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- US attempt to open the Strait of Hormuz tests Iran war's fragile ceasefire
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## New Assembly unlikely to have LoP ● Himanta to submit resignation to Guv today

### Nadda and Saini to oversee selection of new CM candidate



GUWAHATI, May 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is likely to meet the governor on Wednesday and submit his resignation, paving the way for the formation of a new government, an official source said.

Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said that he would call on Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya once the election results are officially submitted to the latter.

The official source said the state's chief elec-

toral officer is scheduled to submit the final results to Acharya on Wednesday forenoon.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 constituencies each.

Sarma was projected as the chief ministerial candidate of the ruling alliance before the polls.

"I will meet the governor and hand over my resignation after the results are submitted to him. It will pave the way for the formation of a new government," he said.

Sarma further said that a meeting of the newly elected BJP MLAs will be convened as per instructions of J P Nadda and Nayab Singh Saini, who have been appointed as central observer and co-observer, respectively, for selection of the leader of the legislative party.

"I will talk to Nadda ji and call the MLAs as per the date set by him," the CM said.

"With it, the government formation process will start," he added.

Sarma further said there may not be the leader of the Opposition (LoP) position in the new assembly as the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Will play role of proactive Oppn: Gaurav

Routed in assembly polls, Oppn in Assam stares at survival crisis: Annalists



GUWAHATI, May 5: A day after the Congress was routed with its worst ever performance in Assam, the party's state chief Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday said it will play the role of a "proactive opposition" to raise people's issues in the coming days.

Addressing a press conference here, he also said the Congress and

the Opposition will keep a watch on the activities of the BJP-led government and protest if any anti-people policies are adopted.

"We will play our role as a proactive opposition to highlight people's issues," Gogoi said.

The party will go to the people again to seek their feedback, and then it will work to strengthen the

organisation, he added.

"We will keep a watch on the BJP government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's works. We will raise our voice if any anti-people stand is taken," Gogoi said.

For its crushing defeat, he accepted moral responsibility as he was "the captain of the Opposition alliance".

**CRISIS IN OPPN :** Meanwhile, the overwhelming verdict of the BJP-led NDA in Assam has left the opposition fighting for relevance with its worst-ever show in recent times.

In the 126-member Assam Assembly, the NDA got a record 102 seats with the BJP alone accounting for 82 of them. The saffron party secured a majority on its own for the first time in the state.

On the other hand, the Congress and the Rajior Dal, who were part of a six-party alliance, won 19 and two seats respectively. The Trinamool Congress and the AIUDF fought (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## NDA to work with more vigour to make Assam one of top states: AGP chief

GUWAHATI May 5: Thanking the people for the massive mandate to the BJP-led NDA, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) president Atul Bora on Tuesday said the alliance, in which his party is a constituent, will work with renewed vigour to make Assam one of the top five states in the country in terms of development.

He maintained that the Congress was removed from reality which led to its poor performance in the election, including the defeat of its state chief and MP Gaurav Gogoi.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Bora said, "We had said before the elections that the NDA's strength will increase and we will win in double digits. It has been proved right."

"We thank the people for their support, and every worker of AGP and our NDA allies for their work," he added.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82

seats, while the AGP and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 each.

Bora maintained that it was work done by the government for the people that ensured the alliance's victory.

"We renew our determination to make Assam among the top five states in the country in the next term. Be it infrastructure, agriculture, education, irrigation, our focus will be on all core sectors," the AGP president, who was a minister in the outgoing cabinet, said.

He maintained that the people of Assam are politically conscious and voted for the alliance that delivered on its promises.

On the next government formation, Bora said the party MLAs will meet here on Wednesday and elect their leader for the assembly.

"We will hold discussions in the BJP state head-office this evening," he said.

Refusing to divulge details of the talks when asked how many ministerial berths the AGP will seek, Bora (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Uncompromising stand against Bangladesh-origin Muslims swayed votes for NDA: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that his government's "uncompromising stand" in taking steps against Bangladesh-origin Muslims swayed people in favour of the BJP-led NDA in this year's assembly elections, resulting in the alliance securing a two-thirds majority.

He maintained that the NDA's win was a victory for the Assamese indigenous people and affirmed continuing developmental work in the state.

Addressing a press conference, Sarma said, "The double-engine government and unprecedented development the state witnessed in the last five years are among the main reasons for our victory."

"We had assured of securing the Assamese 'jati' (community) and took steps to deliver it. Assam progressed in the cultural and economic sectors. Our uncompromising stand against Bangladesh-origin Muslims also had an impact," he said.

The NDA swept to a third successive term in the state by securing 102 seats in the 126-member state assembly. The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies AGP and Bodoland People's Front bagged 10 each.



On Sarma predicting nearly exact numbers for the alliance before the results, he said the assessment was based on his connect with the people.

"I visited every assembly segment thrice before elections. I have a good mass connect system, which helped in my assessment," he said.

Sarma claimed that recommendations of the Justice (retd) Biplab Sharma committee on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which deals with constitutional safeguards for the indigenous Assamese population, were implemented by his government.

"It was because of it that the Assamese people won yesterday. It was not just a BJP victory," he asserted.

The CM claimed the NDA secured the support of all sections of people, including Gen Z, which was evident in the young faces fielded by the BJP emerging victoriously.

He dismissed the charge that the BJP has an "outsider" among its MLAs, referring to Guwahati Central legislator-elect Vijay Gupta.

"Vijay Gupta is an Assamese. If he is a Bihari, we (ancestors) also came from Kanauj. We all have come from different parts. Mongoloids came from outside, Aryans came from outside. This outsider narrative has been created by you all (media)," Sarma said.

On the Congress' poor poll performance, he maintained that there were very few people in the opposition party who understood the sentiments of the Assamese people.

Otherwise, the Congress would not have brought singer Zubeen Garg's name in its manifesto or levied allegations against an Assamese woman, Sarma added, referring to the opposition party's charges of multiple passports and undisclosed foreign investments of his wife. The CM also maintained that Rajior Dal (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Assam Assembly to have 7 women MLAs; six from NDA

GUWAHATI, May 5: Of the 59 women candidates who fought to enter the 126-member Assam Assembly, only seven managed to win, the same as the 2021 results.

In the new Assembly, the ruling NDA will have six women legislators, while the opposition Congress has one. Women comprise 49.98 per cent of the total 2.50 crore electorate of the state.

The BJP has increased the tally of its women MLAs to four, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front will have one each. Of the 14 women candidates the Congress fielded, the highest among all parties, only one managed to win.

In the outgoing Assam Assembly, the BJP had three MLAs, and the AGP and the Congress two each.

The NDA is set to form the government in Assam for the third consecutive term after securing a two-thirds majority, with a record high of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly, while the Congress-led opposition delivered its worst performance in recent times.

The BJP won 82 of the 90 seats it contested, while its allies -- the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), which contested 11 constituencies, and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which fought in 26 -- bagged 10 seats each. The most prominent woman (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Petrol bombs lobbed at Congress candidate's house in Assam

DIPHU, May 5: Unidentified persons have allegedly lobbed petrol bombs at a Congress candidate's house in Assam's Diphu, police said on Tuesday.

None of the six petrol bombs lobbed at the house of the party's Bokajan nominee, Raton Engti, on Monday night exploded, ensuring there was no damage, they said.

Engti lost to BJP's Suriya Rongphar by a margin of over 17,000 votes.

"Engti and his family members were inside the house when the incident happened. As the explosives did not go off, the people inside did not hear any sound," a police officer said.

Engti spotted the bombs in the morning and informed the police, who seized (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Delimitation key factor for NDA's landslide win in Assam

GUWAHATI, May 5: The delimitation of constituencies to reduce the impact of minority candidates in their earlier strongholds is one among the many factors that led to the NDA's stupendous performance in the Assam polls, securing a record win of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly.

The 2023 delimitation exercise, which redrew and realigned constituencies with some earlier Muslim-majority seats getting reserved for indigenous communities, played a significant role in the increase of seats for the BJP and its allies in the just-concluded assembly polls.

The minority votebank played a key role, particularly for the Congress and AIUDF, in all previous assembly polls in 35 seats but delimitation reduced its influence to

less than 25.

The 24 seats that the opposition won, mostly in constituencies unaffected by delimitation, include 22 Muslim candidates with both the Congress and AIUDF showing a sharp decline in their erstwhile bastions.

The realignment led to the fragmentation of Muslim-majority constituencies, and their merger with areas dominated by the indigenous community resulted in the dilution of the vote-bank.

The delimitation exercise kept the number of assembly seats the same at 126 but reserved more constituencies for the Scheduled Tribe and the Scheduled Caste, with the former being increased from 16 to 19 and the latter to nine from eight.

Barpeta and Goalpara (West), seats having a significant number

of Bengali-speaking Muslims, were reserved for the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe, respectively, and the NDA wrested both from the Congress.

The impact of the delimitation was also evident in the other tribal reserved seats in the Bodoland region, where their number was increased from 11 to 15, as the NDA ally Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) won 10 of these seats while its sole Muslim candidate lost the polls.

Both the Congress and AIUDF have been severely impacted by the exercise, with most of its winning candidates restricted to the 25 seats, with only one achieving electoral success from the scheduled caste reserved Naoboicha seat. The AIUDF, which had won 16 constituencies (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Most of winning Congress candidates in assembly polls Muslims: Sources

NEW DELHI, May 5: Most of the Congress candidates who won in the recent assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were Muslims, sources analysing the poll results said.

As per the results, 18 out of 19 MLAs that Congress has won in Assam are Muslims. The Congress had fielded 20 Muslim candidates in Assam, of whom 18 won, while only one non-Muslim won the elections, out of the 79 non-Muslims fielded by the party.

Congress ally Rajior Dal has won two seats, out of which one is a Muslim and the other is Akhil Gogoi, who is under investigation by the NIA for alleged links with Maoists, the sources said.

Kerala has elected 35 Muslim MLAs in an assembly of 140. Out of these 35, as many as 30

are from the Congress-led UDF alliance. Eight Congress MLAs are Muslims and the other 22 of its ally, the Indian Union Muslim League MLAs, are Muslims.

The grand old party won two seats in West Bengal -- both of whom are Muslims from Muslim-dominated seats. In fact, with 63 Muslim candidates, the Congress outdid the TMC in giving tickets to Muslims in West Bengal. The TMC gave tickets to 47 Muslim candidates in the assembly elections.

In Tamil Nadu, Congress nominated two Muslims, of whom one has won.

Muslims fielded by Congress alliances in both Kerala and Assam have an 80 per cent winning strike rate, the sources said.

The BJP on Monday scripted history by winning 206 seats to secure

more than a two-thirds majority in the West Bengal assembly polls, ending the TMC's 15-year rule.

The ruling NDA is set to form the government in Assam for the third consecutive term after securing a two-thirds majority, with a record high of 102 seats in the 126-member assembly, while the Congress-led Opposition delivered its worst performance in recent times.

Actor-politician Vijay's TVK created a record of sorts in the electoral history of Tamil Nadu and emerged as the single largest party by delivering a shock defeat to incumbent DMK.

Kerala witnessed a sharp political reset as the state electors voted out the last Left government in the country, bringing back the Congress to the ruling saddle after a gap of 10 years. (PTI)

## 17% Assam MLAs face criminal cases, 85% crorepatas: ADR

NEW DELHI, May 5: Around 17 per cent of newly elected MLAs in Assam have declared criminal cases against themselves, while a striking 85 per cent are crorepatas, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The report, which analysed affidavits of all 126 winning candidates in the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, shows a decline in the proportion of candidates with criminal cases compared to the previous election. In 2021, 27 per cent, or 34 of the winning candidates had declared criminal cases against them, which has now dropped to 17 per cent, or 21 candidates.

This includes 19, or 15 per cent, candidates facing serious charges. This is also a decrease from 2021, when 28, or 22 per cent of MLAs had declared serious criminal cases.

Among specific offences, three winning candidates have declared cases related to attempt to murder, while two candidates have reported cases related to crimes against women.

The data reveals sharp variation across political parties. Among the BJP, 7 out of 82 winning candidates, or 9 per cent, have declared criminal cases. In the Congress, 9 out of 19 winners, or 47 per cent, face such cases.

The report added that two winning candidates from

the All India United Democratic Front and one Trinamool Congress candidate have also declared criminal cases against themselves.

Notably, all 10 winning candidates from the Bodoland People's Front have clean records.

At the same time, 7 (9 per cent) out of 82 winning candidates from BJP, 7 (37 per cent) out of 19 winning candidates from INC, both the two (100 per cent) winning candidates of AIUDF, the one winner (100 per cent) from AITC, one (50 per cent) out of the two winning candidates from Rajior Dal and one (10 per cent) out of the 10 winning candidates from Asom Gana Parishad have declared serious criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

The report also highlighted a steep increase in the wealth of elected representatives. As many as 107 out of 126 MLAs (85 per cent) are crorepatas, up from 67 per cent in 2021.

The total declared assets of all winning candidates stand at ₹ 1,112 crore. The average asset per MLA has nearly doubled to ₹ 8.82 crore in 2026, compared to ₹ 4.59 crore in the previous election.

Among the political parties, 90 per cent of BJP MLAs are crorepatas, followed by 74 per cent MLAs from the Congress and 80 per cent from the Bodoland People's Front. All winners (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Assam polls: BJP received 37.81 pc of total votes polled in 2026, translating into 82 wins: EC

### Saffron party's rise in vote share results in gain of 22 seats

GUWAHATI, May 5: A 4.6 percentage point shift in BJP's favour helped it pocket 22 more constituencies in the Assam Assembly elections this time compared to 2021 and win 82 seats, an analysis of the vote share data from the Election Commission showed.

The Congress, on the other hand, saw a marginal 0.17 percentage point increase in its vote share even as its seats fell by 10 from the last Assembly polls to settle at 19 this time.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) bagged 102 seats, its highest ever, way ahead of the halfway mark of 64 in the 126-member Assam Assembly.

According to information shared by the Election Commission, the ruling BJP received 37.81 per cent of the total votes polled in 2026, translating into 82 wins. Its vote share was 33.21 per cent in 2021, when it had won 60 seats.



For the opposition Congress, its vote share increased to 29.84 per cent this year from 29.67 per cent five years ago, but its number of MLAs went down to 19 from 29 in the outgoing Assembly.

For the BJP's ally Asom Gana

Parishad (AGP), the vote share decreased to 6.47 per cent from 7.91 per cent in 2021, but it bettered its tally of MLAs by one to have 10 MLAs this time.

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF), another ally of the ruling

NDA, got 3.73 per cent of the total votes polled on its way to winning 10 seats. It had won four seats in 2021, but the EC had not shown its vote share separately in 2021.

In the opposition camp, the AIUDF saw its vote share erode to 5.46 per cent as it won only two seats. In 2021, it had 16 MLAs and 9.29 per cent vote share.

Of the total people who voted this time, 1.23 per cent chose the None of the Above (NOTA) option this time, a slender rise from the 1.14 per cent voters who chose it five years ago, the EC data showed.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha did not win any seat but managed to corner 1.16 per cent vote share this time, signalling an expansion of the party to the Northeast.

The EC said that in the 'others' category, comprising all other contesting parties and candidates, the vote share stood at 10.17 per cent. It was 13.7 (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

# Stock markets decline as renewed geopolitical concerns weigh on investor sentiment

## Markets in Europe were trading mostly higher; US markets ended lower on Monday

MUMBAI, May 5: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure on Tuesday as fresh tensions flared in the Strait of Hormuz region and the ceasefire between the US and Iran came under strain.

The rupee hitting a record low against the US dollar amid elevated crude prices also made investors cautious.

In a volatile session, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 251.61 points, or 0.33 per cent, to settle at 77,017.79. During the day, it tanked 754.37 points, or 0.97 per cent, to 76,515.03.

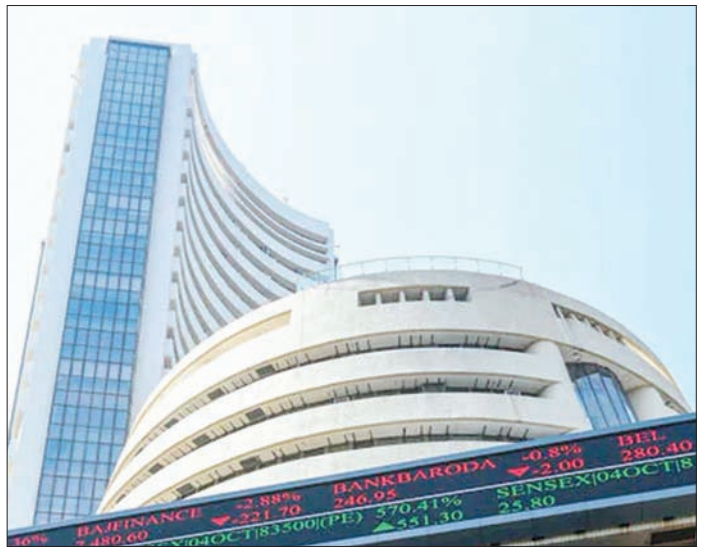
The 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 86.50 points, or 0.36 per cent, to end at 24,032.80.

"Domestic equities witnessed a volatile session, closing lower as post-election optimism faded and sentiment re-aligned with global weakness amid rising geopolitical tensions."

"Elevated crude prices continued to pressure the rupee, which slipped to record lows. Despite these headwinds, the ongoing earnings season, with results slightly ahead of expectations, provided some support and triggered selective bottom-fishing," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, Mahindra &



Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv and Bajaj Finance were top gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE MidCap Select index dipped 0.12 per cent, while the SmallCap Select index went up marginally by 0.14 per cent.

Sectorally, Realty dropped 1.38 per cent, Top 10 Banks (0.79 per cent), Services (0.63 per cent), Consumer Durables (0.62 per cent), Private Banks (0.60 per cent) and Bankex (0.58 per cent).

In contrast, Power, FMCG, Commodities, Healthcare, IT, Telecommunication, Utilities, Auto, Capital Goods, Focused IT and MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt were the gainers.

"On Tuesday, Indian markets came under pressure amid escalating tensions in West Asia and the rupee hitting all-time lows. Iran intensified attacks in the Middle East, targeting critical energy infrastructure in the UAE, raising concerns over supply disruptions," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

On the political front, the outcome of multiple state elections is expected to be viewed positively by the market, he said.

"These results carry longer-term implications for economic growth across the involved states, particularly in West Bengal,

where structural changes could unfold over time," Khemka added.

Drones strikes caused a fire at a major oil industry zone in the United Arab Emirates' port city of Fujairah on Monday. The UAE had accused Iran of carrying out the strike.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded around the USD 113 per barrel mark.

Meanwhile, the rupee slipped 2 paise to an all-time low of 95.25 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday.

Markets were closed in South Korea, Japan and mainland China. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended lower.

Markets in Europe were trading mostly higher.

US markets ended lower on Monday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday, buying equities worth ₹ 2,835.62 crore, according to exchange data.

In a mandate as sweeping as it is symbolic, the BJP on Monday scripted history by winning 206 seats to secure more than a two-thirds majority in the West Bengal assembly polls, ending the TMC's 15-year rule, and decisively shifting the state's ideological and political centre of gravity.

On Monday, the Sensex climbed 355.90 points, or 0.46 per cent, to settle at 77,269.40. The Nifty rallied 121.75 points, or 0.51 per cent, to end at 24,119.30 (PTI)

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## Nadda and Saini to

single-largest party in the opposition, Congress, has 19 MLAs, whereas at least 22 legislators are required for a party to get that position.

"Hence, according to constitutional norms, there will be no leader of the Opposition. But all the parties will have their own legislative party leaders," he added. (PTI)

## Will play role

separately and have one and two MLAs, respectively.

Political observers feel that unless the BJP rivals craft a new social coalition, find a credible Assamese face and develop a counter-narrative on identity and development, it risks being reduced to a scattered opposition with no path to power in 2031.

Members of the six-party alliance will face questions about their strategy, leadership and relevance.

Despite Gaurav Gogoi as Assam Congress chief, BJP chief Lurinjyoti Gogoi's verbal attacks and Akhil Gogoi's activism, the opposition lacks a mass face to match Himanta Biswa Sarma, experts said.

Defeats often lead to internal frictions, with leaders blaming each other for the poor showing. This could result in resignations, leadership changes or even splits within parties -- all of which are nothing new to the Congress.

For the Congress, its present tally came down from its 2021 number of 29 despite leading the alliance. Regional outfits like BJP and Rajiv Dal fielded high-profile Gen Z faces like Kunki Chowdhury and Gyanashree Bora, but could not translate youth energy into seats.

On the other hand, the BJP's narrative on "land, identity and security" along with eviction drives and push-back of "illegal immigrants" had boxed the opposition. Also, out of the 19 Congress candidates who have won, 18 are from the Muslim community, and only one is Hindu, giving ample ammunition to the BJP.

After this humiliating defeat, the opposition will be compelled to reassess their strategy and analyse whether their alliance was effective or if it alienated certain voter bases.

"A loss often brings leadership issues to the fore. State-level leaders may be criticised for failing to mobilise support or for making miscalculations in seat-sharing and campaign messaging," senior journalist Amarendra Deka told PTI.

A defeat of this magnitude can demotivate grassroots workers, leading to decreased enthusiasm for future campaigns, he added.

"This loss of momentum can make it difficult for the parties to maintain their organisational strength and presence at the local level, which is crucial in Assam's politics."

The opposition alliance will need to rethink its political narrative," Deka said. With the Congress losing in Assam for the third straight term since 2016 and its seats decreasing every time, such repeated electoral failures could weaken the opposition in Assam -- both organisationally and in terms of public perception.

The NDA's overwhelming victory in Assam has put the opposition alliance at a crossroads.

Whether the alliance can regroup, introspect and present a united and stronger front in future elections will depend on how effectively they address internal discord, rework their strategies and reconnect with the voters.

Otherwise, the state may witness a further weakening of opposition forces and consolidation of the NDA's dominance in Assam's political landscape. (PTI)

## Assam Assembly to

candidate to win the election is state Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, who retained her Golaghat constituency for the sixth consecutive term. The other BJP candidates to win are its Mahila Morcha state unit chief Nilima Devi in Mangaldoi and Niso Terangpi from Diphu. Another BJP minister in the outgoing Cabinet, Nandita Garlosa, had switched to the Congress after she was denied a ticket and contested from Haflong, but lost to the saffron party's greenhorn Rupali Langthasa.

The AGP's Diptimayee Choudhury retained the Bongaigaon seat, while the BPF's Sewli Mohilary, the wife of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Hagrama Mohilary, won from Kokrajhar.

The lone woman Congress candidate to win the seat is first-timer Baby Begum from Dhubri. Its prominent losers are sitting MLA Nandita Das from Hajo-Sualkuchi, former minister Pranati Phukan from Naharkatia, ex-legislator Roselina Tirkey from Khumtai, and the party's state Mahila Morcha chief Mira Borthakur Goswami from Dispur. There has been a steady decline in the number of women candidates in the state polls -- from the highest 91 in 2016 to 74 in 2021 and 59 this time.

In 2016, eight of the 91 women candidates won. The 2011 Assembly polls had seen the highest 14 women entering the Assembly of the 86 who fought the elections that time. (PTI)

## Uncompromising stand

could have won four-five seats had it not joined hands with the Congress.

The Congress and Akhil Gogoi-led Rajiv Dal were part of a six-party opposition alliance that fought the elections together. Congress won 19 seats and Rajiv Dal two, with the other allies drawing a blank.

"If Akhil Gogoi had not made the mistake, Sherman Ali Ahmed would have been his MLA today," Sarma said, referring to the expelled Congress leader who won as a TMC candidate after Rajiv Dal refused him a ticket owing to the alliance.

On Gogoi being the only opposition MLA to win from a Hindu-majority seat, Sarma said, "It is the people of Sibsagar who decided who will represent them. On my part, it was the Hindu majority seat where I didn't go to campaign."

"Akhil Gogoi should be kept in the assembly, else he will create chaos on the streets with his protests," Sarma said.

He also claimed that Gogoi had failed to make a single serious speech in the assembly during his first tenure as MLA and dubbed the Rajiv Dal president a "comic relief" when the proceedings get dull. (PTI)

## NDA to work

added, "The ministry formation is the discretion of the chief minister." Besides Bora, the party's working president Keshab Mahanta was the other minister from AGP in the outgoing government.

The AGP president also lashed out at the Congress, claiming that the party has been reduced to a figurative zero.

"It has been proven that the future of Congress is zero. They ruled the state for long years but worked only to create own vote bank, indulged in corruption and encouraged infiltration," he said.

He maintained that the party was not in touch with the grassroots, which has led to its dismal performance and even the defeat of its state president Gogoi.

The opposition party could manage to secure only 19 seats.

"Had they worked for the state, our condition would have been different now," Bora claimed.

He also took a swipe at the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), which failed to open its account in the hustings even in its second assembly election outing.

"They tried to imitate our name and project themselves as a regional group. But they joined hands with the Congress and were rejected by the people," Bora added.

The AJP was part of a six-party opposition alliance, which included the Congress. (PTI)

## Petrol bombs lobbed

those and launched an investigation into the incident, the officer added. (PTI)

## Delimitation key factor

in the last polls, managed to secure only two seats this time, while one candidate each from Rajiv Dal and Trinamool Congress also won from within these 25 constituencies.

The ruling alliance, with not much influence in the 25 seats where the Bengali-speaking Muslims are in the majority, made an effort to make an entry with the regional party AGP giving tickets to 13 from the community but none, including sitting MLAs who had shifted to the party following delimitation of their constituencies, could win a seat.

The NDA allies, led by the BJP, ensured that the majority of reserved seats remained in its own kitty.

The saffron party, with a sharp focus on identity politics and practically no influence in these areas, did not give tickets to Muslims.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on several occasions asserted that in the 2026 assembly polls, the BJP stood a better chance due to the delimitation, which has created new constituencies.

The exercise was held in 2023 based on the 2011 census, and the last Lok Sabha polls were the first to be held under the redrawn boundaries, while this was the first assembly poll.

The BJP won 82 seats, while its allies, the BPF and AGP, bagged 10 each. The opposition Congress secured 19, the Rajiv Dal and AIUDF two each and the Trinamool Congress one constituency. (PTI)

## 17% Assam MLAs

from the AIUDF, AITC and Rajiv Dal have declared assets exceeding ₹ 1 crore.

In terms of average wealth, AIUDF candidates top the list with average assets of ₹ 117.77 crore, followed by Bodoland People's Front (₹ 9.92 crore) and the BJP (₹ 7.50 crore). Congress MLAs have average assets of ₹ 6.51 crore, while Asom Gana Parishad candidates report a lower average of ₹ 2.81 crore.

Rajiv Dal MLAs have average assets of ₹ 1.54 crore. Mohammed Badruddin Ajmal of AIUDF is the richest winning candidate with assets worth over ₹ 226 crore, followed by Sewli Mohilary of Bodoland People's Front with assets worth ₹ 63 crore, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is third with assets worth ₹ 35 crore. (PTI)

## Saffron party's rise

per cent in 2021. In the 126-member Assam Assembly, the ruling BJP won 82 seats, and its allies BPF and AGP pocketed 10 seats each in the results declared on Monday.

The Congress and the Rajiv Dal, who were part of a six-party opposition alliance, won 19 and two seats respectively. AIUDF and Trinamool Congress fought separately as single entities and will have two and one MLAs, respectively, in the new Assembly.

Out of the total 722 candidates, Congress had the highest 99, followed by BJP with 90, AIUDF 30, AGP 26 and BPF 11 nominees. Rajiv Dal contested in 13 seats, Assam Jatiya Parishad in 10, CPI(M) in three, and the All Party Hill Leaders Conference in two.

The Aam Aadmi Party and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) each contested in 18 seats each, the TMC in 22, the JMM in 16.

There were 258 Independent candidates in the polls.

In the 2021 Assembly elections, the BJP had won 60 seats, while its allies AGP and UPPL had bagged nine and six MLAs respectively. The Congress had 29 legislators, its partners AIUDF 16 and BPF four, CPI(M) one, besides an Independent MLA. (PTI)

## NFR unloads 1,135 freight rakes in April

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 5: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) recorded steady freight performance at the start of the financial year 2026-27, unloading 1,135 freight rakes across its network in April. The consignments included essential and industrial commodities such as food grains, food-grade items, fertilisers, sugar, coal, salt and petroleum products, handled at goods sheds across the zone.

Assam accounted for the highest share with 593 rakes unloaded, including 317 carrying essential commodities.

Other Northeastern states also recorded freight movement, with 99 rakes unloaded in Tripura, 32 in Nagaland, 20 in Arunachal Pradesh, 14 in Manipur and eight in Mizoram.

## NAME CORRECTION

I Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan, W/O - Mohammed Saif Uddin, Vill: Saharan, P.O. - Joynagar, P.S.-Murajhar, Dist. - Hajo (Assam) That, my actual and correct name is Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan. That, in the HSLC Certificate, my name has been recorded as Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan instead of my actual and correct name Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan. That, both the names Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan and Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan are the names of one and same person i.e. my name.

\*Rizwana Begum Barbhuyan\*.

## Silver rises ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 2.51 lakh/kg in Delhi as geopolitical risks persist

HT Bureau

NEW DELHI, May 5: Silver prices climbed ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 2.51 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Tuesday, tracking a firm trend in global markets as geopolitical tensions in West Asia kept the commodity sentiment supported.

The white metal had closed at ₹ 2,49,500 per kg in the previous session.



However, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell ₹ 300 to ₹ 1,52,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal had finished at ₹ 1,52,800 per 10 grams on Monday.

"Gold continued to face pressure on Tuesday as investors responded to escalating tensions in the Middle East and their implications for the overall macroeconomic outlook," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

The fragile security situation around the Strait of Hormuz, including reported missile strikes and competing claims of control, has reinforces concerns over energy-led

inflation and a prolonged period of tighter monetary policy by central banks, he added.

"With the conflict now in its tenth week, in response to changing macroeconomic conditions, investors have increasingly turned to the US dollar and Treasury yields as their preferred safe-haven assets while remaining sidelined by gold, which adds to the downward pressure on precious metals," Gandhi said.

In the international market, spot silver gained 1.08 per cent to USD 73.51 per ounce while gold was trading marginally higher at USD 4,549.57 per ounce.

Spot gold hovered near USD 4,550 per ounce as crude prices eased on expectations of American military escorts for commercial vessels, though the pullback in oil is likely to be temporary, Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Meanwhile, upside in gold may remain limited as investors have largely priced out interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve, with the possibility of further tightening gaining traction, he added.

Renewed flare-ups in the region, including missile interceptions by the United Arab Emirates, have weakened confidence in the four-week ceasefire efforts, said Renisha Chainani, Head-Research at Augmont, adding that higher crude oil prices and global bond yields are expected due to tighter monetary policy ahead. (PTI)

## Ather Energy posts record FY26 performance, Q4 volumes hit 83,418 units Sales rise 69% YoY; EBITDA losses narrow sharply



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 5: Ather Energy reported its strongest-ever financial performance in FY26, driven by robust growth in sales volumes, expanding market share and improved operating efficiency.

The company sold 2,62,942 units during FY26, registering a 69% year-on-year increase.

In the fourth quarter, volumes reached a record 83,418 units, up 76% YoY.

EBITDA margins improved significantly by around 1,630 basis points for the full year and about 2,080 basis points in Q4, reflecting better unit economics and operating leverage.

Growth during the year was supported by rapid expansion of the retail and service network and strong demand for its family scooter Rizta.

Ather doubled its retail presence to 700 experience centres from 351 in

### CLEANING OF COACHES AND UNDERGEAR

E-Tender Notice No.: DBWS-NIET-04-2026-27; Dated: 02-05-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Name of the work: Cleaning of coaches and undergear of both ICF and LHB Coaches at DBWS for a period of 03 (three) years. Approximate Cost of the work: ₹ 23,053/- inclusive of GST @ 18%. Earnest Money: ₹ 74,500/- E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 25-05-2026 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 25-05-2026 at office of the N.F. Railway Mechanical workshop, Dibrugarh-786001. The complete information about the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs of 25-05-2026 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Chief Workshop Manager/  
Mechanical Workshop/Dibrugarh  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
"Serving Customers with a smile"

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Smt. Chanati Ronghangpi, W/o Hemari Teron (41), resident of Jasera Temen Teron Gaon, Amtereng P.O. & P.S. Baithalango, district West Karbi Anglong, Assam, do hereby solemnly affirm and stated before Hamren Judicial Court on 29/01/2026 that in my Voter Id card (EPIC) bearing number JRF353258, PAN card bearing PAN number: DZSPR7891J, Aadhaar Card bearing Aadhaar number 546027703066 my name has been correctly written as Chanati Ronghangpi.

Whereas in my Savings Bank Passbook of AGVB bearing Account Number 7454010043354 my name has been recorded as Chontti Ronghangpi instead of Chanati Ronghangpi. Both Chontti Ronghangpi and Chanati Ronghangpi is the names of one and the same person.

### E-AUCTION FOR GUEST HOUSE

E-auction for Guest House at South Bank of Bogibeel, Dibrugarh over Tinsukia Division. Details are as under: Auction Catalogue No.: TSK-GH-2026-01; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 11:00 hrs. on 21-05-2026; Auction Close Date & Time: 11:30 hrs. on 21-05-2026. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MSS-TSK-DMGN-STGen-31-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Static General)	Guest House at South Bank of river Brahmaputra, Bogibeel, Dibrugarh.

The e-auction catalogue has already been uploaded on 01-05-2026 through IREPS website.

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

### E-AUCTION FOR PARKING CONTRACT

E-auction for the contract of parking over Lumding Division for the period of 03 years. Auction Catalogue No.: PARK-LMG-04-26; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 11:00 hrs. on 20-05-2026; Auction Close Date & Time: 11:40 hrs. on 20-05-2026. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	PARKING-LMG-NGAN-MX-112-26-2 (Parking -Mixed)	Parking Lot for Two Wheelers, Three Wheelers and Four Wheelers at Nagaon Station circulating area.
AA/2	PARKING-LMG-SANG-MX-131-25-2 (Parking - Mixed)	Parking Lot for Two Wheelers, Three wheelers and Four Wheelers at location Sairang (SANG) circulating area.

Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module of IREPS website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Party wins Bokajan, Howraghat and Diphu seats with big margins

# BJP EKADC thanks voters for sweeping victory in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 5:** The BJP-East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC) has expressed gratitude to voters for the party's victory in all three Assembly constituencies—Bokajan, Howraghat and Diphu—in Karbi Anglong district in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP-EKADC office at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan here, district president Roland Killing credited party workers for the outcome, stating that their sustained efforts and dedication played a crucial role in the party's success.

"It is due to the hard work and selfless dedication of party karyakartas, who have worked day and night, that the BJP has achieved victory in all three constituencies with significant margins," Killing said.

He added that party workers endured various hardships and remained committed to organisational work throughout the campaign.

In Bokajan, BJP candidate Surjyo Rong-



phar defeated Congress candidate Raton Engti by a margin of 17,466 votes.

In Howraghat, BJP candidate Lusing Teron secured one of the highest margins in the region, winning by 78,106 votes against Congress candidate Sanjiv Teron.

In Diphu, BJP candidate Niso Terangpi

registered a convincing victory with a margin of 49,740 votes over APHLC-backed Independent candidate JI Kathar.

Killing described the outcome as a historic achievement for the party in Karbi Anglong, noting that in Howraghat constituency, the BJP candidate secured over

one lakh votes.

He also pointed out that the Diphu result marked the first time a woman candidate has been elected from the constituency.

He credited the party's victory to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, BJP Assam Pradesh president Dilip Saikia, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and Rongkhang MLA Tuliram Ronghang, and MP Amarsing Tisso.

He also acknowledged the contributions of party office-bearers and various morcha leaders.

Killing expressed confidence that the BJP government would focus on development and governance in the coming five years, with emphasis on infrastructure, employment generation, youth welfare and women's empowerment in Karbi Anglong.

He said the party remains committed to ensuring peace and overall progress in the region.

## Ripun Bora retires from electoral politics after defeat

Former APCC chief says he will continue in Congress as 'guardian'



**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, May 5:** Ripun Bora on Tuesday announced his retirement from electoral politics after his defeat in the Borsola Assembly constituency.

Addressing the media in Tezpur, Bora said he would not contest any future elections but would continue to remain in the Congress and work as a "guardian" of the party.

He reaffirmed his commitment to the party, stating that he would remain with it and continue to op-

pose the BJP.

Bora, who lost to BJP candidate Ritubaran Sarmah, urged party workers not to lose heart and said issues related to alliances would be discussed within the party.

He added that the Congress would undertake a detailed review of its performance in the Assembly elections.

While accepting the electoral outcome, Bora expressed reservations over the results, stating that doubts were being raised among sections of the public.

He referred to pre-result projections and said they closely matched the final outcome.

He also pointed to the participation of young voters and said their enthusiasm during the campaign did not appear to reflect in the results.

Bora further raised concerns over the functioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs), stating that questions regarding their use could not be entirely ruled out.

Referring to voter demographics, he said that of the nearly 2.11 crore voters in the state, around 1.08 crore were women, and questioned the voting pattern in light of welfare scheme beneficiaries.

## Four arrested as Jorhat police bust theft gang

Cash, jewellery, mobile phones and temple items recovered

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 5:** Police in Jorhat have busted a theft gang and recovered cash, jewellery, mobile phones and items stolen from temples.

Officer-in-Charge of Jorhat Police Station Hrishikesh Hazarika said four persons, including a jewellery shop owner and a scrap yard dealer, were arrested in connection with the case, while one more individual has been detained for questioning.

The accused have been booked under Sections 331 and 305 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

They were identified as Ujjal Borah of Palibor and Abdul Qadir.

Police said Ujjal Borah allegedly sold stolen jewellery at a low price to LN Jewellers at Tarajan. The shop owner, Jitumoni Bordoloi, has been arrested for purchasing stolen items. Scrap dealer Rofique Ansari was also arrested for allegedly disposing of brass items stolen from temples.

According to police, the operation was launched following a theft complaint from a resident of the Cholahora area. A special police team was formed, CCTV footage was analysed and a drive was carried out to apprehend the accused.

Police recovered ₹89,000 in cash, five mobile phones, brass xarais and other temple items, costly mekhela sadors, and jewellery worth around ₹10 lakh.

## BJP retains Hojai, Lumding; Ajmal wins Binnakandi

**HT Correspondent**

**HOJAI, May 5:** The BJP retained both Hojai and Lumding Assembly constituencies in Hojai district, while the AIUDF held on to Binnakandi, reflecting the broader electoral trend in central Assam.

In 63 No Hojai constituency, BJP candidate Shiladitya Dev won with 1,44,361 votes, defeating Congress candidate Jhili Chowdhury, who secured 77,660 votes, by a margin of over 66,000 votes.

Following his victory, Dev described the result as a mandate of trust and said he would prioritise development in the constituency.

He also indicated that action would be taken against alleged encroachments on land belonging to religious institutions.

In 64 No Lumding constituency, BJP candidate Sibru Misra secured a third consecutive term, polling 1,15,330 votes against Congress candidate Swapna Kar, who received 94,736 votes. In 62 No Binnakandi constituency, AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal won with 1,17,549 votes, defeating AJP candidate Rejaul Karim Chowdhury, who secured 82,793 votes.

23<sup>rd</sup> edition organised by HTBS highlights cultural unity and heritage

## Rongjali Bwisagu celebrated with enthusiasm in Howraghat

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, May 5:** The 23rd edition of the Rongjali Bwisagu festival was celebrated with enthusiasm by the Howraghat Town Bodo Society (HTBS) on Sunday, reflecting the community's cultural vibrancy and unity.

The celebrations began with the ceremonial hoisting of the Bwisagu flag along with the HTBS organisational flag.

HTBS president KK Brahma hoisted the society's flag, while vice president Ajit Basumatary conducted the formal raising of the Bwisagu flag.

Former president Karuna Boro led the homage ceremony, paying tribute to the cultural significance of the occasion.

## Tezpur College launches Indo-Bhutan academic exchange programme

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, May 5:** Tezpur College on Tuesday inaugurated a week-long international student-teacher academic exchange programme aimed at strengthening academic collaboration between India and Bhutan.

The programme, organised by the Department of Geography, began at the Chandra Mohan Medhi Auditorium in the presence of a 15-member delegation from Samtse College of Education under the Royal University of Bhutan.

The delegation was led by senior faculty member Kuenzang Gyeltshen and included professors, administrative officials and research scholars.

The inaugural session began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by principal Dr Manoj Kumar Hazarika.

In his address, he said such initiatives would enhance academic and cultural engagement between institutions and contribute to human resource development in both countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Gyeltshen high-



lighted India's longstanding cooperation with Bhutan and expressed optimism that the programme would open new avenues for academic exchange and collaboration.

The seven-day programme aims to strengthen academic linkages between students and faculty of both institutions, promote innovative teaching practices and encourage field-based learning.

It includes classroom observations, co-teaching sessions, faculty interactions, student seminars and academic discussions on contemporary themes in geography education.

A key component of the programme is a workshop on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing, focusing on spatial data analysis and the application of geospatial technologies in teaching and research.

A special lecture on Gross National Happiness (GNH) and sustainable development is also scheduled.

The programme also featured cultural performances by students and was anchored by Violina Deka, Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics.

## Arogya Yoga Kendra marks foundation day with yoga sports meet



**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 5:** Arogya Yoga Kendra, Dhing unit of Arogya Care Foundation, celebrated its 8th foundation day along with the 3rd annual yoga sports meet through a three-day programme.

The event was inaugurated by Dr Biman Hazarika, Principal of Dhing College, in the presence of Dr Mukut Devnath.

The closing programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp before the portrait of Zubeen Garg by social worker Bidyut Hazarika.

Addressing the gathering, he said trainees of the Kendra have brought recognition to the Dhing region by participating in various state and national-level competitions.

Competitions including yoga, art, essay writing, speech, musical chair, chess and races were organised during the event.

In his address, president Dr Jonaram Nath highlighted the institution's eight-year journey and its contribution to student development through yoga.

Participants were felicitated with medals, trophies and certificates. Sanchita Kuri was awarded best yoga player, while Saurav Debnath received the best player award.

Meritorious students, including Jiban Debnath, Sayon Karmakar, Saurav Debnath, Sneha Deka and Bishal Kar, were also felicitated for their performance in the HSLC and Higher Secondary examinations.

The programme was conducted under the supervision of secretary Rupjiyoti Kar.

## Sushanta Borgohain accorded warm welcome in Demow after victory

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, May 5:** Sushanta Borgohain was accorded a warm welcome by party workers and supporters in Demow following his victory in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

Borgohain won the 95 No Demow constituency by a margin of 33,528 votes over Congress-led alliance candidate Ajoy Kumar Gogoi, while CPI candidate Ajoy Bora finished third.

After the declaration of results on May 4, Borgohain arrived in the constituency from the counting centre in Sivasagar, where he was received by party workers.

Celebrations were held at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan at Demow Alun Nagar near NH-37, where supporters felicitated him with phulam gamosa and chhella chadar.

On Tuesday, residents gathered at his residence in Demow Raichai to congratulate him, offering traditional honours including gamosa, flowers and chhella chadar.

Borgohain began his political career as a Congress candidate, winning from the erstwhile 107 No Thowra constituency (now 95 No Demow) in 2011.

He lost in 2016 but returned to the Assembly in 2021.

Following his victory, he resigned from the Congress and joined the BJP, later winning the by-election from the constituency.

The recent election marked his third term as MLA from the constituency following delimitation.

E-AUCTION FOR PROVISION OF CATERING STALLS OVER LUMDING DIVISION			
E-Auction is invited for Catering Stall (General Minor Unit & Special Minor Unit) Assets Over Lumding Division Auction Catalogue No.: CATER-LMG-04-26; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): At 10:30 hrs. on 18-05-2026. Days: 1826.			
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description	
AA/1	Catg-LMG-JRNA-GMU-58-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. JRNATS-1 at platform-1 of Jirania Railway station.	
AA/2	Catg-LMG-BXP-GMU-103-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BXPTS-3 at Platform-1 of Barpathar Railway station.	
AA/3	Catg-LMG-BHRB-GMU-119-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BHRBTS-1 at platform-1 of Bhaibarai Railway station.	
AA/4	Catg-LMG-DSR-GMU-122-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DSRTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dhansiri Railway station.	
AA/5	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-150-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) NHLGTS-2 at PF-1 of New Halflong Railway Station.	
AA/6	Catg-LMG-BPB-GMU-151-26-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) BPBTS-9 at PF-2 of BADARPUR Railway Station.	
AA/7	Catg-LMG-HKD-GMU-185-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on General Minor Units (GMU), Tea Stall (HKDTS-3), of Hailakandi Railway Station at PF-1.	
AA/8	Catg-LMG-MXR-GMU-79-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. MXRTS-1 at Platform-1 of Mahur Railway station.	
AA/9	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-53-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. SHTTTS-3 at platform-1 of Silghat Town Railway station.	
AA/10	Catg-LMG-MBO-GMU-169-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Units (GMU), Tea stall (MBOTS-1), at platform-1 of Mairabari Railway station.	
AA/11	Catg-LMG-NGAN-GMU-81-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. NGANTS-1 at Platform-1 of Nagaon Railway station.	
AA/12	Catg-LMG-DJA-GMU-109-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DJATS-2 at Platform-1 of Daotuhaja Railway station.	
AA/13	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-148-26-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of Catering Service at General Minor Unit (GMU) NHLGTS-1 at New Halflong Railway Station.	
AA/14	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-171-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering stall (GMU Tea stall (SHTTTS-1) at platform-1 of Silghat Railway station.	
AA/15	Catg-LMG-BRGM-GMU-50-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. BRGMTS-2 at platform-1 of Baraigam Railway station.	
AA/16	Catg-LMG-DML-GMU-110-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DMLTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dharमत Railway station.	
AA/17	Catg-LMG-BXJ-GMU-178-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on (GMU), Tea stall (BXJTS-1) at platform-1 near Battery Room of Bokajan Railway station.	
AA/18	Catg-LMG-DHRY-GMU-108-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. DHRYTS-1 at Platform-1 of Dhalpukhuri Railway station.	
AA/19	Catg-LMG-RAHA-GMU-51-25-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on General Minor Unit (GMU) tea stall No. RAHATS-1 at platform-1 of Raha Railway station.	
AB/1	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-48-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. LKATS-3 at platform-1 of Lanka Railway station.	
AB/2	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-183-26-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service (SMU tea stall No. JMKTS-1) at PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station.	
AB/3	Catg-LMG-SANG-SMU-181-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea stall (SANGTS-1) at platform-1 of Sairang Railway station.	
AB/4	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-59-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. LKATS-7 at Other Platform of Lanka Railway station.	
AB/5	Catg-LMG-JID-SMU-180-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea stall (JIDTSTS-1) at PF-1 of Jagiroad Railway station.	
AB/6	Catg-LMG-CPK-SMU-65-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service on Special Minor Unit (SMU) tea stall No. CPKTS-6 at Old Platform-1 of Chaparmukh Railway station.	
AB/7	Catg-LMG-MYD-SMU-173-25-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering services on Special Minor Units (SMU), Tea Stall (MYDTS-2), at PF-1 of Mandardisa Railway Station.	
AB/8	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-184-26-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of catering service (SMU tea stall No. JMKTS-2) at PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station.	
AB/9	Catg-LMG-GHY-SMU-123-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit)	Provision of Fruit stall (Fruit, Juice & other packed items as approved by zonal Railways), stall No. 'GHYFS-2' at PF 4/5, between pillars No 14 & 15 at Guwahati Railway station.	
Closing date & time : At 15:30 hrs. on 18-05-2026. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 minutes. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> for more details.			
Sr. DCM, Lumding			
<b>NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY</b> Serving Customers With A Smile			

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Sports is like a war without the killing. - Ted Turner

## Sudden emergence of Vijay

The scale of what Vijay has pulled off in Tamil Nadu is not just unexpected—it is structurally disruptive. In a state where politics has, for over half a century, oscillated between two Dravidian poles—Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam—the sudden emergence of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam as the single largest party, brushing past the 110-seat mark and falling just short of a majority in the 234-member Assembly, marks a generational rupture. This is not merely a victory. It is a rejection—of incumbency, of entrenched political networks, and perhaps most significantly, of the idea that Tamil Nadu's electorate is immutably loyal to Dravidian binaries. For M. K. Stalin, this election was supposed to consolidate the gains of 2021, when the DMK returned to power with a comfortable majority of 133 seats. Instead, the party has seen its tally nearly halved in early trends, dropping to the mid-50s—a stunning reversal in just five years. Several factors converged to produce the collapse. There was an anti-incumbency with economic edge. Unlike previous elections driven by identity or welfare politics, this verdict carries a strong undercurrent of economic resentment. Across urban and semi-urban Tamil Nadu, there has been growing disquiet over the perceived monopolisation of key sectors by networks linked to the ruling establishment.

From state-run cable distribution to the dominance of private media empires like Sun TV Network, and film distribution channels associated with Red Giant Movies, a narrative had taken root: that economic opportunity was being covered by a tight political-business nexus. This sentiment appears to have cut across caste and class lines—particularly among first-generation entrepreneurs, small manufacturers, and the urban aspirational class. Then, there is a perception over increasing family control. The DMK has long faced accusations of dynastic concentration, but this election sharpened that critique. The prominence of Udhayanidhi Stalin, alongside other family-linked power centres, fed into a perception that governance and economic access were increasingly centralised. While Udhayanidhi himself is leading, the broader backlash has been severe enough to unsettle or endanger several senior ministers, including figures like Durai Murugan. Even more striking are trends suggesting Stalin himself trailing in Kolathur—symbolically devastating if it holds.

The DMK's strategic calculation appears to have been that Vijay's entry would split the anti-incumbency vote, indirectly benefiting the ruling party. That assumption has collapsed. Instead, TVK has acted as a consolidator, not a splitter—pulling voters directly away from the DMK across regions, especially among youth and first-time voters. Political observers say his rise to power in two years with such a huge number surpasses another film personality NTR in Andhra Pradesh who ousted Mrs Gandhi with his *atmagauravam* (self-respect) campaign. What makes Vijay's rise particularly consequential is the ideological space he occupies. He is not easily boxed into existing Tamil Nadu frameworks: Not explicitly Dravidian in the classical sense; Not aligned with Hindutva politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party; and publicly positioned as an agnostic on religion and caste.

## POST BAG

## An open letter to the newly elected MLAs of Assam

Sir/ Ma'am,

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the MLAs who have emerged victorious in the Assam Legislative Assembly elections. The trust and responsibility that the people have placed upon you are not limited to a political victory; rather, they mark the beginning of a profound commitment. In this moment of celebration, it is important for every MLA to remember that they are not merely representatives of a party or a group, but the voice of every citizen in their constituency. Assam faces numerous challenges—education, employment, healthcare, floods and erosion, environmental conservation, and the future of its youth. These issues should not remain mere promises but must be transformed into concrete actions. Within the Assembly, uphold the dignity of democracy through rational, respectful, and constructive debates, and outside it, maintain continuous engagement with the public.

Through this open letter, I would like to make a special appeal. MLAs should allocate a portion of their development funds toward career guidance, skill development, and the creation of self-employment opportunities for the youth. This will help build a stronger future for the state. Many students in Assam complete their schooling without having a clear understanding of the diverse career opportunities available to them. Most tend to focus only on traditional professions such as medicine, engineering, teaching, or government jobs. However, in today's world, there is immense potential in fields like information technology, digital services, entrepreneurship, tourism, and agri-technology. Due to the lack of proper guidance, many young people fail to choose the right path and fall behind, facing unemployment or underemployment despite being educated. Therefore, it is essential to establish career guidance centres in every constituency. These centres can provide reliable information and counselling on educational opportunities, training programs, scholarships, competitive examinations, and employment prospects. Such initiatives would be especially beneficial for students in rural areas. The use of technology is also crucial. Developing an integrated online career guidance portal would enable students to access information easily. With features such as online counselling, mentorship programs, and learning resources, the youth can become more aware and better prepared. In addition, it is important to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and the government. Programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and industrial visits can provide practical experience and prepare students for the real world of work. Such measures will help bridge the gap between education and the job market.

Another significant issue in Assam is youth migration. Many talented young individuals leave the state in search of better opportunities. By focusing on local skill development and career guidance, more employment opportunities can be created within the state, thereby strengthening the local economy. The career guidance system must be accessible and inclusive for all. Special attention should be given to students from rural and economically weaker sections through scholarships, free counselling, and targeted skill development initiatives. The youth of Assam are the future of the state. With the right direction and opportunities, they can contribute not only to their own growth but also to the progress of the entire state. Therefore, prioritizing career guidance is the need of the hour.

Dr Buljit Buragohain

## Why our democracy needs a vision, Not just a protest

Sir/ Ma'am

Through the columns of your esteemed daily, I want to share a perspective from a young voter watching our recent elections. The outcome of the recent elections is known and with it is born a sentiment of disappointment among us youngsters. It is not with the result per se but more with the lack of any grand vision by the opposition that has disappointed us. Coming from a generation of innovative youth, it pained me that the opposition was all about pointing the fingers at them without offering anything concrete regarding what the alternative future would look like.

An effective opposition forms the lifeblood of any nation. They cannot simply become a "no machine". In order to create a balanced democracy, the opposition needs to come up with an alternative and visionary path regarding various issues such as employment, technology, climate change etc. The pressure generated through this opposition will make the ruling party do even better.

Opposition in itself means nothing. What we need is leaders who not only oppose a policy but also have an alternate future to present. If the opposition keeps looking into its past, our country and its democracy will be left behind.

Sanju Paul  
Dibrugarh University

## Mama Magic: BJP's unstoppable victory in Assam

The results of the Assam Legislative Assembly elections declared today have marked the beginning of an unprecedented and historic chapter. According to the official data and statistics of the Election Commission, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance has managed to capture power in Assam for a third consecutive term with a massive and absolute majority, completely uprooting the foundation of the opposition camp. In a democratic system, political analysts generally believe that after remaining in power for two consecutive terms, a natural wave of anti-incumbency or public dissatisfaction begins to take shape against the ruling party. The opposition parties had also made tireless efforts in this election to counter the ruling party by using issues such as price rise, unemployment, and various regional concerns as their main weapons. However, in this electoral battle, all those conventional political theories and the expectations of the opposition were shattered in an instant. Out of the 126 Assembly seats in Assam, the remarkable results achieved by the BJP along with its allies are rare in the political history of post-independence Assam. On the other hand, the condition of the Congress and its led Assam United Alliance became so pitiable that they were forced to struggle even to preserve their existence. Particularly, in an important and historic constituency like Jorhat, the manner in which Congress's prominent leader Gaurav Gogoi suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of BJP's veteran and experienced politician Hitendra Nath Goswami proved that in Assam's soil, elections can no longer be won merely on the basis of lineage or national-level recognition. Behind this unstoppable victory lies the ruling party's long-term strategic planning, its ability to understand public psychology, and a strong organizational base at the grassroots level. The results clearly indicate that the voters of present-day Assam do not cast their votes merely out of emotion or by being swayed by promises, but instead seek continuity in development, security, and strong leadership, which they have found in the BJP.

The chief architect and driving force behind this massive and historic victory of the BJP is, above all, the name of the state's Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. His political acumen, extraordinary hard work, and the close bond he has built with the people have given a distinct and vibrant dimension to the entire electoral process. In Assam's politics, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma is

no longer just a Chief Minister or a political leader; he has become an emotion for the general electorate. People across the state— young and old, especially the youth and women—affectionately address him as 'Mama'. This title is not something artificially imposed through political propaganda; rather, it is a spontaneous reflection of his continuous public engagement, his readiness to stand

by people in times of distress, and his simple and approachable demeanor. During the election campaign, the way he tirelessly traveled across the state day and night, interacting directly with people in every rally, was beyond the imagination of opposition leaders. His eloquence, his ability to

make quick decisions on complex issues, and his magical political strategy of turning opposition attacks into his advantage are truly unparalleled. Whenever opposition parties targeted him personally, he skillfully projected those attacks as conspiracies against Assam and Assamese pride. Dr Sarma operates in the political arena like a skilled and visionary general who anticipates the opponent's next move and prepares both defense and offense in advance. His massive victory margin in the Jalukbari constituency was merely a formality, as his real and larger battle was to transform the BJP's base across Assam into an impregnable fortress. A key feature of his so-called 'Mama Magic' lies in eliminating the distance between the government and the people. He has proven that if a leader can genuinely touch the hearts of the people, no political storm can shake him.

The process of constituency delimitation carried out in Assam before the election played a decisive and significant role in this Assembly election, which can be described as a far-sighted and masterstroke political victory for the BJP. This long-pending process, completed through the Election Commission of India, brought about a massive structural transformation in Assam's political map. As a result of this delimitation, representation of indigenous and tribal communities was ensured and their political rights became more secure. Constituencies that were earlier dominated by certain migrant or minority groups, where indigenous communities were on the verge of losing their political identity, witnessed a fundamental change in demographics. The government led by Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma successfully established this entire legal and administrative process in the public psyche as a strong and historic step towards safeguarding the existence of indigenous communities in

Assam. Consequently, the trust and confidence of indigenous voters across Upper Assam, Lower Assam, the North Bank, and Central Assam increased manifold towards the ruling party. The BJP effectively used identity politics in its favor and rendered the opposition completely defenseless on this sensitive issue. While Congress and other opposition parties opposed the delimitation, the BJP linked it with the future and security of the Assamese people, creating a deep emotional resonance. Meanwhile, parties like AIUDF found their influence restricted to a few specific constituencies, reducing their overall significance at the state level. Congress lost many of its traditional strongholds as the geographical boundaries and demographic composition of those constituencies changed. Under the visionary leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP had already begun building its organizational base in these newly formed and redefined constituencies years in advance through silent and systematic planning. Each constituency's new equations, ethnic composition, and local issues were studied meticulously, and candidates were selected accordingly. All these factors smoothed the BJP's path to victory to such an extent that the opposition seemed mentally defeated even before the contest began.

Rapid infrastructure development and beneficiary-centric welfare economics emerged as another powerful and unassailable weapon behind the BJP's sweeping victory, appealing equally to both rural and urban voters. Among the government's various schemes, the 'Orunodoi' scheme, in particular, initiated a silent revolution in Assam's socio-economic and political landscape. Through this ambitious scheme, lakhs of poor and underprivileged women began receiving direct financial assistance in their bank accounts every month. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma did not confine this scheme merely as a government subsidy; instead, he transformed it into a symbol of women empowerment, poverty alleviation, and dignity. Women voters constitute a decisive and silent force in any democratic election, and through schemes like Orunodoi, the BJP successfully established this vast segment as a

reliable vote bank. Simultaneously, unprecedented infrastructure development across the state instilled deep confidence among the people in the government's intentions. Massive bridges over the Brahmaputra, modern medical colleges in various districts, improved national highways, and the upgrading of educational institutions visibly transformed the state's landscape. Dr Sarma consistently highlighted the concept of a 'double engine' government, explaining in simple terms the coordinated development brought by both central and state governments. Even those voters who were not ideologically aligned with the BJP earlier were compelled to support the ruling party after witnessing these tangible changes and benefiting from government schemes. While opposition parties criticized these initiatives as electoral gimmicks or misuse of public funds, such theoretical criticisms held no value for rural families who depended on the monthly financial support for their livelihood. The Chief Minister's strict monitoring of governance and his sharp oversight across departments made the administrative system more transparent and accountable, the benefits of which were returned by the people through their votes.

On the other hand, the opposition's consistent strategic failures, lack of a constructive vision, and severe leadership crisis further eased the BJP's path to this sweeping victory. Before the 2026 elections, the Assam United Alliance led by Congress made several promises and launched strong criticisms against the government, but failed to demonstrate genuine coordination among its constituent parties at the grassroots level. Internal conflicts over seat-sharing even before the elections eroded public confidence in the alliance. Although Congress projected Gaurav Gogoi as a prominent face, his defeat in a key constituency like Jorhat proved that national-level image and parliamentary eloquence alone are insufficient to win state elections. Against a grounded and experienced leader like Hitendra Nath Goswami, Gogoi's campaign lacked strategic depth. The opposition failed to present a credible alternative vision capable of countering Dr Hi-

mananta Biswa Sarma's strong personality, persuasive communication, and aggressive political style. In a democratic election, mere criticism of the ruling government is never enough; the opposition must present a reliable and hopeful alternative for the future, which they failed to do. Additionally, the BJP's well-organized and disciplined booth-level machinery had no parallel in the opposition. From mobilizing voters on polling day to managing the entire process till the last moment, the BJP displayed unmatched efficiency and dedication, leaving the opposition bewildered.

Overall analysis reveals that the results of this Assam Legislative Assembly election clearly establish the unstoppable momentum of the BJP and the extraordinary political influence of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. This landslide victory rests on a firm foundation of nationalist ideology, an unwavering commitment to holistic development, and continuous efforts to connect with every citizen. The BJP has not merely focused on winning elections; it has embedded its ideology and governance model deeply within the social fabric of Assam. For the opposition, this result serves as a harsh and realistic warning. If they aspire to regain relevance, they must overhaul their strategies, reconnect with grassroots realities, and rebuild public trust. They must step beyond the confines of social media and engage directly with people, understanding their concerns and aspirations. Moreover, they require strong, visionary, and widely acceptable leadership capable of presenting a credible alternative. Otherwise, halting the BJP's momentum will remain a distant dream, and the phenomenon of 'Mama Magic' will continue to dominate Assam's political landscape for years to come. This election proves that there is no magic in politics; what is described as 'Mama Magic' is essentially the result of relentless hard work, timely decision-making, and a deep understanding of public sentiment. The people of Assam have not merely voted for a party; they have voted for continuity, security, and the promise of a brighter future, thereby establishing a new milestone in the political history of the state.



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## Fortress Assam and the fall of Bengal's Didi

The 2026 Assembly elections have left India at a crossroads that feels both familiar and deeply unsettling. As the dust settles across Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry, the political map of the country looks like a patchwork quilt of conflicting ideologies and shifting loyalties. We are looking at a moment where the National Democratic Alliance finds itself celebrating massive territorial gains in the north and east while facing a stubborn, almost impenetrable wall in the south. This election cycle was never just about who gets to sit in the Chief Minister's chair for the next five years. It was a high-stakes battle for the soul of our federal structure and the definition of what it means to be a secular republic in a rapidly changing world. When we look at the numbers and the narratives that emerged from these five regions, we see a story of incredible consolidation on one side and a desperate, sometimes failing, struggle for relevance on the other.

In Assam, the story is one of absolute dominance that has effectively rewritten the rules of the game. For the first time in the history of the state, the Bharatiya Janata Party has managed to cross the halfway mark of sixty four seats entirely on its own strength. This is a massive psychological and political victory for Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has spent the last few years crafting a persona that blends aggressive communal rhetoric with a very calculated system of welfare redistribution. By winning one hundred and one seats along with its partners in the one hundred and twenty six member Assembly, the NDA has essentially decimated the opposition. The Congress party is starting at a wreckage that is hard to describe. This is their worst performance ever, falling even below the dismal numbers they saw in 1985 after the Assam Agitation. It is a stinging blow to the grand old party, especially with Gaurav Gogoi losing his own seat. It feels like the old guard of Assamese politics has been pushed out by a new, more muscular form of nationalism that does not feel the need to hide its polarising edges. The regional parties that tried to find a middle ground or align with the Congress, like the Rajiv Dal and Assam Jatiya Parishad, were completely routed. Even the allies within the NDA, such as the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bodoland People's Front, find themselves in a precarious position. They won a few seats,

but they have almost no leverage left because the BJP does not actually need them to stay in power. The state has moved from a complex multi-polar contest to a virtual one-party system. While the victory in Assam was a validation of a sitting government, the earthquake in West Bengal is what will define the history books of this decade. The BJP has achieved what many thought was impossible just a few years ago. They have managed to dismantle the Trinamool Congress's fortress through a combination of relentless, long-term planning and a deep understanding of Bengal's unique political history. Bengal has always been a paradox. It was the cradle of India's national movement and a bastion of secularism for decades under the Left, but it was also the birthplace of many Hindutva ideas long before they became mainstream in the cow belt.

The BJP tapped into this older, dormant identity and fused it with a totalising nationalist narrative that eventually overwhelmed the regional pride Mamata Banerjee had successfully weaponised for so long. The Trinamool Congress now finds itself in a state of existential crisis. Mamata Banerjee is seventy one years old, and without a clear line of succession that carries her same fire and connection to the grassroots, the party looks vulnerable. Its cadres and voters are now exposed to the immense pressure of a triumphant BJP that has shown it knows how to subsume regional politics, much like it did in Maharashtra and Odisha. But we cannot talk about the Bengal results without addressing the dark clouds that hung over the entire process. This was perhaps the most tainted election in our recent memory. The fact that nearly twenty seven lakh people were arbitrarily removed from the electoral rolls is a staggering blow to the integrity of our democracy. When the Supreme Court of India took what many see as an unhelpful view of this massive disenfranchisement, it sent a shiver down the spine of anyone who cares about fair play. If a victory is built on the foundation of excluding a significant portion of the electorate from the very act of voting, then the mandate carries a heavy burden of doubt. It is a sign of a decaying democratic culture where the process matters less than the result. This trend is a cause for serious concern because it suggests that the fundamentals of our republic are being tinkered with in ways that might be irreversible.

The narrative shifts completely when we cross the Vindhyas and look at the southern states. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the NDA's juggernaut hit a solid wall of regional identity and alternative governance models. In these two states, the incumbents were swept away, but not in the direction the BJP hoped for. The people chose to change their leaders, but they did not choose the saffron path. Tamil Nadu remains a territory where the Dravidian identity is the primary filter through which all politics must pass. The rejection of the NDA here is a reminder that a singular, centralised nationalist narrative often fails to resonate in places that take deep pride in their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness.

Kerala also followed its tradition of rotating power, but it did so by keeping the contest within the frameworks of its own unique social coalitions. These states act as a vital check on the idea that India is moving toward a monolithic political future. They represent the federal spirit of our republic, proving that different parts of the country can and will march to different beats. The success of the BJP in the east and its failure in the south creates a strange imbalance in the national discourse. We are seeing a country that is becoming more politically polarised not just between parties, but between entire regions. The north and east seem to be gravitating toward a strong, centralised authority that uses a mix of religion and direct benefit transfers to maintain its grip. Meanwhile, the south continues to protect its autonomy and its own specific brand of social justice politics. This divergence makes the task of national integration much harder. It places a lot of stress on our federal institutions, which are supposed to mediate between these different visions of India. When one side feels that the very rules of the election are being manipulated, as we saw in Bengal, the trust that holds a diverse country together begins to fray.

Puducherry followed the trend of the NDA retaining power, similar to Assam, which provides a small foothold for the alliance in the south, but it is too small a sample to suggest a broader shift in the region. The real story remains the massive consolidation of power in the hands of a few leaders who have mastered the art of the permanent campaign. The way Himanta Biswa Sarma has reinforced his position in Assam is a masterclass in modern Indian politics. He has managed to make himself indispensable

by being both a development-oriented administrator and a fierce ideological warrior. This dual identity allows him to appeal to a broad base of voters while keeping his core supporters energised. On the other hand, the loss for the Congress and its regional allies in the state shows a complete lack of a counter-narrative. You cannot defeat a powerful ideological machine with half-hearted alliances and a leadership that seems disconnected from the ground. The situation for the opposition in Bengal is even more dire. The Trinamool Congress's politics had clearly run its course, exhausted by years of incumbency and allegations of corruption that the BJP was able to exploit. But more than that, the BJP succeeded because it was willing to play the long game. They did not just show up for the election; they spent years building an organisation that could match the TMC's muscle on the streets. This meticulous preparation is what allowed them to convert a threshold population to their side. Now that they have won, the question is how they will govern a state as complex and volatile as Bengal. Will they try to heal the wounds of a fractured society, or will they continue the same polarising tactics that brought them to power? Given the history of the last few years, many fear it will be the latter.

When we think about the future of India as a secular, democratic, federal republic, these election results offer a mixed bag of hope and despair. The persistence of regional identities in the south is a sign of health for our federalism. It shows that the Indian voter is not a monolith and can distinguish between national trends and local needs. But the erosion of democratic norms in the election process in Bengal is a warning that we cannot ignore. A democracy is only as strong as its weakest link, and if our electoral rolls and our courts fail to protect the right of every citizen to vote, then the very foundation of our republic is at risk. We are living through a time of great flux where old certainties are disappearing and new, often harsher realities are taking their place. The 2026 elections have shown us that while some parts of India are ready to embrace a new order, others are digging their heels in to protect a different vision of the country. This tension is what will define our politics in the years to come. It is not just about who wins or loses; it is about what kind of India survives the victory.

# Free Bus services as public goods: Lessons from the Dunkirk experiment

By: Ramanath Jha

Among the inclusionary initiatives adopted by some Indian states is the provision of free or subsidised bus transport. For example, Delhi launched the 'Pink Ticket' scheme to extend the facility of unrestricted bus rides for women. Cities in Tamil Nadu offer a zero-fare bus travel scheme, allowing women to travel on government buses without charge. The Karnataka government has named a similar scheme 'Shakti'. Maharashtra, on the other hand, provides subsidised bus travel for women at 50 percent of the normal fare under the 'Mahila Samman Yojana'. Telangana's 'Maha Laxmi Scheme' offers free bus rides to both women and marginalised groups. In Andhra Pradesh, women can travel within their districts without charge. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as BEST (Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport) in Mumbai, also provide bus concessions.

Lessons from Europe

Even before free bus rides were introduced in India, several countries and cities had adopted similar initiatives. Luxembourg, a small but affluent European country, pioneered free public transport across all modes in February 2020, except for first-class train travel, followed by Malta in October 2022. Earlier, Hasselt (Belgium) abolished fares in 1997, and Tallinn (Estonia) in 2013. More recently, Kharkiv (Ukraine) adopted a similar policy in 2022, and Belgrade followed in 2025.

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While Hasselt and Tallinn are smaller cities, Kharkiv and Belgrade are large metropolitan centres with populations exceeding one million. Notably, in India, decisions on free or subsidised transport have been taken by state governments, whereas in Europe, such initiatives have largely been led by city governments. This distinction reflects a broader structural difference: European cities enjoy greater autonomy, while in India, local transportation is not included in the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, which outlines municipal functions.

The Dunkirk Model

Another city was added to the above-cited list in 2014. Mayor Patrice Vergriete, who holds a doctorate in urban planning, announced that Dunkirk, a city in France with a population of 81,920, would provide free bus services. The ini-

tiative was titled "100% free bus, 7 days a week". The objectives were to improve mobility in the city, reduce reliance on private vehicles, and lower carbon emissions and air pollution. However, the plan was preceded by nearly four years of preparation before its rollout.

The programme was communicated to the public through the media and on the streets. This was followed by surveys and extensive dialogue with residents, leading to revisions and simplification of timetables to better align with commuting patterns. Vehicle quality improved, bus stop locations were modified, and the fleet size increased. In 2015, the city piloted the programme by introducing free weekend travel. The full free bus service was rolled out in 2018. Throughout the process, a total investment of €26.47 million was made, with a contribution of €1.65 million from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund.

While Dunkirk's experience has been replicated in several European cities, debate persists over the model's viability in major cities worldwide—including New York City, where Zohran Mandani campaigned on a promise of free bus rides for all residents.

The results of the endeavour were highly encouraging. There was a 165 percent rise in bus ridership. About 10 percent of bus users had permanently given up their cars, and parking lot use declined by 30 percent. A 2019 study found that half of new bus riders were taking bus journeys they previously made by car. People travelled more to the city centre, and walking increased significantly. The initiative had little impact on cycling, which was mainly a leisure activity for residents. The initiative also catalysed a positive shift away from the idealised image of private car ownership, especially among young people.

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In Dunkirk, free bus rides cost €17 million (3.4 percent) of the city's total budget of €500 million. However, in New York, transportation is the second-highest household cost, accounting for an average of 14 percent of household spending. Estimates for a free bus service in New York City put the cost at US\$ 652 million, or about 4 percent of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's



(MTA) total revenue. This does not account for the likelihood that free rides will boost demand, thereby increasing bus trips, which stood at 415 million in 2022. Increased travel demand will require an expansion of the city's bus fleet. While US\$ 652 million in revenue loss is a small portion of the city budget, the resulting deficit is likely to affect other services. This shortfall, however, could be offset by raising fares on other public transport modes or by increasing general taxes.

Public Good or Populism?

This scenario brings us to the debate over freebies—things given without charge—and their desirability. Western countries have practised welfarism in various forms for a long time. In India, this is a more recent phenomenon, raising concerns in certain quarters, especially about the growing use of such measures. Critics have cautioned that such measures may create disincentives to work and discourage labour force participation. Besides, they can place significant pressure on a country's economy by diverting cap-

ital to unproductive expenditures and crowding out resources required for development and infrastructure upgrades. The Economic Survey 2025–26 reported that unconditional cash transfers had risen to become a central pillar of national welfare policy and amounted to INR 1.7 lakh crore in FY 26.

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Economists and policy analysts, however, have argued that the distribution of certain commodities, such as foodgrains, could be classified as essential. Other goods have been labelled as 'merit goods', which yield significant public benefits, especially in health and education-related areas, such as mid-day meals. However, the inclusion of cash transfers or goods such as TV sets is often

seen as less justifiable. Money that is directly transferred to an individual may lack clearly defined public objectives beyond individual benefit and may, in some cases, influence political preferences. This may lead to greater consumption, but the public authority has limited control over how the money is spent. Despite these criticisms, several social commentators have also justified such measures.

While a universal definition of 'freebies' remains difficult, one possible approach is to consider a cap on such expenditures as a share of city and national budgets. Such a cap would be relatively easy to monitor and could help prioritise expenditures that deliver greater public value.

In the suggested gradation, free bus service emerges as one of the most desirable interventions on account of the several public benefits it generates. It promotes public transport and discourages private car use. It reduces traffic congestion and air pollution, and contributes positively to the urban environment. It can also release parking space due to reduced demand. Walking to and from bus stops contributes to public health. These benefits are complemented by its inclusionary nature, particularly for lower-income groups. Given its global popularity, free bus transport can be considered a significant public good.

The Dunkirk experiment demonstrates how free bus transport, when carefully designed and supported by complementary investments, can yield significant mobility, environmental, and social gains.

Conclusion

The Dunkirk experiment demonstrates how free bus transport, when carefully designed and supported by complementary investments, can yield significant mobility, environmental, and social gains. For Indian cities, grappling with congestion, pollution, and unequal access, such initiatives hold promise as targeted, inclusion-oriented interventions rather than broad-based welfare measures. The key lies in embedding them within a broader framework of transport planning, fiscal prudence, and institutional accountability. Free bus services should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a larger effort to shift commuters away from private vehicles, strengthen public transport systems, and improve urban livability. As Indian cities continue to expand, the challenge will be to strike a balance between equity and efficiency, while ensuring that such schemes remain financially sustainable and deliver tangible public value. (Courtesy: ORF)

## Women's Bill: A new era of inclusive leadership

By: Dr Vijay Garg

The Women's Bill is not merely a legislative reform—it represents a profound shift in how power is perceived, distributed, and exercised in society. At its core, the bill challenges long-standing structures that have historically limited women's participation in decision-making processes. By advocating for greater representation and equality, it seeks to redefine power as inclusive, balanced, and representative of the entire population.

For decades, women have played vital roles in shaping families, communities, and economies, yet their presence in formal political and institutional spaces has remained disproportionately low. The Women's Bill addresses this imbalance by ensuring that women have a rightful seat at the table. It recognizes that true democracy cannot exist when half the population is underrepresented.

Redefining power also means changing mindsets. Traditionally, power has been associated with dominance and control—qualities often framed in masculine terms. The Women's Bill introduces a more collaborative and empathetic vision of leadership. Women leaders frequently bring perspectives rooted in social welfare, education, healthcare, and community development. Their inclusion broadens policy priorities and leads to more holistic governance.

Another significant aspect of the Women's Bill is its potential to inspire future generations. When young girls see women in positions of authority, it reshapes their aspirations. It sends a clear message: leadership is not defined by gender but by capability, vision, and determination. This psychological shift is as important as the structural changes the bill proposes.

However, the success of such legislation depends not only on its passage but also on its implementation. Social barriers, cultural biases, and institutional resistance can still hinder progress. Therefore, alongside legal reforms, there must be continuous efforts in ed-

ucation, awareness, and capacity-building to empower women at all levels.

Critics sometimes argue that reservations or quotas undermine merit. However, this perspective overlooks the systemic barriers that have historically prevented women from accessing opportunities. The Women's Bill does not replace merit—it creates a level playing field where merit can truly shine.

Ultimately, the Women's Bill is about redefining power from exclusivity to inclusivity. It is about acknowledging that diverse voices lead to stronger decisions and more resilient societies. By empowering women, the bill strengthens democracy itself.

The Core Provisions

The bill (now the 106th Amendment Act) introduces several structural changes to ensure that women are not just participants, but stakeholders in power:

Quantitative Shift: Reserves 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies (including the Delhi Assembly). Sub-Reservation: Includes a quota within the quota for women from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Sunset Clause: The reservation is initially set for 15 years, allowing for a periodic review of its effectiveness and the hope that gender parity will eventually become self-sustaining.

Rotational Policy: Reserved seats will be rotated after each delimitation exercise to ensure broader representation across different geographical areas.

Why It Redefines Power

Political analysts and leaders argue that this bill changes the "grammar of power" in three distinct ways:

1. From "Proxy" to "Principals"

In the past, critics of women's reservation at the local Panchayat level pointed to the "Sarpanch Pati" phenomenon (where husbands ruled through their elected wives). However, the 2023 Act targets higher legislative bodies where the scrutiny of the media and the complexity of policy-making demand direct leadership. It forces political parties to build a leadership

pipeline of women who can debate law, manage budgets, and lead ministries.

2. Changing the Legislative Agenda

Global studies suggest that women in leadership often prioritize "social infrastructure"—healthcare, education, and drinking water—over traditional "hard" infrastructure. By reaching a critical mass of 33%, women can move from being a silent minority to a voting bloc that can swing the national agenda toward more inclusive, welfare-oriented policies.

3. Altering Political Culture

The bill challenges the "old boys' club" nature of political party structures. Since 33% of seats must be filled by women, parties can no longer argue that they cannot find "winnable" female candidates. This institutionalizes gender as a central pillar of political strategy rather than an afterthought.

The Path to Implementation

While the bill is a historic milestone, its actual impact on power depends on two "triggers":

The Census: The reservation will only take effect after the first census is conducted following the bill's passage.

Delimitation: Following the census, a delimitation exercise (redrawing of constituency boundaries) must occur before the seats are officially reserved.

"This is not only about representation; it is about redefining power. India is not just correcting a historical injustice—it is completing the circle of its democratic promise."

Current Standing (2026 Context)

As of early 2026, the focus has shifted from the passage of the bill to the execution of the census and delimitation. The debate now centers on ensuring that "redefining power" also includes women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including the demand for an OBC (Other Backward Class) sub-quota, to ensure the new power structure is as representative as possible.

In redefining power, we are not taking it away from anyone—we are expanding it to include everyone.

## Women power or a new mask of power?



By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

When the Nari Shakti Vandan Act was passed in India, it was hailed as "historic." Parliament erupted in applause, and a new era of women's empowerment was announced. But amidst all this celebration, an uncomfortable question persisted: are the doors of politics truly open for women, or is it merely a new symbolic framework being created into which the same old image of power will be fitted?

The character of Indian politics has been more realistic and, at times, harsh, than idealistic. Where equations prevail over principles, and morality often shifts according to the convenience of power, expecting that reservation alone will change the character of the system may be naive. Increasing women's participation in politics is a fundamental democratic necessity, but the question is whether this participation will translate into genuine empowerment or whether the same power structures will adapt them to their own mold, as they have done with every new entrant. The path to entry into politics is still extremely complex, with pressures from family, capital, connections and party loyalty at play. For women, the path becomes even more difficult as they face additional hurdles such as social constraints, character questions and lack of opportunities. To assume that every woman who rises will do so only through compromise is not only an oversimplification but also an insult to the struggles of thousands of women who are making their way through their hard work and talent.

The real problem is that the system under which this reservation is being implemented is itself not transparent and fair. The lack of democracy within political parties, the opacity in ticket distribution, and the centralization of leadership ensure that opportunities are distributed more based on proximity than merit. Therefore, even if seats are reserved for women, they will not necessarily emerge as truly independent and empowered representatives; rather, they may become part of the same power game where decisions are made elsewhere and faces are seen elsewhere. This is why both hope and apprehension about this law are natural, because if the structure remains unchanged, the outcome will remain the same as before. The question of ethics in politics is also central to this debate, as a

culture of "contact" and "compromise" has long existed in the corridors of power, and it is not limited to women but permeates the entire system. Therefore, if this culture is not challenged, reservations could become ingrained in the same structure and lose their original purpose.

It's also important to understand that increasing representation doesn't guarantee change. Sometimes, even newcomers fall into the trap of following old patterns because the system forces them to do so. Therefore, any reform should be evaluated not just on the basis of numbers, but on its impact. Whether increasing the number of women will bring sensitivity to policies, prioritize social issues, or will politics simply continue in the same old direction with new faces is an open question that only time will answer. The most important element in this entire scenario is accountability. If anyone, whether male or female, abuses power, action should be taken against them. However, this requires independent and strong institutions that can function without political pressure. Unfortunately, the nexus between crime and politics has become a serious problem today, where in many cases the accused are protected and the voices of the victims are suppressed. Expecting reservation alone to solve this problem is unrealistic.

As a solution, we need comprehensive reforms, bringing transparency within political parties, establishing clear and fair criteria for ticket distribution, developing safe and independent grievance mechanisms for women so they can express themselves without fear, and preparing them not just as symbolic representatives but as capable and trained leaders. This requires political education, resources, and institutional support. And most importantly, a change in societal mindsets, because unless women are given equal status, no law will fully achieve its objective. Ultimately, we must understand that the solution to the country's problems lies not simply in increasing the number of seats, but in strengthening education, health, and infrastructure, because only an empowered society can lay the foundation for a strong democracy. The Nari Shakti Vandan Act is an opportunity, but it will only be meaningful if implemented with honesty and foresight; otherwise, it will remain a new mask, hiding the same old image of power behind it.

## Keep hydrated this summer

By: Shahnaz Husain

Does your skin feel tight, dull, or rough with the arrival of summer? That's often a sign your skin is losing moisture faster than it can retain it.

Heat, sun exposure, and long hours in air-conditioned spaces can quietly dehydrate the skin, affecting its texture and natural glow.

Dehydration leads to flakiness, wrinkles, itching, and skin infections. The tricky part is that your skin can look oily even when it's dehydrated underneath.

Dehydration can affect many bodily processes, including digestion, immune system support, and temperature regulation.

Dehydration isn't just about feeling thirsty – it can affect your mood, focus, skin, and vital organ functions. The key to avoiding it lies in knowing how to hydrate your body consistently, especially when the temperature soars.

Thirst is often a late indicator of dehydration.

Listen to your body - if you're feeling thirsty or sluggish, you might already be running low on hydration. Mild fluid loss can mess with how you feel.

There's no magic number when it comes to how much water you need daily - it all depends on your activity level, health conditions, height, weight, gender, and other factors. Experts recommend drinking 8-10 glasses of water daily for healthy adults.

Pregnant women should drink 10 glasses of water daily, and breastfeeding women should drink 12 glasses. Kids and teens should drink 6 to 8 cups of

water a day.

Drink a glass of water every 2 hours to maintain hydration.

Most people should drink water, not sports drinks, during their workouts. Sports drinks may be useful for people doing intense exercise for a long time, especially if they're sweating a lot. But for non-athletes, sports drinks are simply another sugary beverage.

Water doesn't have any added sugars or calories in it, which makes it a great beverage to have throughout the day.

Adding lime, cucumber, or mint makes it easier to keep sipping throughout the day as the flavour encourages increased fluid intake compared to plain water.

Infusing water with lemon, lime, cucumber, and mint is an easy way to add nutrients and a burst of natural flavour. It's also a tasty way to stay hydrated, support digestion, and promote alkalinity while adding vitamins, antioxidants, and a natural cooling effect.

It's an extra refreshing way to stay hydrated and a cooling alternative when it's too hot to sip on herbal tea.

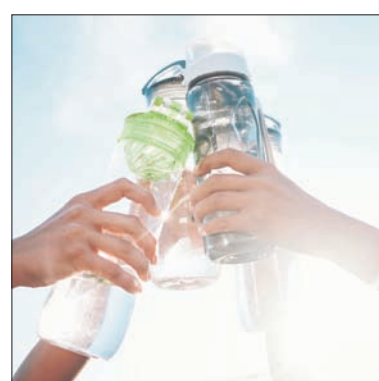
The hydrating effects of cucumber mint water contribute to glowing, healthy.

Cucumbers are composed of approximately 95-96% water, making them one of nature's most hydrating foods.

Cucumbers contain vitamins C and K, which help reduce skin inflammation and promote collagen production.

Keep water within reach. Carry a reusable water bottle everywhere and use it - refill it often so hydration stays on your radar.

Water-rich fruits are rich in natural



sugars, fibre, and antioxidants. They are not only an excellent source of hydration but also protect the body against damage caused by heat and sun exposure. Many fruits naturally contain high amounts of water along with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Including hydrating summer fruits such as watermelon (92%), strawberries (91%), cantaloupe (90%), and peaches (89%) not only provides essential nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, and antioxidants, helping with hydration, immunity, and overall energy.

Adding a variety of colourful water-rich fruits ensures that you get different nutrients to stay healthy all season long. Incorporating hydrating fruits into daily meals just requires minor dietary changes to add these fruits to your routine. You may prepare fresh fruit salads for breakfast or snacks, add fruits to smoothies or yoghurt bowls, and consume chilled fruit slices during mid-day breaks. Key strategies include adding berries or bananas to morning oatmeal/yoghurt, swapping processed

snacks for apples or citrus, and adding sliced fruit to salads.

Eat whole fruits. However, if you drink fruit juice, keep your serving to ½ cup, and be sure it's labeled 100%. Skip fruit drinks, punches or fruit cocktails. They are often loaded with excess sodium and/or added sugar. Be sure to take a wide variety of water-rich fruits with different types and colours since they offer different nutrients. Always keep a good stock of fresh fruit in your refrigerator so that you are always prepared to eat healthily. Develop a habit of eating two servings of water-rich fruit daily.

Choose Coconut Water or Natural Electrolyte Drinks for hydration during this summer season.

Electrolytes are minerals that conduct an electrical charge when mixed with water. They help regulate a variety of your body's most essential functions, including nerve signalling, pH balance, muscle contraction, and hydration.

Coconut water replenishes lost electrolytes and is a natural alternative to energy drinks, making it one of the top hydration tips for tropical climates.

Coconut water is best for fluid replenishment after light activity. It offers a hydration boost that performs somewhere between water and traditional sports drinks or electrolyte solutions.

Unsweetened coconut water also contains naturally occurring sugars—about 7 to 10 grams per cup.

Coconut water, milk, fruit juices, and smoothies are high in electrolytes. Drinks with electrolytes may help you rehydrate after intense exercise, vomiting, or diarrhoea. You can also make your own drink at home.

# US attempt to open the Strait of Hormuz tests Iran war's fragile ceasefire

**DUBAI, May 5:** The Iran war risked reigniting after the US tried to force open the Strait of Hormuz for commercial shipping, though a ceasefire seemed to be holding Tuesday even after the United Arab Emirates said Iran fired missiles and drones at it.

Iran's powerful parliamentary speaker and chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, accused the US of undermining regional security with the effort to end Iran's stranglehold on the strait and warned that Tehran will respond.

The US military said two American-flagged merchant ships successfully transited the strait on Monday, the first day of the effort, and that it fired on Iranian forces, sinking six small boats that were targeting vessels.

Disputing Washington's claim of sinking six boats, an Iranian military commander said two small civilian cargo boats were hit on Monday, killing five civilians, Iran's state TV reported.

Ship tracking data showed a Panamanian-flagged crude oil tanker heading toward the centre of the strait Tuesday morning after leaving an anchorage in the Persian Gulf, though it was unclear if it would try to pass through. The

tanker had a stated destination of Singapore, according to the MarineTraffic ship tracking site.

Iran's effective closure of the strait, through which about a fifth of the world's trade in oil and natural gas typically passes, along with fertilizer and other petroleum-derived products, has sent fuel prices skyrocketing, rattled the global economy and proved a major strategic advantage in negotiations to end the war. Breaking that grip would deny Tehran a major source of leverage.

But such efforts risk reigniting the full-scale fighting that erupted when the US and Israel attacked Iran on Feb 28, prompting it to close the strait.

**Iran accuses US of ceasefire violation**

Iran has called the new US effort a violation of the fragile ceasefire that has held for more than three weeks.

In a post on X on Tuesday, Qalibaf accused Washington of undermining shipping security in the Strait of Hormuz, and warned that a "new equation" there is taking shape.

He signaled that Iran has yet to fully respond to the US attempt to reopen the waterway, saying: "We know full well that the continuation



of the status quo is intolerable for America; while we have not even begun yet."

His statement did not mention negotiations with the US that are now in the form of passing messages via Pakistan.

**Trump vows to reopen the strait**

US President Donald Trump on Sunday warned that Iranian efforts to halt passage through the strait "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully."

He said the US effort, "Project Freedom," was intended to aid tens of thousands of stranded seafarers

on hundreds of ships stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began.

The US-led Joint Maritime Information Center advised ships on Monday to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying it had set up an "enhanced security area."

But shippers remained wary.

**The UAE bore the brunt of Iran's retaliation**

The United Arab Emirates' Defence Ministry said its air defenses had engaged 15 missiles and four drones fired by Iran. Authorities in the eastern emirate of Fujairah said one drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility, wounding three Indian na-

tional. The British military reported two cargo vessels ablaze off the UAE.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday condemned the attacks, calling the targeting of civilians and infrastructure "unacceptable." On X, Modi said India stands in "firm solidarity" with the UAE, and stressed the need for safe and uninterrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran did not confirm or deny the attacks but Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi early Tuesday said on X that both the US and the UAE "should be wary of being dragged back into quagmire."

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia condemned the strikes against the UAE. The Saudi condemnation came despite increasingly strained relations between it and the UAE.

**Strait of Hormuz closure has far-reaching consequences**

The disruption of the waterway has squeezed countries in Europe and Asia that depend on Persian Gulf oil and gas, raising prices far beyond the region.

The U.S. meanwhile has enforced a naval blockade on Iranian ports since April 13, telling at least 49 commercial ships to turn back, according to its Central Command.

It also has warned shipping companies they could face sanctions if they pay Iran for transit of the strait.

The blockade has deprived Tehran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy. US officials have expressed hope the blockade will force Iran to make concessions in talks on its disputed nuclear program and other long-standing issues.

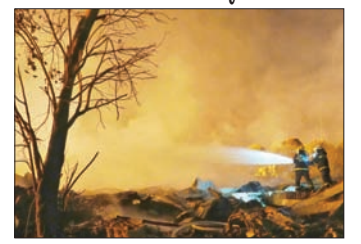
**Negotiations make little progress**

Iran's latest proposal for ending the war calls for the US to lift sanctions, end the blockade, withdraw forces from the region and cease all hostilities including Israel's operations in Lebanon, according to the semi-official Nour News and Tasnim agencies, which have close ties to Iran's security apparatus.

Iranian officials over the weekend said they were reviewing the US response. Tehran has claimed its proposal does not include its nuclear program and enriched uranium, long a driving force in tensions with the US and Israel.

Iran wants other issues resolved within 30 days and aims to end the war rather than extend the ceasefire. Trump expressed doubt over the weekend that the proposal would lead to a deal. (AP)

## 26 killed, 61 injured in blast at fireworks factory in China



**BEIJING, May 5:** At least 26 people were killed and 61 others injured in a massive explosion at a fireworks factory in China's Hunan province, officials said on Tuesday.

The explosion occurred on Monday afternoon at the plant operated by the Huasheng fireworks manufacturing and display company in Liuyang, a county-level city under Changsha, the provincial capital.

Videos circulating on Chinese social media showed massive destruction of property spanning several kilometres.

More than 480 rescuers, organised into five teams, have been deployed for relief operations, with three rescue robots pressed into service.

Officials said 26 people were killed and 61 others were injured. The injured have been rushed to hospitals for treatment.

China is a leading manufacturer and exporter of fireworks.

As the explosion site is located near two black powder warehouses, the rescuers have evacuated nearby residents and set up a buffer zone to prevent a secondary accident, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Changsha Mayor Chen Bozhong expressed condolences to the victims and apologised to their families, affected residents and society at large.

"We are deeply grieved and filled with remorse," he said at a press conference, where attendees observed a moment of silence for the victims, Xinhua reported.

The Ministry of Emergency Management has dispatched experts to the scene to guide rescue efforts.

The person in charge of the company has been detained by police and the cause of the accident is being investigated, the report said. (PTI)

## Prominent cleric shot dead in Pakistan



**PESHAWAR, May 5:** A prominent cleric was shot dead in a targeted attack in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, police said.

Unidentified gunmen ambushed the vehicle of Sheikh-ul-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Idrees in the Utmanzai area of Charsadda district, injuring two security guards accompanying him, they said.

Idrees was considered among the senior and respected religious scholars in Pakistan, known for his contributions to religious education.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to police, the assailants opened fire on the cleric while he was on his way to deliver a Dars-e-Hadith (religious lecture) at Darul Uloom Utmanzai. He sustained critical injuries and died while being shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital.

The body was later taken to his native village, Turangzai, in Charsadda district, as a large number of followers gathered at the hospital upon hearing of his death.

The killing triggered protests in the area, with hundreds of demonstrators marching towards Charsadda city and demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible. Protesters also blocked key roads and staged a sit-in at Farooq-e-Azam Chowk.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police (IGP) Zulfiqar Hameed sought a report from the Regional Police Officer in Mardan, directing authorities to ensure the swift arrest of the perpetrators.

In a statement, the IGP described the services of Idrees as "unforgettable" and said those involved in the "heinous act" would be brought

to justice.

Idrees was also the Charsadda district chief of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) and was considered a close aide of party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

His father-in-law, Maulana Hassan Jan, who was also a renowned religious scholar, was assassinated in Peshawar in 2007 by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for opposing armed struggle.

President Asif Ali Zardari expressed sorrow over the killing of Idrees and extended condolences to the bereaved family.

"Such cowardly acts cannot demoralise the nation," he said, asserting that the country's resolve to eradicate terrorism remained "strong and unwavering".

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also expressed grief over the killing and conveyed his sympathies to the family.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi termed the cleric's death an "irreparable loss" and sought a report from the authorities. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi also condemned the attack and sought a detailed report from police authorities. He also directed authorities to ensure the best possible treatment for the injured security personnel.

Awami National Party (ANP) President Aimal Wali Khan also condemned the incident, stressing that it was "clear evidence" of the "deteriorating" law and order situation in the province.

"Target killing and terrorism incidents have become a norm in KP now," he said, calling on the federal and provincial governments to put their differences aside and take steps towards restoring peace in KP. (PTI)

## Pak court declares PM Shehbaz's daughter and her husband 'innocent'

*PTI terms acquittals as 'demise of justice'*

**LAHORE, May 5:** A Pakistani court has declared the daughter of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and her husband "innocent" and absolved them of all charges in a mega corruption and money laundering case in just "one hearing".

The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) told the Anti-Corruption Court on Monday that PM's daughter Rabia Inman and her husband Ali Inman Yousaf are not found involved in the Punjab Saaf Pani Company corruption and money laundering case as no evidence is available against them.

Last week, an accountability court suspended the perpetual arrest warrants issued against the couple in the multi-billion-dollar corruption case. The accountability court had issued perpetual warrants for their arrest in 2022 during the tenure

of the Imran Khan government.

Rabia and her husband fled to the UK in 2022 to evade arrest, and the court subsequently declared them proclaimed offenders.

An official said that the court absolved the couple of all corruption and money laundering charges in the first hearing of the case on the report of the ACE.

Rabia and her husband returned to the country from the UK a couple of weeks ago after the court granted them bail. PM Shehbaz was also named in this corruption case, but he was acquitted due to the lack of evidence.

Inman Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party has alleged that the acquittal of PM Shehbaz and other ruling coalition members in various corruption cases is the result of a "compromised ju-

diary" and a "NAB-PMLN nexus", referring to a perceived alliance between the National Accountability Bureau and the military-backed government.

The party termed these acquittals as the "demise of justice" and accused the judiciary of acting as a "silent accomplice" to state-backed political terrorism.

Three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif of the ruling PMLN was also acquitted in corruption cases, including the one -- Al-Azizia -- for which he was undergoing seven-year imprisonment in Lahore jail.

Inman Khan was ousted from power in April 2022 through a no-confidence motion. Subsequently, he was arrested in August 2023 and has been in jail in multiple cases since then. (PTI)

## As US plans fewer troops in Germany, Europe sees need for bigger role within NATO

**YEREVAN (ARMENIA), May 5:** European leaders said President Donald Trump's surprise decision to pull thousands of US troops out of Germany is just the latest signal that Europe must take more responsibility for its security.

The Pentagon announced last week it would pull some 5,000 troops out of Germany, but Trump told reporters on Saturday the US plans on "cutting a lot further".

Trump offered no reason for the move, which blindsided NATO. But his decision came amid an escalating dispute with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who said the US has been humiliated by Iran in talks to end the war it launched with Israel on Feb 28. Trump has also expressed anger over European allies' reluctance to get involved in the conflict.

European leaders meeting at a summit in Yerevan, Armenia, sought to both downplay the impact of 5,000 fewer troops in Germany while acknowledging that it provides a useful nudge for the continent to step up its role within NATO.

"I do not see those figures as dramatic, but I think they should be handled in a harmonious way inside the framework of NATO," said Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on Monday. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said "there needs to be a stronger European element in NATO. I have no doubt about that".

Tensions within NATO have mounted since the second Trump administration came into office last year warning that European allies would have to defend themselves and Ukraine in the future. Talks on ending the war there, now in its fourth year, have bogged down as the US focuses on Iran.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said the timing of Trump's announcement came as a surprise, even though there has been "talk about withdrawal of US troops for a long time from Europe".

Asked whether she believes Trump is trying to punish Merz, Kallas said: "I don't see into the head of President Trump, so he has to explain it himself."

Merz did not attend the European Political Community summit in Yerevan, which included about 30 European leaders, plus Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

United States. There were nearly 9 million disaster displacements in the Philippines in 2024, most of which (86 per cent) were the result of typhoons.

Internal disaster displacements in India were the second largest in the region, exceeding 5 million, and triggered by floods and storms, including significant cyclones. China, with more than 3.9 million internal disaster displacements in 2024, recorded the third highest figure in Asia, driven largely by Typhoon Yagi.

Further, all of the five largest migration corridors involving countries in Oceania comprise migrants to Australia, with the largest corridor being from the United Kingdom to Australia. Just over 1 million migrants from the United Kingdom were living in Australia in 2024, and this number has remained relatively stable over the last 35 years.

The second and third-largest corridors were from India and China to Australia (around 876,000 and 656,000, respectively). "Australia was home to the largest number of refugees and asylum-seekers in 2024, with nearly 30,000 refugees and over 91,000 asylum-seekers residing in the country. Most asylum-seekers in Australia come from Asia, but from a wide range of countries, including China and India, which were the origin countries of the first and second largest number of asylum-seekers in Australia in 2024. (PTI)

The report also noted that, consistent with previous years, the largest internal displacements in Asia in 2024 were triggered by disasters rather than conflict and violence.

The Philippines recorded the highest number of internal disaster displacements in the region and the second largest in the world, after the

United States. There were nearly 9 million disaster displacements in the Philippines in 2024, most of which (86 per cent) were the result of typhoons.

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## Romania's pro-European coalition collapses after prime minister fails no-confidence vote



**BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), May 5:** Romania's pro-European coalition collapsed Tuesday after lawmakers voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan, triggering a fresh period of turmoil in the European Union country less than a year after the coalition was sworn in.

The joint effort was launched last week when the leftist Social Democratic Party, or PSD, which withdrew from the coalition in late April, and the hard-right opposition Alliance for the Unity of Romanians party, or AUR, submitted the motion to Parliament.

After a parliamentary debate, 281 lawmakers voted in favor of the motion and four against. Lawmakers from Bolojan's center-right National Liberal Party, or PNL, and coalition partners Save Romania Union party, and the small ethnic Hungarian UDMR party did not cast votes.

Bolojan, of the center-right National Liberal Party, or PNL, called the motion "cynical and artificial", and said Tuesday before his government was toppled that it "seems to be written by people who were not in government every day and did not participate in all the decisions".

"It is cynical, because it does not take into account the context in which we find ourselves," he said. "I assumed the position of prime minister, being aware that it comes with enormous pressure and that I would not receive applause from the citizens. But I chose to do what was urgent and necessary for our country."

Romania has faced a long period of instability after a presidential election was annulled in December 2024, and the country is grappling with one of the highest budget deficits in the EU, rampant inflation and a technical recession.

When the coalition was voted in last June, it pledged to make reducing the budget deficit a top priority. The PSD often found itself at loggerheads with Bolojan over some of the austerity meas-

ures, which included tax hikes, public sector wage and pension freezes, and cutting public spending and public administration jobs.

PSD said that Bolojan had "failed to implement any genuine reform" in his 10 months leading the government, and said Romania needs a leader who is "capable of collaboration".

Bolojan said that he took tough but necessary fiscal measures that effectively "regained the trust of the markets in the Romanian government".

The PSD would be needed to form a pro-European parliamentary majority. The party has previously ruled out entering a government with AUR. George Simion, the AUR leader, said Tuesday that voters had "supported and wanted water, food, energy," but had "received taxes, war and poverty".

"We assume the future of this country, a future government and restore the hope of the Romanians," he said. "Romania must go back to the vote of the Romanians."

Cristian Andrei, a Bucharest-based political consultant, says the crisis will likely lead to a stalemate, since "no one has a majority, or a coalition, and it will take the president ... weeks to find such a majority and name a new prime minister, prolonging the indecision."

"At this moment, there are two tentative options for a new Cabinet, both difficult to achieve; either a reshuffled coalition, without Bolojan, in the same formation ... or a minority Cabinet, rather led by PSD and satellites from populist parties, like AUR, or other small groups," he said.

"A PSD-AUR official Cabinet is not a possibility today because the president will not endorse it."

The prime ministerial position was set to be rotated in 2027 from Bolojan to a PSD premier as part of a power-sharing agreement. A general election is scheduled for 2028. (AP)

## India remains top remittance recipient country in the world with USD 137 bn: UN

**UNITED NATIONS, May 5:** India received more than 137 billion dollars in remittances in 2024, the top remittance recipient country in the world and the only nation to surpass 100 billion dollars, the UN agency on migration said.

"India consistently leads as the top recipient of remittances, followed by Mexico," the World Migration Report 2026, released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Tuesday, said.

In 2024, India, Mexico, the Philippines and France were the top four remittance recipient countries globally. "India, however, continued to be well above the rest, receiving more than USD 137 billion, and remained the only country to surpass USD 100 billion," the report said.

Since 2010, India has been the top remittance receiving country in the world, when it had received 53.48 billion dollars, which grew over the years to 68.91 billion dollars in 2015, 83.15 billion dollars in 2020 and 137.67 billion dollars in 2024.

The report said that the distribution of remittances varies across regions as well, with South Asia estimated to experience the highest growth in 2024 at 11.8 per cent, driven by continued strong inflows to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

High-income countries are almost always the main source of international remittances. For decades, the United States of America has con-



sistently been the top remittance-sending country in the world, with a total outflow surpassing USD 100 billion in 2024. It was followed by Saudi Arabia (over USD 46 billion), Switzerland (around USD 40 billion) and Germany (nearly USD 24 billion).

The report also said that countries in Asia continue to account for the largest share of internationally mobile students. In 2022, more than one million international students came from China, the single largest origin country worldwide. India ranked second, with over 620,000 students abroad.

Beyond these two leading countries, origin country numbers drop considerably: Uzbekistan (150,000), Viet Nam (134,000) and Germany (126,000) follow, while the United States, France, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Nepal each had between 95,000 and 115,000 students studying abroad. More than half of the

world's internationally mobile students reside in countries in Europe and North America.

The Indian diaspora has been instrumental in the expansion of India's technology sector, it said.

The report pointed out that protecting migration's role in development also means addressing the "brain drain" challenge and turning it into "brain gain". When skilled workers emigrate, origin countries may lose human capital, but tailored policies can circulate knowledge so that both origin and destination countries benefit.

"India's brain gain efforts include annual diaspora conventions and innovation hubs to entice Indian scientists and entrepreneurs back (or to mentor startups remotely), while China's initiatives like the Thousand Talents Plan have successfully attracted thousands of overseas Chinese academics to return and bolster domestic research and development. Such programmes can have mixed results, however, notwithstanding the longer-term benefits," it said.

The report also noted that, consistent with previous years, the largest internal displacements in Asia in 2024 were triggered by disasters rather than conflict and violence.

The Philippines recorded the highest number of internal disaster displacements in the region and the second largest in the world, after the

# Khandu stresses on holistic education, youth empowerment

The chief minister commended students, artists and mentors for presenting a vibrant cultural showcase

**ITANAGAR, May 5:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday described Arunachal Panorama as a unique platform promoting cultural unity while emphasising the need for holistic education and youth empowerment, as he attended the inaugural ceremony of the 9th edition of the festival at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) in Doimukh.

Addressing students, faculty members and dignitaries at the university's Rono Hills campus, Khandu said the flagship cultural and youth festival celebrates the rich diversity of Arunachal Pradesh while fostering unity among its many tribes and communities.

Recalling its inception in 2006 under former Vice Chancellor Professor Atul Sharma, he lauded the university for sustaining the festival as a meaningful tradition showcasing the cultural expressions of the state's tribes and sub-tribes.

The chief minister commended students, artists and mentors for presenting a vibrant cultural showcase, including a fusion of traditional dances, and noted that such platforms help present the diversity of over 26 major tribes in a cohesive and engaging manner, particularly for the younger generation. Reflecting on the journey of RGU since its establishment in 1984, Khandu said the institution has played a key role in shaping the state's human resources, with its alumni contributing across sectors such as governance, politics, business, technology and public



service.

He expressed confidence that current students would carry forward this legacy in line with the vision of a developed India by 2047.

Highlighting the changing dynamics of education, the chief minister said academic learning alone is no longer sufficient and stressed the importance of sports, co-curricular activities and technological adaptability in an era driven by artificial intelligence and machine learning.

He advised students to use technology judiciously and avoid overdependence.

Reiterating the government's commitment to educational reforms, Khandu referred to the implementation of the National Education Policy and ongoing initiatives under Mission Shiksha Arunachal aimed at strengthening

foundational literacy and numeracy, improving secondary education outcomes and integrating skill development.

He said investments have been made in upgrading schools, building hostels and rationalising infrastructure.

On higher education and research, he emphasised the role of universities in bridging academic knowledge with grassroots realities and encouraged Rajiv Gandhi University to enhance research-driven policy contributions and improve its national ranking.

The chief minister also announced that the state cabinet has approved a satellite campus at Kambang to expand access to higher education in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

Khandu outlined several initiatives for youth empowerment, in-

cluding the scheme for academic excellence to support students securing admission to top international universities, and urged students to utilise such opportunities.

Encouraging entrepreneurship, he highlighted initiatives like the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation and Investment Park, which provides incubation, mentorship and financial support to startups, and said the state is emerging as a strong performer in the startup ecosystem. He also announced the proposed establishment of the Arunachal Creative Economy Cell under the Chief Minister's Office to promote talent in art, music, design and other creative fields, and to provide wider exposure to youth.

Khandu further spoke about plans to boost participation of Arunachali youth in the Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces through structured training and support, and highlighted ongoing infrastructure initiatives, including development of science centres, colleges and university facilities.

Responding to issues raised by student representatives, he assured support for infrastructure improvements at the university, including roads, street lighting and water supply systems.

The chief minister extended his best wishes to organisers and participants of Arunachal Panorama 2026, expressing confidence that the festival would continue to strengthen cultural unity and inspire the youth. (PTI)

# BJP councillor dies by suicide after being threatened by youths following party's bypoll win



**AGARTALA, May 5:** A BJP councillor of Dharmanagar Municipal Council (DMC) in North Tripura died by suicide on Tuesday after he was allegedly threatened and humiliated by a group of youth following the saffron party's victory in the Dharmanagar bypoll, police said.

Rahul Kishore Roy, who was also the BJP's Yuva Morcha mandal president, took the extreme step a day after BJP candidate Jahar Chakraborty won the bypoll for the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency by a massive margin.

Chief Minister Manik Saha expressed shock over the youth leader's death and assured an impartial inquiry into the allegations brought by the deceased's wife, Ananya Bhattacharjee.

"I am shocked by the untimely death of Rahul Kishore Roy. May his soul rest in peace, and also offer my sympathy to the bereaved family. I also assured that an impartial inquiry will be conducted following the complaint of the deceased's wife," the CM wrote on Facebook.

## Nagaland gov reminds community leaders of their crucial role

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 5:** Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Tuesday reminded community leaders, particularly the gaon burhas (village heads) and tribal organisations, that their role is crucial in guiding society and fostering cooperation among the people.

Yadav made the remarks while interacting with the leaders of civil society organisations and government officials at Niuland DC's conference hall during his visit to the district.

Stating that their leadership and commitment will play a key role in shaping the future of this district, he said, together with collective effort and shared responsibility, Niuland will emerge as a model district in the state.

Yadav noted that Niuland, one of the youngest districts of Nagaland, holds immense promise and potential while it is still in its formative years.

He said he was delighted to see a strong sense of unity, identity and purpose among its people.

"The coming together of different tribal bodies and community organisations reflects the spirit of cooperation and harmony which is essential for progress and development," he stated. Yadav said his visit to the district is part of an effort to understand the aspirations, challenges, and priorities of the people at the grassroots level.

He said development is most effective when it is inclusive and responsive to local needs and urged all stakeholders — civil society organisations, village leaders, and district administration — to continue working in close coordination to ensure that government initiatives reach every household.

Yadav further emphasised the importance of maintaining peace, strengthening community bonds, and nurturing the values of integrity and responsibility.

"As Niuland grows, it must do so with a vision that balances development with preservation of its rich cultural heritage and traditions," he said.

## NU Prof participates in Fulbright-Nehru Prog in US

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 5:** Prof Dipak Sinha, pro-vice chancellor, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, who was selected for the 2025-26 Fulbright-Nehru International Education Administrators Award (FNIEA), participated in the Fulbright-Nehru Programme in the United States from April 11 to 25, a varsity release said on Tuesday.

This fully funded fellowship, offered under the Indo-US Fulbright-Nehru initiative by the United States-India Educational Foundation, is designed for senior education administrators from India, including vice-chancellors, pro-vice chancellors, deans and academic leaders. The programme aims to strengthen leadership in higher education, promote international academic partnerships and support institutional development through direct exposure to global practices. It is specifically designed to expose participants to diverse university systems as well as key federal agencies shaping higher education and research.

The programme, which began at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, provided a comprehensive understanding of the United States higher education system. It included visits, meetings and academic interactions with leading institutions across multiple cities. These engagements across geographically diverse academic centres highlighted the scale and diversity of the U.S. higher education landscape.

Prof Sinha's participation in this prestigious global fellowship is expected to contribute meaningfully to the academic growth, international engagement, and institutional strengthening of Nagaland University, the release added.

## Trinamool Congress a 'gone case' after defeat in Bengal Assembly polls: Biplab Deb

**AGARTALA, May 5:** Senior BJP leader Biplab Kumar Deb on Tuesday claimed that the Trinamool Congress, which had ruled West Bengal for 15 years, is a "gone case" now after the crushing defeat in the recently concluded assembly elections.

The BJP secured 207 seats in the 294-member assembly, ending the TMC's uninterrupted 15-year rule in West Bengal and marking a decisive shift in the state's political landscape.

"The Trinamool is a gone case now after the defeat in the West Bengal elections. I thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for liberating the people from the mis-governance of the Trinamool Congress government," said Deb, who played a key role in guiding the BJP to the historic triumph as co-in-charge of the party's West Bengal elections.

The former Tripura chief minister declared the West Bengal Assembly election result a "historic" win for democracy and a rejection of the TMC's "politics of fear, appeasement, and mismanagement". He emphasised it was a mandate for development under PM Modi and indicated a "liberation" for the people of Bengal.

He also praised the people of West Bengal for coming out in large numbers to vote for regime change.



On his new responsibility, the former chief minister replied, "Whatever responsibility has been assigned to me by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, I performed wholeheartedly," he said. Asked who would be the chief minister of Bengal, the West Tripura MP said the party will decide on the issue.

Earlier, thousands of party leaders and workers gave a rousing welcome to Deb upon his arrival at MBB airport here after the BJP's victory in Bengal. He also went to the Maa Tripura Sundari temple and offered prayers. (PTI)

## Arunachal Governor urges police to adopt mission-oriented approach in policing

**ITANAGAR, May 5:** Arunachal Pradesh Governor K T Parinaik on Tuesday advised the police to adopt a proactive and mission-oriented approach, based on the latest technologies and human intelligence.

Reviewing the state's security situation with Director General of Police Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal at Lok Bhavan here, Parinaik underscored that policing in such sensitive and strategically significant areas must combine firmness and efficiency with empathy and a humane touch, ensuring the force remains approachable and responsive to people's needs, an official report said.

With special reference to the Tirap-Changlang-Longding (TCL)

region, the governor reiterated that public trust is the cornerstone of effective policing, and it must be nurtured through consistent engagement, transparency, and fairness in action.

He emphasised that in the TCL districts, where geographical challenges and security concerns coexist, building confidence among citizens is as important as maintaining law and order. He emphasised the need to review the deployment of police personnel, as well as the strategic location of police stations and outposts in the TCL region.

The governor emphasised the urgent need for the early implementation of border fencing, un-

derscoring that it is not merely an infrastructure project but a critical pillar of national security. He said that in sensitive frontier regions, effective border management plays a decisive role in curbing illegal infiltration, trans-border crime, and other security challenges that can disrupt peace and stability.

The governor stressed that a well-secured border is fundamental to safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and called for coordinated efforts among all concerned agencies to expedite the process with utmost priority and diligence.

Earlier, Jamwal briefed the governor on the overall law and order situation across the state, the report added. (PTI)

## Rate hornbill sighted in Arunachal's Pasighat after long gap: Officials

**ITANAGAR, May 5:** A rare adult Oriental pied hornbill has been sighted at Pasighat in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh after a long gap, indicating a healthy forest ecosystem in the region, officials said.

The hornbill was observed foraging near the forest office area by local resident Biswajit Tayeng, the officials said.

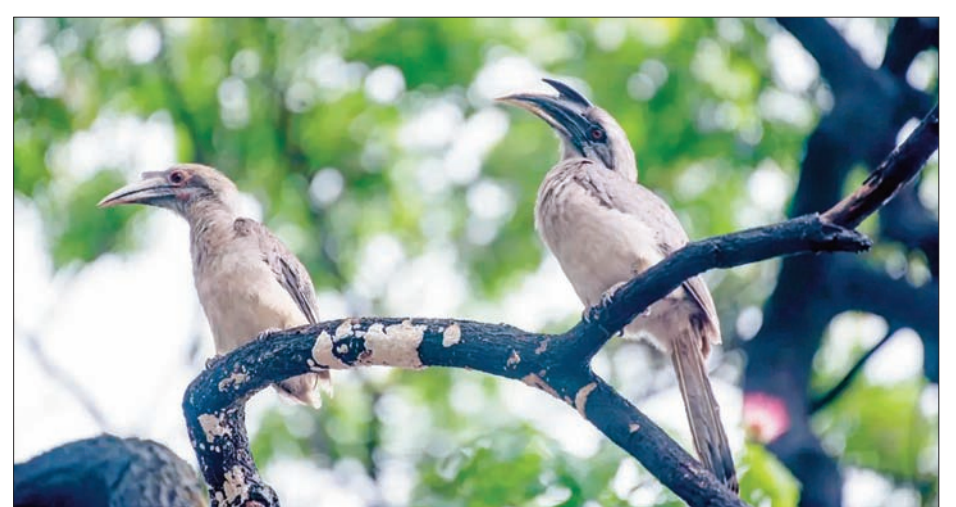
The sighting has generated interest among wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists.

Hornbills are considered key ecological indicators, and their presence reflects the overall health of forest habitats.

Officials said the species plays a crucial role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration, contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity.

"The return of the hornbill after a prolonged gap suggests that habitat conditions in the area remain favourable and conservation measures are yielding positive outcomes," a forest official said.

Often referred to as "farmers of the forest," hornbills help in the regeneration of native vegetation by dispersing seeds over large distances. Experts observed that the species depends on mature trees and undisturbed forest cover for survival.



The sighting has highlighted the importance of continued conservation efforts in Arunachal Pradesh, which forms part of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot.

Officials stressed the need to protect natural habitats, prevent deforestation, and strengthen community participation in conservation initia-

tives. Roy's wife has lodged a complaint with the local police station, holding seven persons responsible for her husband's death.

"Soon after the announcement of the results of the bypoll to the Dharmanagar Assembly bypoll, six to seven youths attacked our residence at Chandrapur at 3 pm and started hurling abuses at my husband. They also assaulted me to hand over my husband to them," she stated in the complaint.

Ananya said, "The same gang returned late at night again, attacked our house and hurled two or

three bombs. They also threatened to eliminate my husband whenever he is found at Dharmanagar."

Deeply upset by the attacks and threats, my husband committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling early Tuesday morning. I urge the Officer in Charge (OC), Dharmanagar police station, to investigate against these people for justice, she said. "Based on a specific complaint, we have registered a case, and an investigation is underway. No one has been arrested yet." SP, North Tripura, Avinash Kumar Rai said. (PTI)

## Arunachal CM stresses merit, transparency in recruitment

**ITANAGAR, May 5:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday underscored merit-based recruitment, transparency and integrity in public service while urging newly appointed candidates to discharge their duties with sincerity and compassion.

The chief minister was addressing candidates at a function where appointment orders were handed over to successful candidates of the Non-Ministerial Technical Examination (NMTE) conducted by the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board (APSSB).

Khandu, along with Rajya Sabha MP Nabam Rebia, minister Balo Raja and Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, felicitated the candidates and congratulated them on their success, describing their achievement as a result of hard work, perseverance and merit, an official communique said.

Highlighting the significance of the event, he said that while appointment orders have been issued since the establishment of the APSSB in 2017-18, the event reflects a more organised approach where candidates are brought together on a common platform, fostering a sense of camaraderie among new entrants to government service.

Emphasising transparency, Khandu said the creation of the APSSB marked a transformative step in ensuring that government jobs are awarded purely on merit.

He observed that earlier, the absence of a structured mechanism often posed challenges for deserving candidates, but the Board has now streamlined recruitment with near-zero error systems and full transparency.

Describing the Board as an ISO-certified recruitment agency, alongside the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission, he said the state has developed robust institutions to uphold fairness and equal opportunity in public employment.

Encouraging aspirants to aim higher, the chief minister urged the newly appointed candidates to prepare for competitive examinations such as the Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service and the Union Public



Service Commission, noting that reforms have aligned examination patterns to enable preparation for both state and national services simultaneously.

Providing details of the recruitment process, he said that out of 225 sanctioned posts, 183 were filled through the examination, with 166 candidates receiving appointment orders, while some posts remained vacant due to eligibility constraints or candidates opting for other opportunities.

He added that the government is considering introducing a waiting list system in future to ensure better utilisation of vacancies.

Stressing capacity building, Khandu said training is essential for public service, particularly for technical personnel, and called on departments to collaborate with training institutions to design structured programmes for skill enhancement.

Addressing the appointees, he reminded them that government service is fundamentally about serving the people and urged them to maintain humility, honesty and compassion in their work so that citizens feel respected and supported.

Khandu also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve working conditions, including upgrading office infrastructure, healthcare facilities and residential accommodations, adding that district-wise reviews are being undertaken to identify and address gaps.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to recognising merit and hard work, the chief minister said integrity remains non-negotiable in public service and expressed confidence that the new recruits would contribute meaningfully to the state's development and governance. (PTI)

## Nagaland inks pact with Tata Motors to strengthen its public transport services

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 5:** The Nagaland government on Tuesday signed a landmark memorandum of agreement (MoA) with Tata Motors Limited for the procurement of 43 buses to strengthen and expand public transport services under the Nagaland State Transport (NST) department.

The agreement, signed at the chief secretary's conference hall in Kohima, introduces a structured deferred payment mechanism, allowing the state to acquire the fleet without immediate heavy capital outflow. The total project cost of ₹ 13 crore will be paid in three installments over a period of three years, beginning with a mobilisation advance of ₹ 5 crore, followed by ₹ 4 crore each in the subsequent two years. The payments will be serviced through state plan allocations, minimising additional financial burden and avoiding conventional borrowing.

Under the agreement, the NST is expected to receive delivery of all



43 buses within three months, leading to an immediate boost in fleet capacity.

The expansion is anticipated to significantly enhance operational efficiency, improve service coverage across urban and rural areas, and increase revenue generation potential for the department. Officials stated that the induction of the new buses will improve passenger safety, comfort, and reliability, while also strengthening last-mile connectivity and reducing disruptions caused by the aging fleet.

The initiative is also expected to enhance both inter-district and in-

terstate transport connectivity.

Described as a first of its kind structured procurement model between Tata Motors Limited and a government entity, the agreement marks one of the largest fleet expansion efforts undertaken by NST. The tripartite agreement was signed in the presence of chief secretary Sentyangar Imchen. Signatories included Merangkaba Imchen, additional chief engineer representing NST, Ketouhou Metha, OSD from the finance department, and Ajay Gupta, DGM (sales & marketing), Tata Motors Limited.

# AAP indulging in 'dangerous vendetta politics': Raghav Chadha

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** Raja Sabha MP Raghav Chadha on Tuesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Punjab government of indulging in 'vendetta politics' and misusing the state machinery to target the MPs who recently quit the party and merged with the BJP in the Raja Sabha.

Chadha, along with three other MPs, met President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday and submitted a representation alleging harassment and "politically motivated" action against them following their exit from AAP.

Raja Sabha MPs Rajinder Gupta and Ashok Mittal were part of the delegation.

"All those MPs who exercised their constitutional right to express disagreement with the Aam Aadmi Party and chose to leave it, and all these incidents and developments, have been presented today before the President of India. I also want to tell the Aam Aadmi Party that as long as we were obedient, we were considered cultured. The moment we left, we were branded corrupt," Chadha told reporters here after the meeting.

He alleged that several former AAP MPs who have joined the BJP are facing intimidation and coercive actions from state agencies.

"The Aam Aadmi Party, which accuses everyone else of revenge politics, is today itself indulging in dangerous vendetta politics. Since April 24, when we left AAP and merged with the BJP, our MPs are being systematically targeted and harassed," he said.

Citing specific instances, Chadha claimed that former cricketer and MP Harbhajan Singh has been attacked, while industrialist and MP Rajendra Gupta's business operations have allegedly been disrupted.

"We left the Aam Aadmi Party on April 24, 2026, and merged



with the BJP. Since then, harassment of our MPs has begun. First, World Cup-winning cricketer Harbhajan Singh had "traitor" written outside his house. Stones were thrown at his residence and with the help of Punjab Police, and offensive slogans were raised targeting his family," he alleged.

"Then, our colleague Rajinder Gupta, a Padma Shri awardee and an industrialist running a major factory in Punjab's Malwa region—providing livelihood to around 30,000 people—had his factory targeted. The Punjab government allegedly cut off its water supply, and the Pollution Board conducted raids to initiate its closure," he said.

He further claimed that cases have been registered against MP Sandeep Pathak, terming them "malicious and fabricated".

"These FIRs and notices are so frivolous that they are not worth the paper they are written on. The judiciary will tear them apart," Chadha said.

He warned the AAP government that such actions could have serious consequences. "Using vigilance, the Pollution Board, and the police for political revenge is a dangerous game. You may have started it, but the end will not be good. This must stop," he said.

"The AAP has a government in one state and control over the police there. The BJP has governments in 21 states and control over police forces in those states," he added.

Chadha also alleged that attempts are being made to target him next through "fabricated cases" and claimed that social media campaigns are being run to malign them.

Appealing to Punjab government officials, he urged them not to act under political pressure. "I want to tell officials that you are respected officers. Do not succumb to threats of transfer or suspension. Act according to law and in national interest," he said.

The Raja Sabha MP also took a swipe at the AAP, saying those who invoke Mahatma Gandhi's ideals are now misusing state machinery for political purposes.

"The people of Punjab must know how their government is being used to settle political scores," Chadha added.

Raja Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak alleged that the party is now resorting to coercive measures out of "fear and panic".

"We joined the Aam Aadmi Party because it showed the country a dream -- a dream of starting a new kind of politics, an honest form of politics. While being there, due to

ideological reasons and after witnessing several inconsistencies, we decided to leave the party," he said.

"Out of fear and panic, the Aam Aadmi Party is now filing FIRs. They are conducting raids in factories and trying to intimidate people through false FIRs. I want to say 'go ahead, file FIRs', but do not back off afterwards. We will fight legally," he told reporters.

Advising the AAP government, Pathak asserted that governance, not intimidation, is the only way forward.

"You cannot save a government through such dirty tactics. If you want to retain power, you must work honestly. If you think you can stop us through false and fabricated FIRs, that is not possible. We have stepped out ready to sacrifice everything and will do what is right for the country," he said.

Pathak mentioned that the President assured them that constitutional protections would be upheld.

Taking a swipe at the ruling party, Chadha said its tenure in Punjab is now short-lived. "This government has only a few months left; it will go. They will simply board the Shatabdi and return to Delhi. They have no future in Punjab," he said.

Later, in a post on X, Chadha said that he, along with three other MPs, conveyed to the President how the AAP's Punjab government is misusing state machinery to target them for exercising their constitutional rights.

"The party that once cried vendetta is now practising its most toxic form," he wrote.

"We take strength from the President's assurance that constitutional rights and democratic choices must be respected," he added, while likening the AAP's conduct to that of a "bitter and vindictive" former ally. (PTI)

# Pradhan calls for higher private sector investment in research, innovation

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday batted for an equal contribution by the private sector and government in research and innovation, noting that about 70 per cent of research investment in India currently comes from the government.

Inaugurating the IIT Madras Technology Summit 2026 here, he said while the government has significantly increased funding for research and development, industry contribution needs to rise.

"At present, around 70% of research investment comes from the Government, reflecting strong public commitment. However, the long-term direction must move towards a more balanced 50:50 partnership between the public sector and industry to accelerate innovation and scale impact," the minister said.

The summit was attended by Union Minister of State for Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (Independent charge) Jayant Chaudhary, and senior officials.

Inaugurating the summit themed "From IITM. For Bharat. Building Together", Pradhan said India's innovation ecosystem is at a "crucial turning point".

"Research should not remain confined to academic theses but it must translate into real-world products and solutions. India's talent pool is already leading globally in many ways, but the time has come to reform and modernise the entire innovation process," he said.

However, a key question remains as to why are we not innovating enough within our own country.

"Science and technology must move to the forefront of national development, with a human-centric approach that brings tangible benefits to society," he said.

"India has immense potential to lead globally, especially through its premier institutions like the IITs. Significant investments such as a proposed ₹ 1 lakh crore fund for research and development, are being directed toward the private sector and start ups.

"Many successful start ups and unicorns have already emerged from IIT campuses, highlighting the strength of this ecosystem. Despite this, there is a gap. Much of the technology developed by Indian talent abroad is being purchased back by Indian industries from foreign markets," the minister said.

"This indicates a need to build and invest in our own products domestically. With a strong internal market, India has the advantage of being both producer and consumer," he added.

The minister noted that India has emerged as a global hub for start ups, with their number rising from



a few hundred to over 2.5 lakh in recent years, and the country improving its position in the Global Innovation Index from 85th to 38th.

"A few years back, we had only a few hundred start ups in our country. Now, we have crossed more than two and a half lakh start ups. There is a new culture in the world, and India is improving its position in the innovation index from 85th to 38th," he said.

The minister reiterated the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047, and said the Global South will depend on the Indian model.

Praising IIT Madras for its initiatives, he said institutions must remain accountable to society and communicate their contributions in research and innovation.

"Building Bharat is not limited to India's boundaries. It means creating sustainable solutions for the world, especially for the poor and the Global South," he said.

IIT Madras Director Prof V Kamakoti said the summit is a call to action for industry, corporate firms and academia, including institutions like IIT Madras, to come together to build Bharat's future.

"Today, IIT Madras is at the forefront of research and innovation through our Institute of Eminence (IoE), Centres of Excellence (CoE) and other centres driving high-impact research with significant patents, funding, publications, and start ups."

Prof. Ashwin Mahalingam, Dean (Alumni and Corporate Relations), IIT Madras, said, "IIT Madras' strong growth in research and innovation is driven by our clear undeterred focus in translating it into real-world solutions for societal impact. The success of our IoE Centres of Excellence stands testament to the fact that real impact happens when research and development reaches the last mile." (PTI)

## 'BJP's victory chariot will be stopped in Punjab'

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday asserted that Punjab will halt the 'Vijay Rath' (victory chariot) of the BJP, which is celebrating a massive victory in the West Bengal election.

Kejriwal said that the BJP has "hijacked and killed" democracy by manipulating elections.

"What happened in West Bengal was not an election. We have been witnessing what has been happening there for months. The same was done in Bihar, Maharashtra, and even in my own New Delhi constituency.

"Today, democracy is under threat. In 2014, there was a wave for Narendra Modi, and they kept winning elections. In February 2015, they won only three seats in Delhi. If they come to power in Punjab, they will ravage the state," the former Delhi chief minister said.

Kejriwal alleged that even if a rival party wins an election, it matters little to the BJP, which deploys agencies like ED and CBI, leverages money power, indulges in horse trading of MLAs, resorts to breaking parties, topples governments, sends leaders to jail, and ensures their votes get deleted.

He asserted that the 2027 Punjab election would be "the last election" for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. (PTI)

## TMC alleges worker killed in post-poll violence, many offices vandalised

**KOLKATA, May 5:** A Trinamool Congress worker was killed in a clash in Birbhum district on Tuesday as stray incidents of post-poll violence were reported across West Bengal following the BJP's landslide victory in the assembly elections, police said.

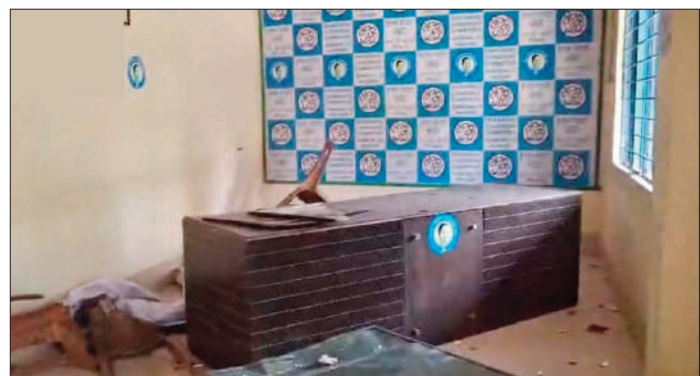
In other incidents, there were reports of arson and vandalism at TMC offices in Kolkata's Tollygunge and Kasba, in Baruipur, Kamarhati, Baranagar in the suburbs, and in Howrah and Baharampur in the districts by mobs holding BJP flags since Monday afternoon.

A senior police officer said Abir Sheikh, TMC's Nanoor Anchal Committee member, was hacked to death during an argument with "another group", at Santoshpur village under Nanoor.

Sheikh died on the spot while another person, whose identity was not known, was injured, he said, adding police reinforcements were rushed to the area where tension prevailed. 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 also shared a video of the body with a



caption -- "horrifying, chilling".

In a post on X, Ghosh said, "TMC worker killed in widespread violence".

The TMC said in its official X handle, "brutal murder of our party worker in Birbhum's Nanoor. Modi's idea of poriborton begins. Deceased name Abir SK."

The party in another post claimed an old woman was brutally attacked by BJP workers in Alipurduar town. "She has sustained multiple injuries -- on head too," the TMC said, attaching a purported image of the woman. PTI, however, could not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

In earlier incidents of arson, the election office of TMC candidate and former minister Aroop Biswas was vandalised by a mob at Bijoygarh-Netajinagar area of Tollygunje. Some among the crowd were seen kicking the broken

hoarding before leaving.

At Ruby Crossing, Kasba, the office of TMC councillor Sushanta Ghosh was rampaged by a crowd holding BJP flags.

In Panihati Assembly constituency, where the RG Kar Hospital rape-murder victim's mother, Ratna Debnath, trounced TMC's Tirthankar Ghosh by 28,836 votes, an office of the Mamata Banerjee-led party changed hands overnight.

TMC Noapara candidate Trinankur Bhattacharya and Barrackpore's Raj Chakraborty were allegedly manhandled while they were leaving the counting centres and had to be escorted out by CAPF personnel.

"Their goons led a violent attack on our party office in Murshidabad. Vandalism and chaos -- this is the real face of the BJP. This marks the BJP's descent into gutter politics," it said. (PTI)

## TVK leaders promise grassroots service, clean break from Dravidian politics

**CHENNAI, May 5:** The air outside the TVK headquarters in Panaiyur here was thick with the sound of whistles and slogans as the party's rank and file celebrated the unanimous election of their leader, Vijay, as the legislative party leader.

While the official agenda was the selection of a floor leader, the voices emerging from the meeting spoke of a broader mandate -- one centred on grassroots service and a clean break from traditional Dravidian politics. For many of the 108 newly elected MLAs, the primary takeaway from the leadership meeting was a sobering reminder of their responsibilities. TVK leader Arunraj IRS, speaking to reporters, emphasised that the victory was not being viewed as a conquest but as a duty.

"Basically, he (Vijay) said that this is a huge responsibility which the people have given us," Arunraj said, reflecting on Vijay's address to the candidates. "It's not any post or authority; it's a service mandate... we should always deliver to the lowest strata of people."

The diversity of the elected representatives has become a focal point for supporters.

Madhar Badhurudeen, the MLA-elect from Madurai Central constituency, pointed out that the party's success was built on inclusive representation that challenged the status quo. (PTI)

## Mann meets Prez seeking cancellation of 6 MPs' RS membership



**NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, May 5:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Tuesday met President Droupadi Murmu and sought the termination of membership of six Raja Sabha members from the state who defected to the BJP, saying their act was a "mockery" and "murder" of the Constitution.

On April 24, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) suffered a massive setback when seven of its 10 Raja Sabha members -- Raghav Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikranjit Sahney and Swati Maliwal -- quit and merged with the BJP, alleging that the party had strayed from its principles, values and core morals.

Six of these seven MPs are from Punjab while Maliwal is from Delhi.

Mann met the President alone at Rashtrapati Bhavan, where he submitted a memorandum along with the signatures of all MLAs. Approximately 90 MLAs were gathered at nearby Rail Bhawan while the meeting took place.

During the meeting, Mann emphasised the need for a 'recall' provision in the Constitution, referencing Chadha's earlier calls for such a measure when representatives fail to meet public expectations.

Mann later said the President assured him that she would consult constitutional experts before responding. "I had a very good meeting."

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.

Notably, Chadha also met Murmu before Mann, and submitted a representation alleging harassment and "politically motivated" action against them following their exit from AAP.

"The Aam Aadmi Party, which accuses everyone else of revenge politics, is today itself indulging in dangerous vendetta politics. Since April 24, when we left AAP and merged with the BJP, our MPs are being systematically targeted and harassed," Chadha said after the

meeting. Fellow MPs Gupta and Mittal were also part of the delegation.

He alleged that several former AAP MPs who have joined the BJP are facing intimidation and coercive actions from state agencies.

Citing specific instances, Chadha claimed that former cricketer and MP Harbhajan Singh has been attacked, while industrialist and MP Gupta's business operations have allegedly been disrupted.

He warned the AAP government that such actions could have serious consequences.

"Using vigilance, the Pollution Board, and the police for political revenge is a dangerous game. You may have started it, but the end will not be good. This must stop," he said.

Chadha also alleged that attempts are being made to target him next through "fabricated cases" and claimed that social media campaigns are being run to malign them.

After his meeting with the president, Mann addressed the media, describing the departure of the seven MPs as a "murder" of the Constitution.

"Seven MPs merging with another party is completely unconstitutional. I spoke to the President in detail," he said.

Mann said he told the President that the BJP has only two MLAs in Punjab, yet now it has six MPs in Raja Sabha. He questioned, "How can this be possible? Isn't it a mockery of the Constitution?"

The chief minister challenged the MPs, saying, "If they are such revolutionaries at heart, then they should have resigned from their six seats. The AAP could have sent someone else." He questioned whether they had lived up to the expectations of the people.

He sought to differentiate between the terms 'elected' and 'selected,' stating, "They were 'selected.' Therefore, their membership should be cancelled."

Mann criticised the MPs who, after calling themselves 'Inqlabi' (revolutionaries), chose to join another party, stating it was a "murder of democracy" and that Punjabis do not tolerate such 'gad-dari' (betrayal). (PTI)

# India should chart own path in treatment of rare diseases: ICMR chief

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** An India-specific model focusing on resource optimisation, indigenous innovation and preventive strategies is needed to strengthen rare disease care in the country rather than relying solely on Western frameworks, ICMR chief Dr Rajiv Bahl said on Tuesday.

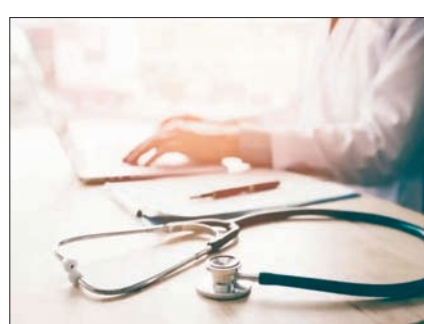
He also batted for a context-driven approach to tackling rare diseases.

Addressing the two-day national conference on rare diseases organised by the Union Health Ministry here, the director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said India must chart its own path in diagnosis, treatment and prevention rather than relying solely on Western frameworks.

He noted that while developed countries have greater resources, India can leverage its strengths through population-based approaches, preventive strategies, and the effective use of digital technologies, including social media and emerging tools such as artificial intelligence, to expand outreach and improve early detection.

Highlighting the progress over the past three decades, Bahl said, "in the 1990s, identifying a patient with a suspected rare disease often led to a sense of helplessness, as diagnosis was extremely difficult and treatment options were virtually unavailable."

"Today, while even financial support of ₹



50 lakh per patient may seem insufficient given the high cost of therapies, it represents remarkable progress that the country is now able to meaningfully support children affected by rare diseases," he said.

He emphasised that this evolution reflects a broader shift in healthcare priorities, where attention is not only given to common diseases but also to those affected by rare, often genetic condition and termed the government's rare disease programme as "a source of hope for thousands of children."

Stressing the need to optimise available resources, Dr Bahl said with a defined financial support framework, careful planning of diagnostics and treatment pathways is essential.

He highlighted the value of family-based approaches, including parental genetic analysis and antenatal diagnosis, as cost-effective

strategies for prevention and early intervention.

Highlighting ongoing efforts, he said the ICMR is actively working to expand the range of tools available for managing rare diseases, including promoting the indigenisation of therapies and encouraging domestic production of affordable alternatives to high-cost drugs in collaboration with industry partners and supported by clinical evaluation through Centres of Excellence.

He also spoke about the use of repurposed drug which are "medications that may not fully cure but can significantly improve outcomes and quality of life", adding that six such drugs have been identified and clinical efforts are being initiated for their use in rare diseases.

On advancements in frontier technologies, Bahl said efforts in gene therapy are being pursued in collaboration with institutions such as the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and CSIR, noting that "India is making steady progress in this area and is closer than ever to realising such advanced therapies," citing developments like CAR-T cell therapy.

He voiced confidence that continued collaboration, innovation, and commitment from all stakeholders will significantly improve the landscape of rare disease care in India and bring tangible benefits to patients and their families.

# West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has no option but to go: Experts

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee must resign following her defeat in the assembly polls or the governor can dismiss her, experts said on Tuesday after she refused to step down.

Some of the experts said that Banerjee's term as the chief minister would automatically come to an end the moment a new person takes over after being invited by the governor to form the government. Also, they noted, her term and that of the outgoing Assembly will end on May 7.

Constitution expert and former Lok Sabha secretary general P D Achary told PTI that Banerjee has no option but to go after a new chief minister is sworn in. "Because there cannot be two chief ministers in a state," he said.

Senior advocate Ajit Sinha said once the new chief minister takes over, "she is deemed to be out of the office". Achary also underlined that she was elected to the outgoing legislative assembly. Its term ends on May 7. "As per constitutional provisions, a government is accountable to the legislature. Once the term ends, the government too has to go," he noted. The only provision for her to stay is when the governor asks the government to continue for a few days, he said.

Banerjee, in her first media interaction after the BJP defeated her Trinamool Congress (TMC), ruled out stepping down as the chief minister and dared the constitutional functionary to take action.

Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, Banerjee alleged large-scale irregularities in the counting process, claiming that the mandate in nearly 100 seats "was looted" and that counting was deliberately slowed down to demoralise her party.

"The question of my resignation does not arise, as we were defeated not by a public mandate but by a conspiracy. I did not lose; I will not go to Lok Bhavan. They can take action as per constitutional norms," she told reporters.

Asked about constitutional or legal options available to the West Bengal governor owing to



Banerjee's assertion, senior advocate and constitutional law expert Rakesh Dwivedi said political morality and constitutional discipline demand that she resign. "But, in any case, there is a new legislative assembly elected and soon some BJP leader would stake a claim and would be appointed CM by the governor. The governor will dismiss her (Banerjee) if she doesn't resign," Dwivedi said.

Senior advocate and former Supreme Court Bar Association President Dushyant Dave said, "He (Governor) must dismiss her". Senior advocate Ajit Sinha said Banerjee has to resign or else she will be out once the new incumbent takes over and proves a majority on the floor of the House.

"Mamata Banerjee has to resign. As per constitutional provisions, the governor has to call the party having a majority to form the government and it has to prove the majority on the floor of the House... Once the new incumbent takes over, she is deemed to be out of the office," Sinha said.

Another senior advocate, Amit Anand Tiwari, referred to the Sarkaria Commission report and judgments, including in the SR Bommai case on the governor's power and discretion in the formation of a new government, and said the governor is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers at the time of inviting a political party.

He said while exercising the discretion to form a government, precedence should be given to the

party that has the majority on the floor of the House or a pre-poll or post-poll alliance that has the majority.

"Now, in the case of West Bengal, there is no doubt as to which is the single largest party with a majority in the House. The BJP has seats in excess of 200 out of 294 seats in the Assembly. They have the majority. There is absolutely no discretion to the governor not to call the BJP to form the government," Tiwari said.

"As far as Mamata Banerjee saying that she will not resign as the CM, there is no question. Her term as the CM and the term of the state assembly have come to an end and she is no longer the CM of the state. The moment a new person takes the oath, she is out," Tiwari said.

Senior advocate Shobh Alam said Banerjee may have her disagreements with the conduct of the election process and the result, but a chief minister cannot occupy the post in contravention of the people's mandate. (PTI)

## Cabinet approves ₹ 5,659 crore for five-year mission to increase cotton crop yield

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** The government on Tuesday announced a five-year mission to increase the productivity of the cotton crop with an outlay of ₹ 5,659.22 crore.

According to an official statement, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved "₹ 5659.22 crore for Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026-27 to 2030-31) to address bottlenecks, declining growth, and quality concerns in India's cotton sector."

India's cotton production stood at 291 lakh bales of 170 kg each during the 2025-26 crop year (July-June), according to the government's latest estimate.

The mission aligns with the '5F vision' (Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign), and would focus on enhancing cotton productivity, the statement added.

The cotton yield will be improved through the development of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds resistant to disease and pests, scaling up of existing and latest crop production technologies through state governments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs).

There would be large-scale promotion and adoption of the latest



crop production technologies. The mission seeks to ensure a least contaminant cotton supply to the industry and promote high-quality cotton exports.

"The Mission envisages to accomplish the production of 498 lakh bales (170 kg lint each) of cotton by enhancing lint productivity from 440 kg/hectares to 755 kg/hectares by 2031," the statement said.

About 32 lakh farmers will benefit, leading to self-reliance.

The Mission, which was announced in the FY26 annual budget, will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Textiles, involving 10

institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), one institute of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and 10 centres of All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRPs) on cotton operating in different state agricultural universities (SAUs) of major cotton-growing states.

Initially, 140 districts will be focused in 14 states through the state department of agriculture and ICAR for upscaling technologies and 2000 ginning/processing factories. Elaborating more, the government said this mission would prove to be a "milestone in making the country self-reliant in cotton

sector".

The mission will focus on the development of high-yielding, climate-resilient, pest-resistant seeds and other production/protection technologies.

It will make efforts to upscale improved cotton production technologies like High Density Planting System (HDPS), Closer Spacing (CS), Integrated Cotton Management, and promotion of Extra Long Staple (ELS) Cotton.

That apart, the mission aims to augment the quality of cotton through capacity building and promoting modernisation of ginning and processing factories.

It also seeks to strengthen cotton testing infrastructure, with modern, standardised, and accredited facilities to ensure reliable quality assessment and global benchmarking.

The Mission will focus on "robust branding and traceability initiatives under Kasturi Cotton Bharat to position Indian cotton as a premium, sustainable, and globally trusted product".

Farmers will be empowered through digital integration of market yards (mandis), enabling transparent price discovery, direct market access, and improved realisation through e-platforms. (PTI)

## Excommunicating Parsi women for entering interfaith marriages discriminatory: SC

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that the practice of excommunicating Parsi women for entering into interfaith marriages is prima facie discriminatory.

A nine-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the right of conscience under Article 25 (1) of the Constitution is a right by birth and cannot be taken away by marriage.

The bench, also comprising Justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joyimalya Bagchi, was hearing petitions regarding discrimination against women at religious sites, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, as well as the scope of religious freedom across various faiths.

The Constitution bench is also examining the question whether the community's religious head's power to expel member(s) from religious life can coexist with the individual's right to profess and practice religion under Article 25.

During the hearing, senior advocate Darius Khamata, who was appearing for a Parsi Zoroastrian woman who married a Hindu man and faced excommunication from the Parsi community due to her interfaith marriage, said such practice is bad in law.

"I am a devotee. I have not forsaken my religion, I am a believer. Just because I have married (I have faced exclusion), that (an interfaith marriage) is not a crime," he submitted, adding that this was a man-made imposition on an otherwise progressive and great religion.

Justice Nagarathna said marriage is the basis of discrimination only if it is a case of a woman entering into marriage with a man from another faith.

The bench observed that such selective excommunication appears to have a discriminatory effect. "The right of conscience under Article 25 (1) is a

right by birth and cannot be taken away by marriage. In this case, marriage as a basis of classification is discriminatory against women," Justice Nagarathna observed.

Khamata submitted, "The same principle is not applied to a man. The same should apply both ways."

"And that could lead to huge ramifications not only for Parsi Zoroastrians but across the board. It would lead to some terrible consequences."

Justice Nagarathna further remarked that children of Parsi fathers have the benefit of the Zoroastrian religion because of birth.

"The same thing (should) apply to the wife also. It is a religion by birth; it cannot be taken away by marriage," she said.

Khamata also argued that the rights of a religious denomination under Article 26 of the Constitution are not wider than one's freedom to practice their religion or exercise their conscience under Article 25 of the Constitution of India.

"Both must be read harmoniously," he emphasised.

Justice Nagarathna said the two provisions of the Constitution form a compact and must be read together as they are the same right of religion.

"It is not a separate or distinct right that a denomination exercises. It cannot be dichotomised or divorced. A river cannot rise higher than its source; Article 26 rights cannot rise higher than Article 25 (1) right," Khamata submitted, adding that Article 26 cannot give a higher right to religion or a lower right to religion.

The hearing remained inconclusive and would continue on Wednesday.

The reference to the nine-judge bench was made by the five-judge bench on the challenge to the 1962 verdict of the Bombay High Court which had upheld the power of excommunication as protected religious practice. (PTI)

## India, Japan hold key meeting on healthcare in Delhi

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** India and Japan on Tuesday committed to deepen bilateral collaboration in the health sector, with Union Health Minister JP Nadda saying that cooperation between the two countries is anchored in a shared vision of strengthening health systems, improving accessibility and promoting innovation.

Nadda was speaking at the third Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) on Healthcare between India and Japan held at Bharat Mandapam here, which he co-chaired with Japan's minister in charge of Healthcare Policy, Kimi Onoda.

Welcoming the Japanese delegation, Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said, "The Joint Committee Meeting, held under the India-Japan Memorandum of Cooperation, has served as an important platform for advancing this partnership through regular dialogue and deeper mutual understanding."

Nadda said the meeting reflects

the shared commitment of both countries to foster new partnerships in the health sector.

He noted that India-Japan cooperation is guided by the Memorandum of Cooperation in healthcare and wellness, alongside a common goal of strengthening health systems and promoting innovation.

Nadda said the relationship is rooted in over a century of engagement across sectors and reiterated India's commitment to inclusive development under the guiding principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'.

Onoda reaffirmed Japan's continued engagement with India in advancing healthcare cooperation through innovation, technology and research.

During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on such issues as prevention and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), supply chain resilience, digital health and human resource development. (PTI)

## From strongholds to sweep zones: How BJP's Bengal blitzkrieg spanned across geographies

**KOLKATA, May 5:** If the number 207 explains the scale of the BJP's victory in West Bengal, the regional maps explain how the seats were not assembled through scattered gains, but concentrated territorial dominance across large swathes of the state.

A close reading of the results shows that the BJP's mandate was built on sweeping entire districts, expanding into new geographies, and converting regional advantages into decisive seat clusters.

In several districts, the party registered near-total or complete dominance. It won all 12 seats in Bankura, all 16 in Purba Medinipur, all nine in Paschim Bardhaman and Purulia, all seven in Jalpaiguri, and all five in Alipurduar.

These were not incremental gains. They reflected consolidation across entire regions, allowing the BJP to build a structural advantage that the TMC could not offset even where it remained competitive.

The party's strongest zones spanned Jangalmahal, north Bengal, industrial belts and parts of south Bengal where anti-incumbency appeared sharper and organisational penetration deeper.

By contrast, the TMC's performance was restricted to limited geography. It retained relative strength in pockets such as South 24 Parganas, where it won 19 seats against the BJP's 10, and Murshidabad, where it won nine to the BJP's eight. In Howrah, too, the contest remained tight, with the TMC winning nine seats

and the BJP seven.

The larger picture, therefore, was one of an uneven contest -- competitive in pockets but decisively tilted in regions where the BJP managed to sweep.

Migration patterns appear to have played a role in shaping this geography. In constituencies characterised by in-migration, the BJP won roughly three-fourths of the seats. In mixed migration areas, the BJP's advantage widened further.

However, in out-migration belts -- regions marked by labour mobility, economic distress and dependence on remittances -- the TMC performed relatively better, even as the BJP retained an edge.

This suggests that economic anxieties and welfare dependence may have moderated the anti-incumbency wave in certain areas, while in regions experiencing demographic churn or labour competition, the BJP's messaging may have found stronger traction.

Border constituencies offered another layer of complexity. While the BJP maintained an overall lead, its dominance was noticeably reduced compared to the state average, with the TMC and smaller parties improving their presence.

These constituencies are shaped by a mix of factors -- migration, citizenship concerns, informal trade networks, minority concentration and security issues -- producing more fragmented voting patterns than interior regions. (PTI)

## Cabinet approves 3 projects of Railway Ministry costing ₹ 23,437 cr

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday approved three projects costing about ₹ 23,437 crore of the Railway Ministry.

These projects include construction of third and fourth line between Nagda-Mathura, Guntakal-Wadi and Burhwal-Sitapur.

"The increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for Indian Railways. These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion," a government press note said.

While briefing media persons, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that these sections are part of high density railway network routes and these new lines will enhance operational efficiency between major cities and towns.

"The projects are in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of a New India which will make people of the region 'Atmanirbhar' by way of comprehensive development in the area which will enhance their employment/self-employment opportunities," the government said. It added, "The projects are planned on PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan with focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity and logistic efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations. These projects will provide seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services."

These three projects covering 19 districts across the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 901 km. The proposed multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approximately 4,161 villages, which have a population of about 83 lakhs. (PTI)

## SC grills NGO for PIL on entry of women of all ages to Sabarimala temple, questions its motive

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday grilled an NGO, on whose PIL the apex court had allowed the entry of women of all age groups to the Sabarimala temple and questioned its religious belief and conscience.

A nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant sought to know what was its objective behind filing of the PIL in 2006 and what business it has on the issue of entry of women to the temple.

The bench also comprising justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joyimalya Bagchi questioned the locus of the NGO in the matter.

"This is quite serious. The ones who have faith in the deity will perform all that is needed. But someone says that they will break all 'Niyam', which cannot be encouraged by this court. People, who did not have faith and belief in that deity, you are saying, allow them to enter. You are not a true believer," Justice Nagarathna asked advocate Ravi Prakash Gupta, appearing for NGO Indian Young Lawyers Association.

This observation came from the bench while it was hearing petitions regarding discrimination against women at religious sites, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, as well as the scope of religious freedom across various faiths.

It questioned Gupta as to how the NGO being a juristic person can claim the right to worship and whether the body comprises of believers.

"Why did you file the PIL? What good has come out of it? How does a juristic body like yours have a belief? This is for an individual. You don't have a conscience," Justice Nagarathna asked Gupta as he sub-

mitted that the petition was filed based on news reports about astrologers saying that the shrine was defiled after a woman entered the temple.

CJI Surya Kant said, "Are you the chief priest of the country?"

Justice Kumar also asked Gupta whether any resolution was passed by the NGO and enquired about the president of the body.

Gupta replied that the president of the association at the time was a man named Noushad Ali and he was not aware of any such resolution. Justice Sundresh interjected and said, "Noushad has played smart... This is nothing but an abuse of the process of law."

Gupta replied that the NGO was the original writ petitioner in the matter and Noushad was only a name-lender president, who was not aware of the litigation.

Referring to earlier submissions, the advocate said the temple's thantri (head priest) has mentioned that young women should not be permitted to enter the temple as the deity doesn't like young ladies.

Justice Nagarathna said, "How are you concerned? What is your business here? Why the petitioner chose to pursue this matter instead of taking up other causes. Young Lawyers Association has no other business? Why can't they work for the welfare of the bar or assist the bench for the legal system of this country?"

"Work for the bar, work for younger members and for their welfare. Those who are struggling in rural areas have difficulty coming to the cities to argue cases. They have brilliant minds. People have come from the villages with different minds..." she said.

Expressing concern over misuse of PIL jurisdiction, the CJI remarked that the PIL should have been dismissed outright as how does a newspaper article give the cause of action to file a PIL? (PTI)

## World's first ladies special train between Churchgate-Borivali in Mumbai turns 34

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** The Railway Board on Tuesday called 34 years of operation of the world's first ladies special train service between Churchgate and Borivali in Mumbai a "key milestone in women-centric suburban travel".

The service was initially operated between Churchgate and Borivali and was later extended up to Virar in 1993. "Introduced on 5 May 1992 as the world's first Ladies Special train service, it was a response to the growing need for safe, reliable and comfortable commuting options for working women in Mumbai, particularly during peak hours," the Board said.

Recalling the early days, veteran railway officials said that the train was flagged off by the then general manager of Western Railway in a low-key manner, far away from any political fanfare. "The initiative was meant to address the needs of working women. I remember the time when P V Narasimha Rao was the prime minister. C K Jaffer Sharief was the railway minister and Sudhakarrao Naik was the chief minister of Maharashtra. However, it was more of a railway-level event."

"The flag-off was done by the then general manager along with



senior railway officials," a veteran railway officer said. Officials said the introduction of ladies special trains proved to be a boon for working women, who earlier had to struggle to board women's compartments in regular suburban trains. "Over the decades, it has evolved into a vital component of the city's suburban rail network, reflecting both changing travel patterns and the increasing participation of women in the workforce," a Railway Board press note said.

"Over the years, not only has the number of Ladies Special services increased but their popularity among suburban commuters has

also grown significantly. Apart from offering more space and the convenience of boarding any coach, these services have helped foster a strong sense of community among women commuters," it added. At present, Western Railway operates 10 ladies special services daily, evenly distributed between morning and evening peak hours in both up and down directions.

The up services include Virar-Churchgate (7.35-9.15), Borivali-Churchgate (7.40-8.46), Virar-Churchgate (8.49-10.36), Bhayandar-Churchgate (9.06-10.30), Virar-Churchgate (9.47-11.09) and Vasai Road-Churchgate

(10.02-11.36). The down services include Churchgate-Borivali (17.39-18.47), Churchgate-Virar (18.13-20.02), Churchgate-Virar (18.51-20.40) and Churchgate-Virar (19.40-21.06). "The Ladies Special services have been introduced and expanded in phases over the years. The first two services -- Churchgate-Borivali introduced on 5 May 1992 and Borivali-Churchgate introduced on 11 May 1992 -- were extended up to Virar on 1 July 1993," the Board said.

"Subsequently, additional services were introduced, including Churchgate-Borivali on 17 August 1998, and Borivali-Churchgate on 6 January 2003, which was later discontinued on 1 November 2005. Another service from Bandra Yard to Churchgate was introduced on 25 April 2006 and later converted to Virar-Churchgate on 1 November 2018," it added.

Further additions included Borivali-Churchgate and Churchgate-Bandra Yard services introduced on November 23, 2009, and Churchgate-Bandra Suburban services introduced on March 29, 2013, which were later extended up to Virar on September 1, 2016, officials said. (PTI)

# Karan Johar makes Met Gala debut in Manish Malhotra outfit inspired by Raja Ravi Varma's art

Filmmaker Karan Johar made his Met Gala debut in a bespoke outfit by designer Manish Malhotra that draws inspiration from the works of celebrated Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma.

The outfit, titled 'Framed in Eternity', features Johar in a power-shouldered vintage jacket over a hand-painted cape approximately six feet in length. The piece was created by over 80 artisans over 85 days.

Johar, 53, accessorised the look with a multi-gemstone necklace and rings from his jewellery brand Tyaani.

The visual language of the outfit draws directly from Varma's works, including Lady with the Peach, Hamsa Damayanti, Kadambari, Arjuna and Subhadra, and There Comes Papa.

"It's amazing to represent your nation, your culture and heritage on a global platform as magnificent as the Met, which truly signifies the work of art. Today's theme really beautifully blends fashion and art, and I couldn't have chosen a better debut on a theme like this," Johar told reporters at the red carpet of the fashion gala, which is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City every year in May.

This year's Met Gala theme is "Costume Art" with the dress code titled "Fashion is Art". The event, considered one of the biggest nights in global fashion, is co-chaired by Beyonce, Venus Williams, Nicole Kidman and Anna Wintour.

Describing his experience on the red carpet, he said it was "exhilarating, nervous and also heavy in equal

measure".

Paying tribute to both his designer and the artist who inspired the look, the filmmaker said, "Manish Malhotra is a magnificent, famous Indian designer. This is a tribute to Raja Ravi Varma, a glorious artist who did the most magnificent work of the 19th century. I'm just very happy to pay homage to him and to Manish Malhotra."

One of India's most celebrated names in filmmaking with titles such as "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai", "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham", "My Name is Khan" and "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani", Johar has become the first director to represent India at the event that has seen the presence of celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan, Alia Bhatt, Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra Jonas in the past.

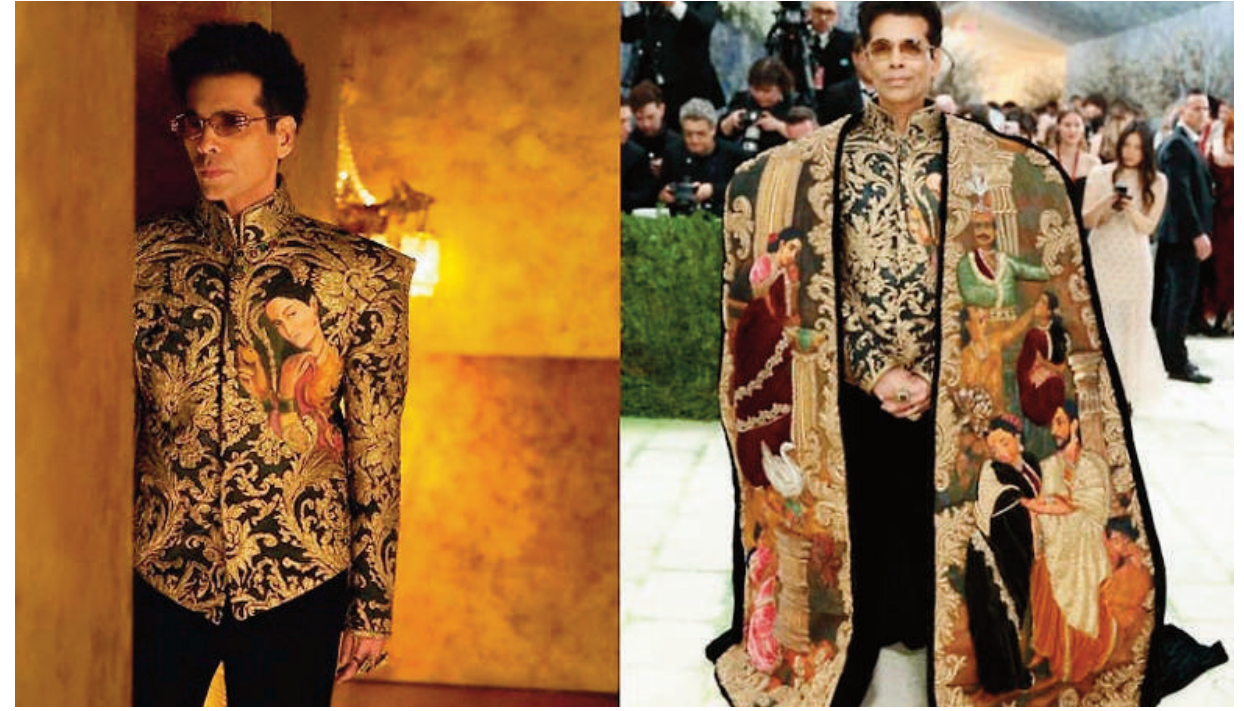
At the red carpet, Johar said he is looking forward to meet Sabrina Carpenter as his daughter Roohi is a huge fan of the globally-popular singer.

"My daughter told me that I must meet Sabrina Carpenter. So I have to meet her because it's her dream come true if I do meet her," he added.

Johar's Met Gala look was developed with stylist Eka Lakshani in collaboration with Malhotra, who has often dressed the filmmaker and his many stars in films and outside of it.

Malhotra, who also attended the event, said Johar's outfit was a tribute to the skilled craftspeople behind it.

"These are all the skilled workers who worked on the



garment -- from the design team to the tailors to all the artisans. I'm honouring all the artisans tonight on this beautiful carpet," he said.

The designer said the signatures of his entire atelier featured on the outfit.

"On a carpet like this, which is so grand and the best,

we need to honour all of the artisans who work backstage," Malhotra added.

Malhotra designed his own outfit for the evening. He wore a black ensemble featuring elaborate white three-dimensional sculptural embellishments on the shoulders and sleeves. (PTI)

## Irrfan Khan's unreleased film 'The Last Tenant' finally make its debut... on YouTube



"The Last Tenant", a movie featuring Irrfan Khan long before he became one of India's most versatile stars but remained unreleased, has finally been made available on YouTube by its makers.

The film, which was completed in 2000, was released on the YouTube page of The Salt Inc as a tribute to Irrfan Khan on his sixth death anniversary on April 29.

Written and directed by Sarthak Dasgupta, the 43-minute movie featured Irrfan alongside Vidya Balan, who was famous at the time for featuring in the TV show "Hum Paanch".

"Some films aren't lost. They wait. In the year 2000, a young filmmaker, with no budget, no guarantees, and only a vision gathered two extraordinary souls and made some-

thing quietly magical. That filmmaker was Sarthak Dasgupta.

"Those two souls were Irrfan Khan and Vidya Balan, before the world truly knew their names. The film was thought to be gone forever. The footage, lost. The memory, alive only in those who lived it. Until now," read the caption on the YouTube page of the movie.

Irrfan passed away on April 29, 2020, at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, following a battle with cancer.

In a statement, Vidya expressed a deep sense of nostalgia upon the film's release.

"It feels surreal to see 'The Last Tenant' finally reach audiences. I was just starting out, trying to find my footing. Working with Irrfan was incredibly special then and that much more now considering it's the only time I got to share screen space with him.

"This film is a beautiful reminder of where it all began for me, and I'm glad it is being shared as a tribute to him," the actor said in a statement.

"The Last Tenant" had remained shelved for over two decades as the director had lost the footage of the film, until recently when he found a VHS copy of the same, the press release read.

Sarthak, best known for Amol Palekar and Rinku Rajguru starrer film, "200 Halla Ho", and "Music Teacher" featuring Neena Gupta and Divya Dutta, said the release of "The Last Tenant" is a dream come true moment for him.

"Fuelled by pure intuition, I had embarked on a journey, still unsure if it could become a career. Releasing this film now, as a tribute to Irrfan, makes it even more emotional. It feels like revisiting a forgotten dream," the director said.

The film is produced by Sarthak and his wife Neena under their banner, The Salt Inc. (PTI)

## Swanand Kirkire, Sudhir Mishra team up again for Emergency-set series 'Summer of 77'

Acclaimed writer-lyricist-composer Swanand Kirkire is set to reunite with filmmaker Sudhir Mishra after 18 years for the upcoming political drama series "Summer of 77".

The duo, who previously joined forces on films like "Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi" and "Khoaya Khoaya Chand", will come together for the eight-part Hindi streaming series set against the backdrop of the 1975-77 Indian Emergency.

Kirkire, who recently created the series "Bandwaale", has composed the entire music album for "Summer of 77", which features six songs. He has also lent his voice to three of the tracks, including "Ye Kaisa Hai Junoon".

"After 'Bandwaale', I was really looking to immerse myself in something that allowed me to explore music as a narrative force again, and 'Summer of 77' offered exactly that.

"This isn't just a period drama, it's a story about a very emotionally charged time in our history, where music, poetry, and expression played a huge role in shaping voices of resistance and identity," Kirkire said in a statement.

The composer said working on a project set during the Emergency came with a certain responsibility.

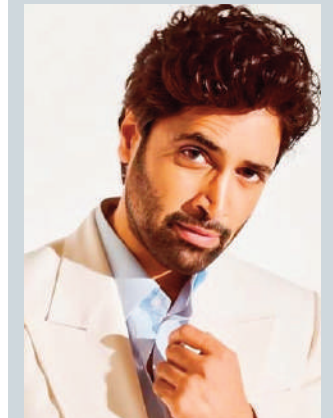
"You're not just creating melodies; you're trying to capture the spirit of a generation that was questioning authority, dreaming of change, and finding its voice amidst chaos. The songs had to feel rooted in that time, yet resonate with today's audience," he said. On "Ye Kaisa Hai Junoon" in particular, Kirkire said the track reflects the passion, confusion and fire of youth during the era.

"It's not just about romance or rebellion, but about a larger emotional unrest that defined those years," he said.

Kirkire also praised Mishra's approach to filmmaking, saying the director gives music the space to breathe within a narrative.

"When a filmmaker trusts music to carry emotion and subtext, it pushes you as a composer to go beyond the obvious," he said. The series boasts an ensemble cast including Rahul Bhat, Isha Talwar, Vishal Vashishtha, Saurabh Shukla, Rajat Kapoor, Manav Vij, TJ Bhanu and Anjan Dutt. (PTI)

## Adivi Sesh announces two romantic projects, calls it an 'expansion'



Fresh off the success of "Dacoit", Telugu star Adivi Sesh is set to feature in two romantic dramas, the actor has announced.

"Dacoit", which has emerged as one of the top five highest-grossing Telugu films of 2026 so far, was mounted at a production cost of Rs 65 crore and broke even for all stakeholders within the first two weeks of its release.

Sesh will first headline "G2", the much-anticipated sequel to his spy thriller "Goodachari", before transitioning to the two romantic projects. The first of the romantic films will be directed by Sai Marthand, whose debut Telugu film "Little Hearts" was a blockbuster.

In a statement, Sesh said the projects marks a departure from the action-heavy roles he has been celebrated for.

"Over the last few years, I've explored intense, high-stakes narratives, and I'm grateful for how strongly they've connected. At the same time, I've been feeling a strong pull towards stories that are more intimate and emotionally driven. Romance, when done right, can be incredibly powerful and deeply relatable," the 40-year-old actor said.

On choosing two romantic scripts, Sesh said both stood out for approaching love and relationships in very different ways.

"They're not just love stories, they're about people, vulnerability, and the choices that define us. That's something I'm very excited to explore as an actor," he said.

At the same time, Sesh clarified that the move does not signal a retreat from action.

"I don't see it as a shift away from action, but rather an expansion of what I want to do. 'G2' is very much in that high-octane space, but these romantic dramas allow me to tap into a completely different emotional spectrum. As an actor, that's the kind of diversity I've been seeking," he said. (PTI)

## Malayalam actor Santhosh Nair dies in road accident in Pathanamthitta

Malayalam actor Santhosh Nair was killed in a road accident at Enathu in this district early on Tuesday, police said.

The accident occurred around 6.30 am when the car in which Nair was travelling collided with a lorry, leaving him and his wife injured.

Nair sustained critical injuries after his chest hit the steering wheel of the vehicle, police said.

He later succumbed to the injuries. His wife suffered rib fractures and is undergoing treatment, they added.

Nair made his debut in cinema with the 1982 film 'Ithu Njangalude Katha' and went on to act in over 100 films, portraying a wide range of roles, including hero, villain and supporting characters.

His latest film 'Mohiniyattam' is currently running in theatres.

Superstar Mohanlal and actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi expressed grief over Nair's demise.

In a Facebook post, Mohanlal recalled that Nair was his college mate and a close friend, describing him as a warm personality who earned the affection of everyone.

"Santhosh was my junior in college. From those days onward, he was not just a good friend but like a brother to me. We have worked together in many films," Mohanlal said in his FB post.

Union Minister Suresh Gopi also said Nair was like a brother who had been a constant presence in his life, and that his death has left an irreplaceable void. (PTI)



## Writers far from what they deserve in cinema: scriptwriter Jyoti Kapoor

Due credit, fair compensation and a wish that their work does not get stolen. Noted screenwriter Jyoti Kapoor says writers in Hindi cinema don't ask for much but they still get short-changed.

Kapoor, who has written for films like "Badhaai Ho" and "Good Newwz", said, "Writers are far from what they deserve."

"A writer essentially wants three basic things when they collaborate with anyone their due credit, a fair compensation for their work and a silent prayer they make every night before they go to bed that their work never gets stolen.

"There's more awareness now but the nature of our business is such that no matter how careful you are, you will end up getting short-changed at some point," Kapoor told PTI in an interview.

Kapoor was speaking on the sidelines of a session hosted by Screenwriters Association around the disputes within the screenwriting community.

"A script is the blueprint of the film and the rest is execution. Filmmaking is a highly collaborative medium and everyone has their part to play, but somehow people end up forgetting the most important person, who gave birth to the story to begin with," Kapoor said.

The legal framework of major production houses also works against writers, she said.



"It's a collaborative medium and it takes a long time for the end product to be made. You end up pitching your work to many prospective collaborators during that time. It's difficult to keep a track of things.

"Almost all production houses make you sign a dreaded NDA which essentially says that, even in the case they end up making anything remotely or substantially similar to your work, they do not have any accountability. And almost all

writers end up signing it."

Kapoor said that while instances of stealing ideas may have reduced due to increased awareness, issues still persist. Though there are a handful of writers who have managed to gain their footing as creators or showrunners on streaming platforms.

But the nature of the business is highly unpredictable, she said, describing how a show that she developed for over five years was shelved recently.

## Was asked to pay ₹ 5 crore for MLA ticket but I refused: Former TMC MLA Manoj Tiwary

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** Former India cricketer and outgoing Trinamool Congress MLA Manoj Tiwary on Tuesday said the "TMC chapter is over" for him, alleging that the party denied him a ticket from Howrah's Shibpur constituency for refusing to pay Rs five crore.

The 40-year-old former India batter and highest run-getter in history of Bengal cricket (10,195 first-class runs) was a Minister of State for Sports in the government led by Mamata Banerjee, whose 15-year tenure ended with a BJP sweep of the latest assembly elections on Monday.

"Look, I am not at all surprised by this debacle. This was bound to happen when an entire party has indulged in corrupt practices and there was no development in any sector," Tiwary told PTI in an interview.

"Only those who could pay hefty money could buy tickets. At least 70-72 candidates this time paid around ₹ five crore to get a ticket. I was asked but I refused to pay. Just check how many of those who paid up have managed to win," he said.

"As far as TMC is concerned, that chapter is over (for me)," he declared.

Tiwary said he had no intention of joining politics even though he was offered a Lok Sabha Ticket by TMC back in 2019. He eventually relented by contesting and winning from Shibpur in 2021 assembly polls.

"At that time, I had played for Punjab Kings in the IPL and was still playing Ranji Trophy seriously when Didi (Mamata) wanted me to contest Lok Sabha.

"I had politely declined but before the 2021 elections, Didi once again called and told me 'Manoj, I have a message for you and Aroop will tell you'. I was asked to contest from Shibpur and I thought that I could make a meaningful change," Tiwary recalled.

"Paid from own pocket for development work"

Tiwary alleged that Trinamool Congress lacks internal democracy.

"I have attended meetings where all TMC



ministers were summoned. Now I was given a Lollypop called MoS which basically meant nothing. If I stood up and said 'Didi I want to draw your attention to a certain problem', she would just stop us midway and say 'I don't have time for you people'."

Tiwary said the longstanding issue of failing sewage and drainage systems in Howrah district was not addressed despite his repeated efforts.

"Being a sitting MLA, I would run from pillar to post for drainage work in my constituency but people who controlled Howrah Municipality for years without allowing elections to happen, never cared.

"They would simply stall developmental work which is very basic. I can tell you that some of the work that I got done was not just from MLA fund but also I paid from my own pocket to complete projects.

"Every year Didi would announce a Master Plan for upgradation of underground drainage system but that was it, just lip service."

**On Allegations that he extorted money**

Tiwary has had to fight perception battles of his own, including allegations that he was involved in extortion from builders in his constituency. He laughed off the charge.

"Let me tell you that when I filed my income affidavit before the 2021 elections, I had declared that I had ₹ 20 crore in cash. I have

played IPL for 10 years, first-class cricket for 20 years, was part of Indian squads for good number of years.

"I don't need extortion money. There were 7-8 local councillors who would regularly write to Didi. False allegations were levelled against me," Tiwary countered.

**"Aroop da was an insecure sports minister"**

A cricketer of repute, Tiwary felt slighted by state cabinet minister for sports Aroop Biswas. He alleged that he was not allowed to perform his ministerial duties by Biswas because of insecurity.

"Aroop Da doesn't know A, B, C, D of any sport. There would be functions where both Aroop da and I would be invited and I would not be called on the dais. There was one Durand Cup unveiling where my pictures were flashed in sports pages and from next Durand Cup, I wouldn't get any invite," Tiwary alleged.

Tiwary is happy that he didn't attend the Lionel Messi event in Kolkata which became a "royal mess" in the end.

The poorly-managed event led to vandalism at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium after a capacity crowd was denied even a clear view of Messi as politicians and local administrators mobbed the icon, who was whisked away early out of security concerns.

"I knew something like this would happen and refrained from attending the event. I didn't want to be part of an event where common people were taken for a ride. I would repeatedly ask Aroop da, 'Dada please introduce a sports policy as per allocated budget'. He never bothered," Tiwary said.

**Applied for Bengal Ranji coach's job**

Having passed his BCCI Level 2 Coaches examination, Tiwary, who is currently an expert with a cricket website, wants to become the head coach of Bengal's Ranji team.

"The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) had invited applications for head coach's post. I have passed my BCCI Level 2 exam with 'distinction' and want to pursue serious coaching in near future," he concluded. (PTI)

## I pick Rohit's brain on batting, we complement each other: Ryan

**MUMBAI, May 5:** Mumbai Indians opener Ryan Rickelton says he never misses an opportunity to pick Rohit Sharma's brain on different facets of batting but the Indian legend is way better at demonstrating how it's done, pulling off shots that he can strike only in his "wildest dreams".

The 29-year-old Rickelton (83) and Rohit (84) combined for their second century partnership of this season to power Mumbai Indians to a six-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants here on Monday, helping the team stay alive in the competition after a tumultuous run.

"I picked his brain a little bit more (in the) first year, just about batting in general. Not necessarily T20 batting, (it was) more (about) Tests and 50-overs batting and the specifics and the mentality around it," Rickelton said when asked about the tips he has received from Rohit.

"It's never always (a) life-changing advice that you hear. It is the stuff that you've heard through different paths and closures as you kind of work your way through the game. It is just more (about) how he manages pressure, how he stays calm and how he backs his ability and understands his game really well," he said.

Rickelton said having different areas to target and being clear about their methods is the secret behind their success as an opening pair.

"We compliment each other nicely as a left-hand right-hand (combination), we score in very different areas and we are quite clear in our methods and who we want to put pressure on," he said. Talking about their approach



as a pair, Rickelton said, "Sometimes he gets away really quickly and takes a lot of pressure off me and sometimes I get away quickly and take a lot of pressure off him."

"Coming back from five or six games out, he gave himself a few balls to just get back to batting again and his routines and then transferring that pressure onto the bowlers. He hit some shots that I could only have in my wildest dreams."

Rickelton said having senior South African wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock, who also scored an IPL ton earlier this season, in the squad also put pressure on him.

"It was tricky to manage mentally because maybe you are burning yourself with a bit more pressure to do well, because you have a guy who is flipping good sitting behind you and the whole world is screaming to pick him,"

he said. "...you can put yourself under a bit too much pressure. But on the flip side, I got an opportunity when he did some damage to his hand," Rickelton added.

Rickelton, who made 83, said he got an earful from de Kock for not pulling off a hundred.

"He was the first person to absolutely abuse me tonight, saying I threw away a hundred, which I agree with him."

**No idea about Pandya's injury**

Rickelton said he was not aware of the extent of skipper Hardik Pandya's injury. Pandya missed the clash due to a back spasm.

"I do not know when he is expected to be back. I found out this afternoon that he has back spasms so I am unaware to the extent of the injury or how bad it is or what he is feeling. But I am sure he will be with the group as we head to Raipur this week," he said. (PTI)

### Shillong Cricket Academy beat Darrang Rhinos by 76 runs

*Mannan Surana stars with all-round show; enters semi-finals*

#### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 5:** In the 11th Sitaram Chhawchharia Memorial Under-19 Cricket Tournament, Shillong Cricket Academy defeated Darrang Rhinos by 76 runs on Tuesday at the NFRSA Stadium, Maligaon.

Shillong Cricket Academy won the toss and elected to bat first.

Due to early morning rain, the match was reduced to 35 overs per side. Shillong Cricket Academy posted 188 runs for the loss of three wickets in 35 overs.

Suraj Chetry top-scored with 71 runs, hitting four boundaries, while Gautam Paul added 60 runs.

Mannan Surana contributed an unbeaten 34 off 19 balls, including six boundaries.

For Darrang Rhinos, Chinmoy picked up one wicket for 19 runs in five overs. Chasing the target, Darrang Rhinos were bowled out for 112 runs in 30.2 overs.

Mubashir Hussain scored 43 runs, while Deep Bora added 16 runs. For Shillong Cricket Academy, Mannan Surana claimed three wickets for 11 runs, took Rohit Sharma and Aaveerl Joshi took two wickets each.

Mannan Surana was adjudged 'Player of the Match' for his all-round performance.

#### Semi-final schedule:

May 8: City Cricket Club vs NJ Academy.

May 9: Aakrida C.E vs Bud Cricket Club.

### Thousands at funeral for Alex Zanardi

**PADUA (ITALY), May 5:** Thousands of fans have attended the funeral for Alex Zanardi, the Italian auto racing champion-turned-Paralympic gold medalist who died last week at 59.

Zanardi's hand-bike was placed near the altar inside the basilica in Padua where the service was held on Tuesday, and his hand cycling teammates sat in the front row near his wife, Daniela, and son, Niccolò.

Also in attendance were Stefano Domenicali, the president and CEO of Formula One, skier Alberto Tomba, Paralympian Bebe Vio and a host of politicians and other officials.

In 2020, Zanardi was seriously injured in a handbike accident after crashing into an oncoming truck during a relay event in Tuscany. Zanardi suffered serious facial and cranial trauma in the crash and was put in a medically induced coma.

Nearly 20 years earlier, Zanardi lost both of his legs in an auto racing crash.

One fan inside the church held up a sign that said, "Farewell Alex, your legend will never die." (AP)

## Doesn't reflect level-playing field: Somani-led consortium on losing RR bid to Mittals



**NEW DELHI, May 5:** "Deeply disappointed" after losing the Rajasthan Royals' ownership bid to the group led by industrialist Lakshmi N Mittal, the US-based Kal Somani-led consortium on Tuesday denied that it pulled out of the bidding process, asserting that the final outcome does not reflect a "level playing field".

Lakshmi Mittal and his son Aditya Mittal, along with vaccine manufacturer Adar Poonawalla, acquired a majority stake in Rajasthan Royals for USD 1.63 billion (Rs 15,600 crore approx) after the consortium comprising Somani (Tech Entrepreneur), Rob Walton (Wal-Mart Group) and Sheila Ford Hamp (Ford group) pulled out of the race, according to the franchise.

"We are deeply disappointed not to be part of the Rajasthan Royals ownership group, following a long six-month process in which we were the lead bid from start to finish," the consortium stated in a press release.

"Contrary to stories that have been planted in the press, our group was and has always been fully funded, prepared to close with certainty, and never withdrew our bid," it added.

The group said it had documentation in place and was told that the franchise's board meeting on Saturday was held to approve its bid.

"In the end this was never the case. We approached this process with the highest standards of honesty, integrity, professionalism and in good faith, but unfortunately that wasn't enough.

"We do not believe the outcome ultimately reflected a level playing field, and it is difficult to reconcile the strength of our bid and pre-

paredness to close with the final decision," it said.

The US-based consortium led by Somani had offered USD 1.63 billion but as per sources there were multiple issues with its documentation, which could not pass the scrutiny of the existing owners -- Manoj Badale and consortium.

However, the specific issues with the bid were not disclosed in the statement that was issued to announce Mittals and Poonawalla as the new owners.

"While we respect competitive outcomes, we also believe that processes of this significance should be conducted with transparency, consistency, integrity and in good faith," the group said.

The Mittal family will own approximately 75 per cent of Rajasthan Royals, with Poonawalla holding around 18 per cent.

The remaining approximately 7 per cent will be held by approved existing investors, including Badale.

The restructured Rajasthan Royals board will comprise Lakshmi N. Mittal, Aditya Mittal, Vanisha Mittal-Bhatia, Adar Poonawalla and Badale. The Somani-led consortium asserted that it was the strongest bidder throughout the process.

"...we were the strongest group at every stage, competing against some of the most prominent investors across the sports investing landscape.

"While this outcome is both surprising and disappointing, we view this experience as part of a broader journey." (PTI)

## India U-18 men's and women's hockey teams to play series against Australia

**BHOPAL, May 5:** The Indian men's and women's U-18 hockey teams will each take on their Australian counterparts in a four-match series from May 15 to 20 here as part of the Asia Cup preparations.

The exposure series that follows the U-18 National Coaching Camp, which began at SAI Bhopal on April 19, will serve as vital preparation for the U18 Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, Japan, beginning later this month.

Men's coach Sardar Singh highlighted the progress made during the camp and the importance of the upcoming matches.

"A key focus during this camp has been to strengthen their fundamentals and basics across all positions, so they are better prepared for the demands of modern hockey and can steadily progress towards the senior level. The upcoming exposure matches against Australia's U18 teams are an important step in our preparation.

"It's a valuable opportunity for the group to experience high-quality international competition, test combinations, and build match temperament. With the U18 Asia Cup on the horizon, these fixtures will play a key role in helping us identify the best possible squad to represent India," said Sardar.

Women's coach Rani Rampal echoed a similar sentiment.

"The matches against Australia's U-18 team will give them a great chance to play at a higher level and prepare for the U-18 Asia Cup. It's an opportunity for each player to showcase their ability and what they have learned," said Rampal. (PTI)

## Deotale shines as Indian men seal top-three finish in compound section in Archery WC



**SHANGHAI, May 5:** Former world champion Ojas Deotale led from the front as India's men compound team secured a top-10 finish in the qualification round of the Archery World Cup Stage 2 here on Tuesday.

Deotale, who became India's first-ever male world champion in archery by winning the 2023 World Archery Championships in Berlin, was the best-placed Indian, shooting 711 points to finish seventh overall that set the tone for the team's effort.

Sahil Jadhav also logged in 711 points, taking the next spot on X-count, while Kushal Dalal completed the trio with an overall 18th-place finish as India sealed the third seeding in the team event.

Asian Games medalist Abhishek Verma, however, endured a disappointing outing, finishing 25th with 705 points to miss out on the team

combination.

He will still feature in the individual elimination rounds.

In the women's compound section, former world champion Aditi Swami finished 13th with 700 points -- seven behind USA's Alexis Ruiz, who topped the qualification.

Pragati was the second-best Indian at 19th with 697 points, while multiple World Cup winner Jyothi Surekha Vennam slipped to 21st, as the trio combined to give India the fifth seeding in the women's team event.

Mexico, South Korea and the USA occupied the top three spots.

Deotale and Aditi will pair up in the compound mixed team event.

The duo, who topped their respective Indian charts in qualification, combined for 1411 points to secure the sixth seeding.

The recurve qualifiers will begin on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Kansas City is World Cup central, hosting England, Argentina and the Netherlands along with 6 games

**KANSAS CITY, May 5:** Of all places, the American Midwest — and Kansas City in particular — could be considered the heart of the World Cup scene, and not just because of its geographic location right smack in the middle of the United States.

Six games will be played at Arrowhead Stadium, the home of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, including a match in the round of 32 and a quarterfinal. But there also will be four high-profile clubs based in and around Kansas City: Lionel Messi and Argentina, Harry Kane and England and Virgil van Dijk and the Netherlands in the metropolitan area, with Algeria in nearby Lawrence, home of the University of Kansas.

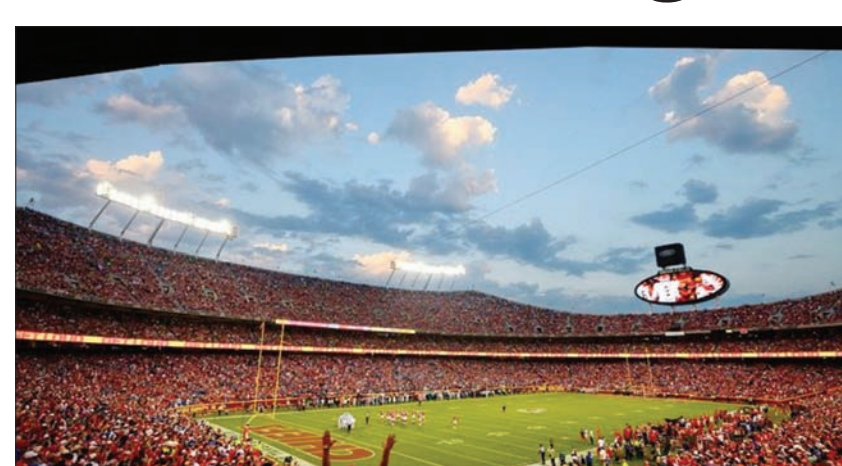
Oh, and remember: There is a Kansas City, Missouri, and a Kansas City, Kansas, which can be confusing to first-time visitors. Most of the World Cup activities will be taking place on the Missouri side of the state line.

Landmarks and places to see There are plenty of cultural attractions in Kansas City, including the National World War I Memorial and Museum, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, the renowned Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the American Jazz Museum and Union Station.

#### Food scene

Kansas City is known for its barbecue, particularly burnt ends, which are the trimmed points of a brisket. The real question isn't what to eat but where, because there are dozens of top BBQ joints. They range from the upscale (Fiorella's Jack Stack) to the famous (Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que) to the award-winning (Q39) to the legendary (Arthur Bryant's) and the beloved dives (B.B.'s Lawnside BBQ). For World Cup fans planning stops here, in Texas and in Georgia, a BBQ tour to compare styles is a must.

#### Fan zones



The free fan festival in Kansas City will be held on the grounds of the World War I memorial. Big screens will show World Cup matches, and live music from the

likes of the Chainsmokers, Flo Rida and The All-American Rejects is on the schedule.

#### Transportation options

Getting around downtown is easy thanks to the Kansas City streetcar. Getting to the games is another issue. Arrowhead Stadium is located about 10 miles east of downtown, and fans typically drive to the stadium. Parking will be severely limited for the World Cup, so more than 200 buses will provide ticketed shuttle services from areas around town.

#### Stadium tips

Arrowhead Stadium has no roof, and summer temperatures can reach triple digits in Kansas City, which is why all the games will be played at night. This is also the heart of tornado alley, so keeping an eye on the weather is important. The stadium itself is one of the iconic facilities in the NFL and known for providing the Chiefs a big homefield advantage. It will be replaced by 2031 with a new, \$3 billion domed stadium that will be built across the state line in Kansas City, Kansas. (AP)

# IPL mania hurls a yorker to cricket fans and Pundits: Is the yorker dead in T20?

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** There was a time when the final overs of a T20 contest carried a familiar script. As panic spread through the batting side and the equation tightened, captains would turn to specialists capable of delivering cricket's ultimate pressure-release valve -- the classical yorker.

But in an IPL era increasingly shaped by 220-plus totals, premeditated ramps, reverse scoops and batters willing to stand virtually anywhere on the crease, the delivery that once inspired dread is facing its sternest test.

The question increasingly being asked in dressing rooms and fan discussions is: Has the league's batting revolution killed the yorker? Has the yorker become a high-risk delivery that hapless bowlers prefer to avoid?

Not really. We can hold off on writing the yorker's epitaph, say the pundits.

The delivery that once defined an era built by Lasith Malinga and perfected by Bumrah still survives. Only now, in a batter-dominated age, it demands even greater courage and precision to remain cricket's ultimate finishing weapon.

"The yorkers remain an important part of the game even though it has become a batter's game," Madan Lal, former India all-rounder,

told PTI. "You have to be very consistent in your line and length for a yorker. You have to hit the lower side of the bat. If it hits slightly higher it is a six. Same with wide yorkers. Your length is key," said Lal, a member of the 1983 World Cup winning squad.

"You have to keep practising for that. Yorkers and slower ones remain part of the game very much," he said.

Other experts echo Lal. The consensus view is that while IPL has not killed the yorker, it has exposed the cricketing nuclear option's vulnerabilities, increased the punishment for imperfection and elevated its execution into one of cricket's rarest acts of skill.

What has changed, experts say, is that T20 cricket has forced the yorker to evolve from a routine death-over option into a specialist skill requiring extraordinary precision.

There was a time when yorkers built reputations and decided championships.

From Lasith Malinga's toe-crushing precision for Mumbai Indians to Dwayne Bravo's slower-yorker variations for Chennai Super Kings and the near-mechanical accuracy of Jasprit Bumrah, the yorker was for years the definitive image of death bowling in the Indian Premier



League. Deep Dasgupta, a former India wicketkeeper-batter and TV analyst, believes the biggest transformation lies in the changing movement patterns of modern batters.

"The classical toe-crushing yorker that Wasim (Akram) and Waqar (Younis) used to bowl back then were on toes that were static targets because batters didn't have big trigger movement or shuffle in ODIs or Tests," he said.

"But nowadays, with changing landscape of T20 cricket, the batter uses the depth of the

crease. There are pronounced triggers. Gone are the days when toes were static. Now suddenly if you practice bowling a traditional yorker and suppose a batter goes deep, it is no longer a yorker but a half-volley.

"If he stands a foot outside the crease, the same delivery could be a full toss. The batters also now move sideways to make room, so toes are also not staying static for you to target and execute a traditional yorker," Dasgupta told PTI.

The shift is reflected in IPL scoring patterns.

Death-over run rates have steadily climbed over the years as batters have transformed finishing into a science, using movement and anticipation to convert even marginal errors into boundaries.

The average death over (17 to 20th over) run rate in the inaugural IPL in 2008 was 9.41 which steadily climbed to 11.5 by 2025. Similarly, the average team score in 2008 was 157 which has shot up to 180 in 2025.

The introduction of the impact player rule in 2023 has also played a big part in the yorker being a less preferred weapon in the slog overs.

The much-debated rule has tilted the game heavily towards batters by allowing a team to

substitute a player at any time of the match. In effect, it strengthens the batting line up.

The yorker's margin of error, always slim, has become microscopic. A delivery that misses by inches can instantly turn from a match-winning weapon into a boundary ball.

That is precisely why franchises have increasingly moved towards hard lengths, slower balls and wide-line variations as their preferred death-over strategies. The wide yorkers have also become an option to prevent the batsmen from improvising.

Dasgupta explained that modern bowlers are no longer simply aiming at the base of the stumps.

A traditional yorker is a delivery that targets the base of the stumps tailing in middle-leg. "But the flip-side is if you err during death (overs) and the leg-side is vacant, you will be punished. Hence wide yorker is a delivery where you play with the line and even if you miss the length, there are times when you can still stay away from batter's hitting arc because of the wide lines that you use," he said.

Former India opener and noted coach W V Raman said the tactical shift stems from the unforgiving nature of the classical yorker. (PTI)

## Man City's last-gasp draw at Everton hands Premier League momentum to Arsenal



**LIVERPOOL, May 5:** Jérémie Doku scored a last-gasp equalizer for Manchester City to snatch a 3-3 draw at Everton and throw the Premier League title momentum back to leader Arsenal.

The draw ended a run of three consecutive wins for City and left it five points behind the London club.

City has a game in hand but the loss at Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium meant the title was now Arsenal's to lose. The Gunners have three games to play.

"It's painful now," Doku said. "There's a lot of games to go, everything can happen. We lost two points today but we will keep on fighting."

"We know that one point can still be important in the end."

City has four games left and knew it needed a win to keep the pressure on Mikel Arteta's side.

But although it dominated possession in the first half it struggled to create real chances and it wasn't until the 42nd minute that Doku found space in a crowded penalty box to curl in a peach of a strike and break the deadlock.

Everton, though, came out a different side in the second half and struck three times in 13 minutes.

City defender Marc Guéhi's short back pass was intercepted by substitute Thierno Barry, who slipped it past an incredulous Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Five minutes later, the City defense was all at sea again as Jake O'Brien rose at the near post to glance home a corner from James Garner.

Barry made it 3-1 in the 81st when a shot deflected into his path, giving him the simplest of finishes.

But just as City fans were beginning to stream out of the stadium, many returned when Erling Haaland turned forward and clipped his 25th goal of the season over Jordan Pickford.

City threw everything forward and in the seventh minute of stoppage time Doku curled in a sub-

lime strike with almost the last kick of the match.

It was a killer blow to Everton, which is still hopeful of securing a European place. A win would have lifted it within two points of seventh but instead it was 10th, tied on points with Fulham and Chelsea.

"We let ourselves down, we defended the second goal so poorly and that was the main reason (for the draw)," Everton coach David Moyes said.

"But at halftime we'd have taken this result because we were hugely outplayed in the first half. Getting a point against Manchester City's not a bad result but when you're 3-1 up, you're thinking you're in with a great chance of winning."

**Forest beats Chelsea**

Earlier, Chelsea slumped to a sixth straight Premier League defeat and saw its Champions League qualification hopes virtually disappear after losing to Nottingham Forest 3-1.

Taiwo Awoniyi scored two either side of earning a penalty converted by fellow striker Igor Jesus, inspiring a heavily rotated Forest to the brink of safety. Forest was six points above the relegation zone with three rounds left.

Joao Pedro's overhead kick in second-half stoppage time ended Chelsea's scoreless run in the league stretching back almost two months but proved to be only a consolation.

On a humiliating day for the London club and interim coach Calum McFarlane, Cole Palmer had a penalty saved in a 14-minute period of first-half stoppage time -- required after 18-year-old Chelsea winger Jesse Derry, making his first Premier League start, needed lengthy treatment following a clash of heads with Forest's Zach Abbott at a corner.

Both had to leave the field, Derry on a stretcher as Stamford Bridge fell quiet and his teammates looked concerned. (AP)

## Batting woes haunt Punjab Kings ahead of SRH challenge

**HYDERABAD, May 5:** Punjab Kings batters will be under pressure to halt a worrying slide when they face a confident Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday.

Punjab, which had emerged as the team to beat with six wins on the trot, stumbled in the last two matches and both the defeats exposed frailties they would be keen to address swiftly.

Despite leading the standings with 13 points from nine games, the margin for error has narrowed considerably, with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Rajasthan Royals and Gujarat Titans all within touching distance, just a point behind.

Punjab's recent dip can largely be attributed to a loss of rhythm. Their explosive performances with the bat had covered up for an inconsistent bowling unit much of the season, but the cracks have now begun to show.

The top order, which set the tempo in the early phase, has faltered.

The aggressive approach by the young trio of Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh and Cooper Connolly has veered into recklessness, resulting in early set-backs and leaving the middle order with repair work.

That middle order, in turn, has struggled to stitch together meaningful partnerships, often relying on individual brilliance rather than collective rebuilding, leading



to sub-par totals and faltering chases.

The bowling unit, Punjab's weak link throughout the season, has offered little respite.

Even in victories, the bowlers have allowed opposition batters to score freely in phases, and their lack of discipline at crucial junctures has made closing out innings a persistent problem.

With the tournament entering a tighter phase, Punjab will require sharper execution and clearer plans, particularly against a formidable SRH batting line-up in the batting-friendly conditions at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

Third-placed Sunrisers, meanwhile, will be eager to bounce back from a seven-wicket defeat

to Kolkata Knight Riders that snapped their five-match winning streak. The loss also cost the Pat Cummins-led side a chance to move to the top of the table.

Their batting, barring contributions from Travis Head and Ishan Kishan, failed to fire in that game.

Head has roared back to form with successive fifties in recent outings. Abhishek Sharma has been among the runs too while Heinrich Klaasen has been a picture of consistency through the season.

With the ball, Hyderabad remain a well-rounded unit. The return of captain Cummins has added bite to their attack. The pace group has shown commendable control, particularly in the

## MI would have won a game: Harbhajan Singh

**MUMBAI, May 5:** Mumbai Indians might not have been in such a precarious position as far as IPL playoffs qualification is concerned had former skipper Rohit Sharma recovered earlier from his hamstring injury, rued Harbhajan Singh. Rohit returned to action following an injury-enforced layoff with a strokeful 84 in MI's highest-ever successful run-chase in the IPL in pursuit of 229 when they beat Lucknow Super Giants by six wickets here on Monday. The former Mumbai Indians' skipper had missed in all five matches since leaving the field after suffering a hamstring injury while batting against Royal Challengers Bengaluru here on April 12.

"It's important to be in the middle. You can do only so much sitting in the dugout. But you can make a difference by being in the middle, and Rohit Sharma did exactly that," Harbhajan told JioHotstar.

"You needed that foundation to chase down that many runs and he didn't just lay the foundation, but built a couple of floors on it as well, leaving very little for the rest to do. It would have been even better if he had got his hundred, but for the time he was there, he played exceptionally well." (PTI)

## India retain No 1 position in ICC T20I rankings

**DUBAI, May 5:** Three-time World Cup winners India on Tuesday retained the top spot in the ICC T20I rankings followed by England and Australia at second and third respectively.

India had created history by becoming the first team to successfully defend their T20 World Cup title and also win it for a record-extending third time in March, when they co-hosted the tournament with Sri Lanka.

"The latest rankings rate all matches played since May 2025 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent," the ICC said on its website. "Sitting at 275 points, India see their lead over England (262 points) trimmed by merely one point, while Australia are placed closer to England at the third place with 258 points," it added.

While two-time winners England have 262 rating points, one-time champions Australia have 258 points.

In all, there is no change in ranking for the top seven teams in the ICC T20I rankings with New Zealand (247), South Africa (244), Pakistan (240) and the West Indies (233) remaining at the following spots.

However, Sri Lanka (221) have lost six rating points and subsequently slipped to the ninth position while Bangladesh (225) have moved up one place to be at eighth. Afghanistan (220) are at 10th with a close margin of gap with Sri Lanka.

Zimbabwe and Ireland are ranked 11th and 12th respectively.



"Cricket's rising force in North America, the USA have leapfrogged two spots after gaining six points, and see themselves rise to the 13th place, overtaking Netherlands and Scotland who are at 14th and 15th ranks respectively," the ICC said.

"Namibia was unchanged at 16th place while Nepal (17th) and Oman (19th) jumped a spot each, overtaking UAE (18th) and Canada (20th) respectively."

The ICC informed that the number of teams being ranked are down from 102 to 98.

"The number of teams in the rankings is down from 102 to 98 as Fiji, Gambia, Greece and Israel didn't make the cut as they did not play the requisite eight T20Is in the past three years," the ICC said. (PTI)

## Skeet shooters miss out on final spots in ISSF World Cup Shotgun



**ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN), May 5:** Indian skeet shooters disappointed as they failed to reach the finals in both the men's and women's events in the ISSF World Cup Shotgun here on Tuesday. Olympians Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Raiza Dhillon finished highest among the Indian shooters.

Mairaj, who started day two at 26th place after shooting 71 out of 75 on Monday, shot 23 and 25 in the final two series to end the qualification stage at 18th place with a total of 119. Bhavtegh Singh Gill, who was competing for ranking points, was the next best Indian performer, also with a final score of 119 (24, 24, 23, 24, 24) to finish one place below Mairaj at 19th.

Olympian Anantjeet Singh Naruka started the fourth series with a perfect 25 and followed it up with a series of 23 to finish his first World Cup of the season at 38th place with a final score of 117.

The third Indian in the fray, national champion Gurjoat Singh Khangura finished at 54th place with a score of 115 after shooting 22 and 23 in his final two series.

Abhay Singh Sekhon, who was also competing for ranking points, shot 23 and 20 in the fourth and fifth series for a total of 113 and finished at 71st place.

In the women's event, Ganemat Sekhon, who ended day one just one place below the top eight places, could only manage 22 and 20 in her final two series to drop down to 33rd place with a total score of 112.

Raiza Dhillon finished at the best place among the Indian shooters with a score of 115 (22, 23, 24, 23, 23) at 17th place.

Parinaav Dhalwal finished one place above Ganemat at 32nd place with a score of 112 after shooting 24 and 22 in the final two series. Vanshika Tiwari and Rashmi Rathore, competing for ranking points, finished at 29th and 47th places with a score of 112 and 102 respectively. (PTI)

## Leadership is tough position and Pant is carrying lot of pressure: Langer

**MUMBAI, May 5:** The 27 crore price tag doesn't always guarantee performance but Rishabh Pant is facing the pressure that comes with leading an IPL team, Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer said after his outfit was all but knocked out of play-off race.

LSG lost to Mumbai Indians by five wickets despite scoring a healthy 228 for 5 and Langer did come in defence of an out of form Pant, who has also looked out of sync as a leader.

"I don't think the money has anything to do with it," Langer told reporters here after LSG's defeat.

"What I do think is that leadership is a tough position and he is carrying a lot of pressure for the team. But he is chipping away, he is working hard, and he has had a match-winning game earlier in the season," Langer tried to defend the under-fire skipper but didn't sound convincing.



"We love it when we see him smiling and playing that swashbuckling style of play and he is not far off," Langer added.

Langer said Pant will keep fronting up to the challenges.

"We played a practice game here two days ago and Rishi got, maybe 95 off 40 balls or 30 balls or something, and looking at (it) you go 'that's Rishabh Pant at his very best'," he said.

"We've seen him in Test cricket destroy teams at No. 5, and we felt with the way he

played just two days ago after we've had a seven day break, that might be a good option for the team."

"Rishi is not far off as a captain in the IPL. As a coach, you got to keep fronting up, that's all you can do, and he'll keep fronting up and hopefully he'll help us get some wins over the next few games."

The former Australian opener expressed his pleasure at LSG getting their batting line-up right with Pooran also coming back to form after a lean patch.

"The whole restructure of our batting order was a positive. Last season (with) all our metrics we were on top of everything with our batting, this year we are right down the bottom so we had to do something right, we restructured it," Langer said.

"You try and work out the the jigsaw puzzle, which (way) works best for the team. We've chopped and changed the

opening positions a few times. (Josh) Inglis brought really good spark, (Mitchell) Marsh as well. If you're winning, everyone says the jigsaw puzzle is right. But one part of the jigsaw puzzle today which was a positive was Nicky Pooran," he added.

Langer admitted losing matches does batter a player and a coach's reputation but he does not lose sleep over it.

"Your reputation can often get a bit bruised and scarred by performance, but your character... I wake up every single day I know that I know my character so I never lose a minute's sleep over what I'm or what all the coaches are putting in the job," he said.

"The work ethic the honesty the integrity of it, caring for our people but yeah your reputation gets battered like a player if you're not performing and the reality is that is a part of the job and it's a tough business." (PTI)

## Things don't always go your way but given my best every time: K L Rahul

**NEW DELHI, May 5:** K L Rahul has accepted that things won't always go his way, especially when it comes to his T20 International career, but the India and Delhi Capitals batter is glad that he has managed to "break" the perception of him being a Test specialist.

Last month, the 34-year-old smacked a 64-ball 152 not out in the on-going IPL, albeit in a losing cause against Punjab Kings, but the record-breaking knock showed his growth in the shortest format. The Karnataka player has not turned up in a T20 for India since 2022, but remains a Test and ODI regular. Speaking on JioStar show "Superstars", Rahul said he is proud of the progress he has made in the last decade.

"Ten years ago, I would have given anything to be part of a T20 team. I was never rated as a T20 player or even considered a good white-ball player; I was branded a Test player," he said.

"So, to break out of that mould, develop my white-ball game and come this far is something I'm really proud of. Along the way, I've made mistakes and there are things I could have done better," he added.

"But, what I'm proud of is that I've given my absolute best every time I've played and prepared as well as I could to give myself the best chance to succeed. That's sport; things won't always go your way." (PTI)