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- Excise policy case: Court reserves for June 5 order on Kejriwal's interim bail plea

## EXIT POLLS: PM Modi all set for hat-trick

**Exit polls predict big win for NDA with upto 359-401 seats ● INDIA Bloc given 141-161 seats**

### BJP to get minimum 11 seats in state, Congress 3-4 seats

**GUWAHATI, June 1:** Majority of exit polls on Saturday have predicted that the BJP will perform well in the state with the ruling party winning around 11 seats.

The India Today—My Axis survey predicted 9-11 seats for the BJP in the state while Congress may win 3-4 seats. AIUDF may not be able to win any single seat this time. Almost all other exit polls have given BJP a minimum of 11 seats in the state. Some regional agencies also predicted a similar result for the BJP and Congress.

If AIUDF fails to open its account in the state, it means Badruddin Ajmal is set to lose the Dhubri seat after he managed to win it for three consecutive times. The winning probability of Congress is high in three minority-dominated seats—Dhubri, Karimganj and Nagaon. Some exit polls also predicted that Gaurav Gogoi may defeat BJP's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



**NEW DELHI, June 1:** Several exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling alliance in all likelihood will open its account in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and sweep Karnataka but may see a fall in its tally in states like Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana, according to these pollsters.

The Republic TV-P Marq poll claimed that the ruling alliance will win up to 359 seats and the opposition INDIA bloc will bag 154 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The Republic TV-Matrivez poll gave 353-368 seats to the NDA and 118-133 seats to the opposition.

The Jan Ki Baat poll gave 362-392 seats to the ruling NDA and 141-161 to the opposition alliance. The India TV-CNXX gave them 371-401 and 109-139 seats respectively, while the corresponding tally predicted by News Nation was 342-378 and 153-169. A few other exit polls, including those from Axis My India and Today's Chanakya, were yet to forecast the full results by 8.40 pm.

In the 2019 polls, the BJP won 303 seats, while the NDA tally was 353. The Congress had bagged 53 seats and its allies 38. The 'INDIA' bloc was formed by opposition parties to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## INDIA leaders meet

### Kharge says grouping to get over 295 seats

**NEW DELHI, June 1:** Leaders of several INDIA bloc parties met on Saturday to take stock of the opposition's preparations leading up to the June 4 counting of votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections, and claimed they will get more than 295 seats, enough for them to form the next government.

Addressing the media after a two-and-a-half-hour confabulation here, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asserted the INDIA bloc has arrived at the figure after feedback from people.

Kharge said the leaders of the alliance met at his residence and dwelled upon a host of issues, including the precautions to be taken on the counting day on June 4. He said they have instructed their party workers to not leave the counting halls till all formalities are completed. He said the opposition parties have sought time from the Election Commission on Sunday to raise their concerns and urge the poll body to address them.

The meeting began at Kharge's residence this afternoon as voting in the last phase of the seven-phase general elections were underway for 57 seats. The counting for all the phases will be held on June 4.

"The INDIA bloc will get more than 295 seats. We have arrived at this figure after speaking with all our leaders," Kharge told reporters.

"This is a survey of people. People have given this information to our leaders. The government surveys are there and their media friends also inflate figures and put it out. Therefore, we want to tell you about the reality." Targeting the BJP, he said, "They are trying to give a narrative through government exit polls and we want to tell the people the truth."

Apart from Kharge, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, K C Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were also present at the meeting. Samajwadi

Party, CPI(M), CPI, DMK, JMM, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (Sharad Pawar) were present at the meeting.

TMC supremo and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee had already said they would not attend the meeting as polling was to take place in some Lok Sabha seats in the state. PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti did not attend the meeting due to personal reasons.

Opposition leaders who attended the meeting included Sharad Pawar, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, Anil Desai, Sitaram Yechury, Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwan Mann, Sanjay Singh, Raghu Chadha, Champai Soren, Kalpana Soren, T R Baalu, Feroze Abdulah, D Raja, Dipankar Bhat-tacharya, Jitendra Awhad and Mukesh Sahani. Kharge said the leaders of INDIA parties met informally to take stock of the preparations leading up to the counting day. He said they discussed and analysed the feedback received from different sources.

The INDIA bloc parties have also given instructions to their workers about Form 17 C -- which contains the details of votes polled at booths -- and not to leave the counting hall until he or she gets the certificate of election, he said.

"The fight is still not over, and the leaders and workers of all the parties are extremely alert. I thank each one of them for their esteemed presence," he said. "We have fought the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 with all our might and are confident of a positive outcome, as the people of India have supported us," he said in a post on X. Later, in a post in Hindi on X, Kharge said, "This fight is on public issues. It is a struggle to protect democracy and the Constitution. Today in the INDIA Alliance meeting we discussed important issues and considered our future strategy. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Murmu expresses concern over cyclone Remal caused destruction in state

**GUWAHATI, June 1:** President of India Draupadi Murmu expressed her condolences for loss of lives in the state and a few other states due to cyclone 'Remal' that has ravaged the eastern region of the country for the last few days.

Taking to X handle, Murmu wrote, "Cyclone Remal has caused massive destruction in West Bengal, Assam, parts of the Northeast and also in Telangana. Reports of the loss of lives and property as well as of large-scale displacement are distressing. The nation stands with those affected by this natural disaster."

"I pray for the success of rescue and relief efforts and hope the situation returns to normal at the earliest," she added.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa

### Flood situation remains grim in state, over 3.5 lakh people affected

**GUWAHATI, June 1:** The flood situation in Assam remains grim, with over 3.5 lakh people affected across 11 districts, officials said on Saturday.

Road and rail communication in several parts of the state remained disrupted following incessant rain in the aftermath of cyclone 'Remal', they said. In worst-hit



Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Hailakandi, Golaghat, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts, Assam State Disaster Management Authority stated in a release.

Close to 30,000 people have sought refuge in relief camps, with various rescue agencies evacuating those in vulnerable areas.

Cachar district is the worst hit with 1,19,997 people affected, followed by Nagaon (78,756), Hojai (77,030) and Karimganj (52,684).

The death toll due to floods, rain and storms in the state since May 28 has touched 12.

Incessant rains have disrupted rail and road communications in Barak Valley and Dima Hasao. Vehicles remain stranded as part of the national highway in Meghalaya was washed away, severing road communication in Barak Valley with the rest of the state and region. Several (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### State Election Commission issues show-cause to ENPO on ULB polls

**DIMAPUR, June 1:** The State Election Commission, Nagaland directed Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) president Tsapikyu Sangtam to show cause without delay why action should not be initiated as per subsection (1) of Section 171 C of the IPC for repeated public declaration of the organisation's stand of col-

lective abstention from participation in the upcoming urban local body (ULB) elections.

The ULB elections are scheduled to be held in the state on June 26. In a notice to the ENPO president dated May 31, state election commissioner TJ Longkumer said the repeated public declaration made through the instrument of the organisation, which is essentially a

### Lok Sabha polls phase 7: Over 58 % voting recorded

**NEW DELHI, June 1:** A voter turnout of 58.34 per cent was recorded till 5 pm on Saturday in the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha polls with incidents of violence between TMC and BJP supporters reported in Sandeshkhali region of West Bengal, and complaints of EVM glitches and rigging at some booths lodged.

Voting was held amid a severe heatwave in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three in Jharkhand, besides Chandigarh. Polling for the remaining 42 assembly constituencies in Odisha and bypolls to six assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh are also taking place simultaneously.

Saturday's voting marked the end of the marathon polling process that began on April 19. The



assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim also went to polls. The BJP-led NDA is seeking a rare consecutive third term in office. The Opposition INDIA bloc is trying to upset the NDA bloc by putting up a joint fight in some states.

The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. In Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the counting for the Assembly polls will be held on June 2.

Till 5 pm, the estimated polling percentage was 58.34, according to the EC's voter-turnout app. A voter turnout of nearly 67.95 per cent was recorded in Jharkhand. Uttar Pradesh logged a polling percentage of 54, West Bengal 69.89, Bihar 48.86 and Himachal Pradesh 66.56. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Death toll in Mizoram landslides rises to 29

**AIZWAL, June 1:** The death toll in landslides in Mizoram climbed to 29 after the body of a 34-year-old woman was found in Tlawng River in Kolasib district, officials said. The woman, identified as Vanlalruai, and her husband had been missing after being hit by a landslide in Aibawk village in Aizawl district on Tuesday.

The woman's body was found in the river in Hortoki village in Kolasib district, which borders Assam, on Friday, they said.

Her body was taken to Kawnpui after being fished out of the river and her family members confirmed her identity.

Search for five other missing persons — four of whom are from Melthum, including a six-month-old, besides Vanlalruai's husband — is underway. The deaths were reported in multiple landslides in Aizawl district on Tuesday. Of the deceased, 21 were locals while eight were migrants from Jharkhand and Assam. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### ATDC chairman, Rituparna Baruah flags off 450-km expedition titled 'Plastic Free Brahmaputra' from Bogibeel ghat

**DIBRUGARH, June 1:** With the aim of creating awareness about the dangers of environmental pollution caused by plastics, Dhiraj Bikash Gogoi, a youth from Dibrugarh along with a three member team embarked on a 13-day expedition on the Brahmaputra river on Saturday.

Their boat, built entirely from plastic water bottles, aims to raise awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution. The 450-km expedition titled "Plastic Free Brahmaputra," was flagged off by Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) chairman, Rituparna Baruah from the Bogibeel ghat in Dibrugarh.

The boat used for the expedition,



measuring 28 feet long and 5 feet wide, was constructed using 3,300 plastic water bottles. These bottles were collected by Gogoi from the Brahmaputra river bank in Dibrugarh, where they had been dis-

carded by people. The process of building the boat took a total of 90 days. Gogoi revealed that their mission was to collect water bottles and plastic wastes from the Brahmaputra and its banks during the expedition. They plan to halt at the sandbars (chaporis) during the night before resuming their journey early the next morning. During the journey, he and his team will document the impact of plastic waste on the river's ecosystem, conduct clean-up drives and interact with local communities to educate them about the importance of responsible waste management. "I want to raise awareness about plastic pollution. I have always been concerned about the increasing pollution (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

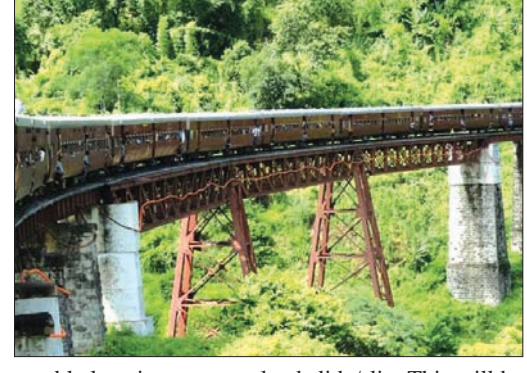
### NFR to conduct Airborne Lidar Survey of the Lumding – Badarpur Hill section

**GUWAHATI, June 1:** The Northeast Frontier Railway is all set to conduct airborne electromagnetic Lidar Survey at the critical locations of Lumding – Silchar Hill Section.

The survey will be conducted during and after monsoon, which will analyse the critical location in detail for the type of soil strata, stability of slope, presence of natural or formed fault tending any movement of hill, water accumulation beneath the soil strata, formation of slip circle and stability of hill toe.

The survey will be conducted between Lumding – Badarpur section at KM – 45 to KM – 125. Tender for the survey has already been finalised and awarded to a Noida based company, Garudauav Soft Solutions Private Limited.

Airborne ground surface survey and sub-surface Electromagnetic Survey based on robust digital twin based artificial intelligence powered one point monitoring system will be conducted. This will monitor the dynamic geophysical landscape and subterranean environment, which will help in identifying and analysing failure as well as critical areas for preventive maintenance of the track environment without substantive human interventions along weak and vul-



nerable location prone to land slide/slip. This will be done by using non-invasive sensors i.e. LiDAR, optical photogrammetry, infrared mapping and ground penetrating radar and airborne electromagnetic.

The result or output will be analysed by artificial intelligence software for better comparing of thousands of data generated by survey and remedial measures will be provided for such critical location. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology is used to obtain highly detailed and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



















# Would like to do something like 'Darlings', 'Badhaai Ho': Actor-producer Khushbu Sundar

**MUMBAI, June 1:** Actor-politician Khushbu Sundar, who has produced Tamil horror comedy "Aranmanai 4", wants to explore stories like "Darlings", "Badhaai Ho" and "Crew" as a producer.

"Aranmanai 4", starring Tamannah Bhatia and Raashii Khanna in the lead, has earned around ₹100 crore at the box office. Sundar believes such movies still lack the multiplex audience in south but those are the stories she wants to explore in future. "I am not the kind of a producer who would say that I am making only women centric films. I would love to do something like 'Darlings', 'Badhaai Ho', 'Crew'. But unfortunately, we still don't have that kind of a multiplex audience in south India as yet.

"That's going to take some time. When 'Badhaai Ho' was made in Tamil, it bombed. It didn't do well," Sundar told

PTI in an interview.

"Aranmanai 4" is directed by her filmmaker husband Sunder C, a noted name in Tamil cinema, who also directed the previous installments of the film.

Sunder, who debuted as a child artist with Hindi film "The Burning Train" and featured in movies such as "Meri Jung" and "Deewana Mujhsa Nah", shifted base to south and found widespread fame by starring in "Dharmathin Thalaivan", "Vetri Vizhaa", "Chinna Thambi", "Pandithurai" and "Annaatthe".

As a producer, she said, her sensibilities are "very commercial" but she is careful about the way women are represented in these stories.

"You don't have to show a woman in a bad light. You don't need to do something on screen which says, 'Okay, it's fine for a woman to be in an abusive relationship

and say it's part of your life'. No, I'm not going to advocate that. But otherwise, I love making commercial films. I'm not here to make a very preachy film," she said. Having spent close to four decades in the film industry, Sunder is happy to note the shift that's taking place when it comes to women coming forward and backing commercially viable projects.

"There is a huge shift in the kind of films being made. Yes, we still do have heroes where you think that the films are being sold only on a hero's name and heroine can play a very miniscule role in the film. "But it's brilliant to see that women can carry the film entirely on their shoulders and still give a hit. You don't need to depend on a male counterpart to have a successful film. The content is the basic hero of the film. And I think that shift is brilliant," she added. (PTI)



## Gulshan Devaiah, Anurag Kashyap starring in Disney+ Hotstar's new action drama series 'Bad Cop'

**MUMBAI, June 1:** Streaming service Disney+ Hotstar on Friday announced Bad Cop, an action drama series headlined by actor Gulshan Devaiah and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap.

Described as a classic cop vs villain story with a lot of twists and turns, the show is the first fictional series from Fremantle India, known for producing reality shows such as India's Got Talent and Indian Idol. Bad Cop is directed by Aditya Datt and stars Devaiah as Karan, a fierce cop, trying to chase down Kazbe (Kashyap), a villain more powerful and deadly than him and simultaneously managing his personal relationships. "I have created a lot of characters that are gore, quirky, dark and many more things but believe it or not it was difficult for me to be one. Kazbe is someone who doesn't think too much before doing anything, he just does it. He is a dreadful, eccentric, nefarious and a quintessential villain." "I had to bite into the intricacies of this character and make it my own. Being directed by Aditya Datt was a great experience and collaborating with partners like Disney+ Hotstar and Fremantle India was incredible," Kashyap said in a statement. Devaiah said the new show is an "out-and-out entertainer" that gave him a chance to play a "massy-entertaining kind of cop". "The action was a bit tough, particularly the running, which challenged me because I'm not used to doing action and I'm not physically built for it. Overall it was fun working with Fremantle India and Disney+ Hotstar. Moreover, it was enjoyable to perform with Anurag, who had only directed and produced my films earlier, but it was fun to do scenes and action with him." (PTI)



## Chris circling upcoming 'Transformers' and 'G.I. Joe' crossover movie

**LOS ANGELES, June 1:** Hollywood actor Chris Hemsworth is in talks to top line the upcoming crossover movie between blockbuster franchises "Transformers" and "G.I. Joe".

Hemsworth, 40, will join the yet untitled movie, which will mark his second outing in the "Transformers" series. He has lent his voice to the character of Optimus Prime for the upcoming animated movie "Transformers One", which will come out in September this year.

The latest movie will be a follow-up to the franchise's seventh installment "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" (2023), starring Anthony Ramos and Dominique Fishback in lead roles.

The movie had ended with a post-credit scene in which Ramos' Noah Diaz meets a shady government operative named Agent Burke, who is revealed to be working for the G.I. Joes, a special team of commandos.

This would be the first time when the two action franchises will come together on the big screen. The new movie will be produced by Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, Mark Vahradian, Michael Bay, Tom DeSanto & Don Murphy with Steven Spielberg and Hasbro Entertainment as executive producers.

Hemsworth currently stars in George Miller's 'Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga' alongside Anya Taylor-Joy and Tom Burke. (PTI)

## Sargun Mehta credits Ekta Kapoor for opening doors for women producers in TV

**MUMBAI, June 1:** Actor Sargun Mehta says producer Ekta Kapoor paved the way for more women filmmakers to come up in the Indian television industry and back content which resonates with them.

Mehta, who has made a name for herself as an actor in TV and Punjabi movie industry, has a host of projects lined up as a producer including TV show, "Badal Pe Paon Hai".

"In TV, Ekta Kapoor cleared the way for everyone. She left no stone unturned to make sure that we didn't have that hassle of being told, 'How will you do it (produce a show)?'. She already did it so much that nobody could question (a woman producer).

"In Punjabi movies, they were not used to the idea of us producing, not that they mocked me, they underestimated me. They didn't think that I'll pull it (films) off the way I did," the actor told PTI in an interview.

After producing Punjabi films and TV shows like "Kala Shah Kala", "Jhalle", "Udaariyaan", and "Junooniyat", among others, Mehta said she has realised acting is a far easier job than producing.

"I realised now that production is a thankless job. As an artist when I come on set, I feel, 'I've a lot of work to do', but there are others like the unit (crew), the producer and creative team who have been working on it for months or years.

"Sometimes when artists crib, I'm like, 'You've a fun job to do, do not crib'. I'm not saying it is an easy job, it's difficult to be an artist but the other job can override your perception of what one is doing. I do it (producing) because I like to have control over what I'm making."

Mehta said she is happy to have started her acting journey in the Punjabi movie industry, which has grown by leaps and bounds over the years.

She made her feature film debut in 2015 with Punjabi romantic-comedy, "Angrej", which emerged as one of the highest grossing films of the year. Some of her other notable work includes "Love Punjab", "Lahoriye", "Qismat", "Moh", and "Jatt Nuu Chudail Takri". (PTI)

## Pratik Gandhi decodes creating 'the lion' tick for his 'Madgaon Express' character with Kunal Kemmu

**NEW DELHI, June 1:** Actor Pratik Gandhi says writer-director Kunal Kemmu had a clear idea about how he wanted to shape "Madgaon Express", in which he plays a meek mama's boy who transforms into a confident person and starts behaving like a lion after accidentally consuming drugs.

The road trip drama marks Kemmu's directorial debut and was a box office and critical success. Also starring Divyendu and Avinash Tiwari, the story revolves around three childhood friends whose long-planned Goa trip goes awry when they cross paths with drug lords and gun-toting goons.

Gandhi, a Gujarati theatre and film star who shot to national fame with "Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story", said Kemmu added the lion's roar in the post-production stage to enhance the impact.

"Kunal had a crystal clear idea in his mind that 'Let's approach it this way'... The lion thing was already there in the lines (dialogues), 'I feel like a lion, I feel like a man! Kunal added the entire roar of the lion in post-production. I'm sure in post also, he must have tried multiple things and then decided that this one works best," Gandhi told PTI in an interview.

The 44-year-old actor said every time he turned into his 'lion-like persona', the cast and crew would go crazy on the sets.

But that alarmed Gandhi as he was worried whether the jokes would have a similar impact in theatre.

"...It has to translate well in a bigger scheme of things. You have to immediately become objective and think that even if I have to do it 10 times, it (the joke) must land," said Gandhi, who has roots

in theatre.

Next up for the actor is an intense drama in "Dedh Bigha Zameen", which will stream on JioCinema Premium from Friday. In the north India-set film, Gandhi plays Anil Singh, a common man who is trying to sell his father's land to arrange dowry for his soon-to-be married sister.

"I have loved the layers of this character and the simplicity of the story. The kinds of situations he faces, there are so many parallels in life and the people we see around us."

The film, written and directed by Pulkit, was supposed to be released before

"Madgaon Express", he added.

According to the actor, language and diction

played a huge role in creating Anil Singh.

"He comes from the Hindi heartland. Apart from that, the kind of emotions, the life he leads, the difficult situations he is facing, is all somewhere telling us about the region and story. Creating Anil Singh in flesh and blood, from paper to screen, was an interesting journey for me as an actor."

The actor had back to back success in "Madgaon Express" and "Do Aur Do Pyaar", where he was paired opposite Vidya Balan. The urban relationship comedy revolved around a cheating couple that rediscovers love in their marriage.

Gandhi said he is currently in a happy space thanks to the way his characters

have been received by the audiences.

"This is something I always wanted, which is to explore different genres, styles of storytelling and characters. I'm happy I'm getting to do this. That's the reason I could put myself out there for the audience to judge and to even experiment... I'm happy it has been received well, translated well. "I would love to continue this way. I don't want to put myself in one particular zone or box where people can feel that 'If this has Pratik, then it would be this way'. I'd rather want to be in a space where people feel 'We don't know what to expect when it's him! That's a happy place, the most comfortable place for an actor to be in," he added.

Gandhi said he caught the acting bug quite early.

"I stepped on stage when I was in Class 4... As far as I remember, there was no particular day when I decided to be an actor. It has become a second nature. Growing up, I loved creating characters, telling stories and having a lot of fun with different aspects and mediums of storytelling and I still want to keep exploring these formats."

Asked if there are any projects in the works in the south film industry, the actor said nothing as yet but hopefully in future.

"I am really fascinated by the grammar of performance in different languages and regions. India is a diverse country. Being an Indian, if I don't do this here, then what's the point?" he said. (PTI)

