAWAN MUNJAL**  
Executive Chairman  
DIN: 00004223

Date: May 05, 2026  
Place: New Delhi

Note: The above information is in accordance with Regulation 33 & 47 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015

| Financial Highlights    | Key Parameters | Quarter ended March 31, 2026 |              | Year ended March 31, 2026 |              |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
|                         |                | Standalone                   | Consolidated | Standalone                | Consolidated |
| Revenue from operations | Standalone     | Rs. 12,797 Crores            | ▲ 29%        | Rs. 46,830 Crores         | ▲ 15%        |
|                         | Consolidated   | Rs. 12,978 Crores            | ▲ 30%        | Rs. 47,411 Crores         | ▲ 16%        |
| Profit after Tax (PAT)  | Standalone     | Rs. 1,401 Crores             | ▲ 30%        | Rs. 5,268 Crores          | ▲ 14%        |
|                         | Consolidated   | Rs. 1,474 Crores             | ▲ 26%        | Rs. 5,776 Crores          | ▲ 32%        |

Dividend: The Company has declared a final dividend of Rs.75 per equity share. Previously, the Company paid an interim dividend of Rs.110 per equity share during the year. This aggregates to a total dividend of Rs.185 per equity share for the FY 2025-26.

Hero MotoCorp Ltd. - Regd. Office: The Grand Plaza, Plot No.2, Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj-Phase-II, New Delhi- 110070. | CIN No. L35911DL1984PLC017354 • Visit [www.heromotocorp.com](http://www.heromotocorp.com)

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