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# NDA retains power with two-thirds majority

Assam polls: Himanta, Ajanta, Atul, Keshav, Pradyut, Akhil among winners • Gaurav, Debabrata, Lurinjyoti, Ripun bite the dust



**GUWAHATI, May 4:** The ruling NDA is set to form the government in Assam for the third time in a row after securing a two-thirds majority, with the alliance winning 101 seats in the 126-member assembly

on Monday. While the BJP won 81 seats till 8.30 pm, its allies -- the Bodo Peoples' Front (BPF) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) -- bagged 10 constituencies each. The BJP was

leading in one seat. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma won the Jalukbari constituency for the sixth consecutive term, defeating Congress candidate Bidisha Neog by 89,434 votes.

In the opposition camp, the Congress won 15 seats and was leading in four, while the Badruddin Ajmal-led AIUDF and Akhil Gogoi-led Rajior Dal secured two seats each, and the Trinamool Con-



## BJP sweeps all five seats in Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, May 4:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) registered a clean sweep across Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, winning all five Assembly constituencies in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

Counting began at 8 AM, with votes for Bokajan, Howraghat and Diphu counted at Diphu Government College, while Rongkhang and Anri were counted at the Dis-



trict Commissioner's office. In Diphu, BJP candidate Luring Teron secured the largest

margin in the region, polling 1,06,229 votes and defeating Congress candidate Sanjiv Teron by 78,106 votes.

In Rongkhang, BJP candidate and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member Tuliram Rongkhang made a winning debut in state politics, securing 83,258 votes and defeating Congress candidate Augustin Engshi by 60,243 votes. In

Barthakur Goswami by 49,667 votes. Bordoloi polled 1,03,337 votes. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Welfare measures of govt paid off'

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** As the BJP-led NDA moved towards forming the government in Assam for a third successive term, leaders of the saffron party said welfare measures covering all sections of society helped them retain public support.

They also claimed that the opposition failed to effectively reach out to voters due to a lack of a proper (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Reflection of good governance

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday thanked the people for the NDA's stupendous performance in the assembly polls, and said it was a reflection of the "good work of the government" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thrust on development of the northeastern state.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Historic hat-trick': Shah

**NEW DELHI, May 4:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday congratulated people of Assam for "historic hat-trick mandate", terming it a strong endorsement of the tireless efforts over the past 10 years by the NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to build a secure, peaceful, and progressive state.

"This boundless affection and cooperation are strengthening our resolve to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## NDA's landslide win reinforces 'Himanta model'

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** The BJP-led NDA's return to power in Assam for a third consecutive term with a massive mandate has reinforced the state as the party's strongest base in the Northeast and validated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's governance model.

The NDA has won or is leading in 102 of the 126 Assembly seats, comfortably crossing the majority mark of 64. The BJP alone won 81 seats and was leading in one more constituency.

BJP's allies, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) have 10 seats each, according to Election Commission data.

This is for the first time since Independence that an alliance bagged more than 100 seats, or a single party other than the Congress secured an absolute majority on its own.

All other earlier non-Congress governments, including the two BJP regimes of 2016 and 2021, did not have any party getting the majority mark single-handedly.

## Hitendra Nath Goswami retains Jorhat seat

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, May 4:** Hitendra Nath Goswami retained the Jorhat Assembly constituency for a third consecutive term on a BJP ticket

and sixth overall, defeating Congress candidate Gaurav Gogoi by a margin of 23,182 votes.

Goswami attributed his victory to development initiatives undertaken by the government led by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

He said he would continue to focus on development, including expanding the supply of arsenic-free water from the Brahmaputra to households across the constituency.

He also said work was under-

way on a project to create a memorial for singer Zubeen Garg, which would include a study centre dedicated to research on the artiste.

Goswami said he maintained cordial relations with his opponent and emphasised the need to work collectively for the development of the constituency.

With the result, the BJP secured all four Assembly seats in Jorhat district -- Jorhat, Mariani, Titabor and Teok.

In Mariani, BJP candidate Rupjyoti Kurmi defeated Rajior Dal candidate Dr Gyanashree Bora by over 26,000 votes, securing his sixth consecutive win.

In Titabor, BJP candidate Dhiraj Gowala (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The mandate is significant in the national context as the victory strengthened the BJP's narrative of state-level dominance ahead of other 2026 polls and the 2029 Lok Sabha cycle.

The BJP's spectacular show in West Bengal and retention of Assam sent a clear signal of the party tightening its pan-India grip.

With the latest results for the five states that went to the polls, the BJP-led NDA will be governing 21 of 31 states and UTs.

Commenting on the performance, Assam BJP social media in-charge Ranjib Kumar Sarmah told PTI that the assembly results have strengthened Modi's hands. "The Congress and its INDIA bloc are totally demoralised across the country now. We can see that from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The people of the country have rejected the anti-BJP leadership fully," he added.

Speaking about the Assam results, Sarmah said the party successfully maintained (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Bengal verdict a victory for nation's security, not just BJP: Himanta

**Staff Reporter**

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Reacting to the BJP's victory in West Bengal, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday termed the outcome as a "victory for the nation", saying it goes beyond party lines and carries significant implications for national security and regional stability.

He said the defeat of Mamata Banerjee marks a decisive shift in the political landscape of eastern India, particularly in the context of border management and governance.

Sarma noted that concerns related to infiltration, border fencing, and demographic challenges have been longstanding issues in the region.

"This is not merely a BJP's victory, but a victory for India," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Sonowal congratulates Himanta for leading BJP's 'historic mandate'

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on Monday congratulated Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for leading the BJP-led NDA to a "historic mandate" in the state assembly elections.

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

"Assam has spoken! In this historic moment, I extend my heartiest congratulations to Dr Hi-

## Time for change, not revenge: Modi on BJP's win in Bengal

# 'Brahmaputra showered immense blessings upon us'



**NEW DELHI, May 4:** As the BJP swept the assembly elections in West Bengal for the first time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the state has been finally freed from fear and that it is a time for change, not revenge, as he appealed to all parties to shun the culture of political violence and focus on the future of the state.

Addressing the jubilant party workers at the BJP headquarters after the win in assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry, Modi said the Congress, TMC and others have been punished se-

verely for opposing the recent women's reservation bill. He asserted that the Samajwadi Party will also face the wrath of women very soon, in an apparent reference to the 2027 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to Assam, the prime minister said that along with the river Ganga, the Brahmaputra has also showered immense blessings upon the BJP, and the blessings of Maa Kamakhya have been with the party. "The people of Assam have trusted the BJP-NDA for the third consecutive time," he said.

In his nearly 50-minute speech, the prime minister said the elections in West Bengal have been special this year, as earlier they were marred by violence, fear and the death of innocent people.

But this time the news was different as peaceful voting took place in West Bengal and for the first time, no one lost their life during voting, he said.

"As Bengal enters a new phase of change, I also want to make an earnest appeal to every political party in Bengal. Over the past decades in Bengal, countless lives have been ruined due to political violence. I firmly believe that this election culture of Bengal must change from today onwards. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Khera's attempt to malign an Assamese woman hurt people of state: Himanta

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the allegations brought by Congress leader Pawan Khera against his wife before the elections had hurt the sentiments of the people, as it was an attempt to malign an Assamese woman.

He maintained that state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi sharing the dais with Khera while the allegations were being levied could be a reason for the former losing his electoral battle.

Addressing a press conference at the state BJP headquarters here, Sarma said, "I have a commitment

for Khera... You all wait and watch this film".

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

The CM and his wife had rejected the allegations, with Riniki Bhuyan Sharma also filing a police complaint here against Khera.

The Congress leader has taken anticipatory bail from the Supreme Court in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Akhil Gogoi retains Sivasagar seat

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, May 4:** Akhil Gogoi retained the 96 No. Sivasagar Assembly constituency, securing a second consecutive term in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

The Rajior Dal leader defeated BJP candidate Kushal Duwori by a margin of over 17,000 votes.

Gogoi polled 86,521 votes, while Duwori secured 69,249 votes. NDA candidate and AGP leader Pradip Hazarika finished third with 14,757 votes. Among other candidates, Bhabendranath Mohan (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BPF sweeps BTC seats, wins 10 of 15 constituencies

### BJP secures four, Congress one; UPPL fails to open account

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 4:** The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) registered a sweeping victory in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) region, winning 10 of the 15 Assembly constituencies in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

The BJP secured four seats, while the Congress won one. The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) failed to win any seat despite contesting across the region.

The BPF contested 11 constituencies and won 10 of them. Its winning candidates include Sewli Mohilary (Kokrajhar), Rabiram Narzary (Dotma), Sabharam Basumatary (Gossaigaon), Rupam Chandra Roy (Baokhungri), Paniram Brahma (Siddi Chirang), Thaneswar Basumatary (Manas), Maheswar Brahma (Baksa), Moheswar Boro (Bhergaon), Rihon Daimary (Udalguri) and Charan Boro (Mazbat).

In Kokrajhar, Sewli Mohilary defeated UPPL candi-

date Lawrence Islyary, while in Dotma, Rabiram Narzary defeated UPPL candidate Raju Kumar Narzary.

In Siddi Chirang, Paniram Brahma defeated UPPL candidate Ranjit Basumatary.

Among BJP winners, Arup Kumar Dey won from Bijni, Bikan Chandra Deka from Tangla, and Victor Das from Goreswar.

In Udalguri, Assam Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary defeated UPPL president and Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro by a margin of 27,378 votes.

Daimary secured 89,398 votes, while Boro polled 61,995 votes.

In Parbatjhora, Congress candidate Ashrafal Islam Sheikh won the seat, defeating Dr. Rejaul Karim.

BPF president and BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary thanked voters for the mandate, describing the result as a reflection of public support for the party.

# Himanta Biswa Sarma: A controversial crusader of BJP's agenda in Assam

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma retained the Jalukbari seat with a margin of 89,434 votes, underlining his continued political dominance in the state even as the BJP leader's tenure remains marked by both strong support and sharp criticism.

Widely credited with expanding the BJP's footprint in Assam and across the Northeast after switching sides from the Congress in 2015, Sarma's rise to the top post in 2021 followed years of calculated political groundwork.

Since taking charge, the 57-year-old leader has pushed development initiatives, rolled out welfare schemes and focused on safeguarding the land rights of indigenous communities.

His tenure, however, has also been marked by controversial



measures and rhetoric, particularly targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims of Bangladeshi descent, who are called 'Miyas' in the state.

Actions like eviction drives on alleged encroached land, a crack-

down on child marriage, moves against polygamy, enforcement of the Cattle Protection Act, closure and conversion of government-run madrasas, and demolition of certain religious institutions have

drawn criticism from opposition parties, which accuse him of deepening social polarisation.

Sarma's campaign remarks, including statements perceived as targeting minorities, triggered nationwide criticism.

His comment -- "will break the backbone of the Miyas' during the next five years" -- and urging people to pay less to them than they deserve for the services they rendered led to criticism not only within the state but across the country.

He remained defiant through controversies, though a row involving allegations by Congress leader Pawan Khera against his wife led to a sharp exchange that even drew mention in a Supreme Court order granting relief to Khera.

Opposition parties, especially the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP victory in Assam 'historic', testimony to fulfilment of 2021 manifesto: State BJP chief

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia on Monday termed the party's absolute majority on its own in the Assembly polls as "historic", describing its third successive victory as a "testimony to the fulfilment" of its 2021 election manifesto.

In an interview with PTI, he said the people had given a "mature mandate" after comparing 55 years of "Congress misrule" with the BJP-led NDA government's 10 years of governance.

Saikia said the party received overwhelming support from all sections of society.

"Post Independence, this is the first time that an alliance is getting more than 100 seats. The BJP is the only party other than the Congress which got an absolute majority in Assam. This is a historic mandate," Saikia said.

The ruling BJP won 67 seats and was ahead in 15 other constituen-

cies. To form a government, a party or alliance requires 64 seats in the 126-member Assembly.

BJP's ally the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) bagged seven seats and was leading in another three. Another member of the NDA alliance, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) won five seats and was leading in five, according to the Election Commission data.

"BJP's massive victory in Assam is a testimony to the fulfilment of the 2021 election manifesto. People saw that we tried to fulfil every promise with near perfection," Saikia said.

"The people understood and realised that what the BJP says, it does that in letter and spirit," he added.

"All Sanatani and indigenous people accepted us wholeheartedly. People came out in large numbers and voted to secure the future of indigenous people,"

Saikia said.

This verdict is a "validation of the BJP's agenda" of making Assam developed, peaceful and secured, he said.

"People of Assam have given a mature mandate after they compared the 55 years of the Congress misrule with the BJP's 10-year good governance. The people analysed the atmosphere and voted unitedly in favour of us," he added. Saikia, a Lok Sabha MP, asserted that the Congress and the opposition alliance tried to mislead people with "fake narratives", while their "anti-Assam and pro-Bangladeshi" nature was fully rejected by voters.

"The opposition's campaign of anti-incumbency and other sentiments was rejected by the people," he added.

He claimed that all sections of society, including women, youth and SC/ST (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Bengal industry bodies hail BJP win, seek push for investments and industrial revival

**KOLKATA, May 4:** Industry bodies and trade associations on Monday congratulated the BJP on its stupendous performance in the West Bengal Assembly polls, and expressed hope that the new government would focus on industrialisation, infrastructure creation, investor-friendly policies and stronger Centre-State coordination to revive the state's economic growth.

In the elections to the 294-member West Bengal Assembly, the BJP won 35 seats and is leading in 170 others till 6.15 pm, according to the EC website. The TMC, which has been ruling the state since 2011, was declared the winner in 15 seats and is ahead in 67 others.

Bharat Chamber of Commerce president Naresh Pachisia said, "A new dawn is on the horizon, with Bengal pinning all its hopes on big-ticket investments and accelerated business development and industrialisation, with a new thrust on Centre-State relations."

He stressed the need for robust and transparent governance, progressive business-friendly policies, stable labour relations and immediate measures to improve



Bengal's image among investors.

"Restoring investor confidence within a short timeframe will be crucial in reviving West Bengal's legacy as a leading industrial hub," he said, adding that the state could once again emerge as a dynamic "entrepreneurial super-highway".

Pachisia also called for diversified resource mobilisation, including leveraging central schemes and assistance from national and international agencies, while strengthening governance mechanisms to plug revenue leak-

ages.

The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) also congratulated the BJP for securing an "overwhelming mandate" to form the government in the state.

"BCC&I looks forward to an environment that further strengthens investor confidence, ease of doing business, industrial development, employment generation, and policy stability in the state," the chamber said in a statement.

It said constructive governance and collaborative development would be critical to unlocking

Bengal's economic potential and outlined priorities including world-class infrastructure, plug-and-play ecosystems for global capability centres, future-ready skilling initiatives and a robust industrial and IT policy framework.

The chamber also stressed the need for institutional cooperation between government and industry, alongside fiscal flexibility and performance-linked incentives to catalyse investments.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Hosiery Association president Sudesh Agarwal expressed hope that the new dispensation would extend special support to the textile sector in alignment with central government schemes.

He said the industry expected stronger Centre-State coordination for effective implementation of schemes, development of modern textile parks, efficient logistics and integrated value chains.

"In an evolving geopolitical environment marked by shifting supply chains, the state holds significant potential to emerge as a competitive and reliable textile hub, provided policy intent is matched by timely execution," Agarwal said.

(PTI)

## Stock markets rebound, Sensex rallies 356 pts on buying in bluechips, political cues

**MUMBAI, May 4:** Benchmark Sensex rebounded by 356 points, while the Nifty settled above 24,100 on Monday, as buying in blue-chip stocks and state poll results trending in line with market expectations lifted investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 355.90 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 77,269.40. During the day, it jumped 997.25 points or 1.29 per cent to 77,910.75.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 121.75 points or 0.51 per cent to end at 24,119.30. From the 30-Sensex firms, Adani Ports, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, Eternal and Maruti were among the biggest gainers. Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and ITC were among the laggards from the pack. "Investor sentiment remained supported by a favourable election outcome in West Bengal and a better-than-expected Q4 earnings, helping markets look past Middle East-related concerns. "However, intermittent profit booking persisted amid uncertainty surrounding the US 'Project Freedom' initiative to reopen the Strait of Hormuz," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

While the resolution path may take time, optimism around gradual

progress continues, he said, adding that crude prices holding below USD 110 are providing near-term comfort. Broader markets also advanced with the BSE SmallCap Select index jumping 0.79 per cent and MidCap Select index by 0.75 per cent. Among major sectoral gainers, BSE Realty, Services, Capital Goods, Industrials, Healthcare and Utilities gained more than 1 per cent. BSE IT and PSU Bank were major losers. A total of 2,607 stocks advanced, while 1,735 declined and 216 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Markets are expected to sustain their gradual upmove, with near-term direction anchored around three key drivers — softer crude oil prices, strong domestic data (record GST collection & healthy April auto sales growth), and political clarity post state election outcomes.

"A BJP win in three out of five assembly elections is likely to reinforce political stability and provide a sentiment boost, while record GST collection and better-than-expected auto volume growth signals resilient underlying demand," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 1.48 per cent to USD 109.8 per barrel. (PTI)

## RBI cautions against misleading campaigns promising loan waivers

**MUMBAI, May 4:** The Reserve Bank on Monday cautioned the below unauthorised and misleading campaigns promising loan waivers, and asked them to refrain from associating with such individuals or entities. "RBI has observed, with serious concern, the continued occurrence of such campaigns, through various media channels and direct outreach, by certain individuals and entities," the central bank said, reiterating a similar caution it had issued in December 2023.

Such campaigns not only misled the general public but also interfere with the orderly functioning of the credit system of the country, it said.

These campaigns, among others, involve false promises of waiver of outstanding dues to banks/non-banking financial companies (NBFCs); issuance of 'debt waiver certificates' or similar documents; and collection of fees under various pretexts, including service or legal charges, from the un-informed public. "It is reiterated that any claims by individuals/entities offering such services are false, misleading, and liable to attract appropriate legal action under applicable statutes," RBI said. The Reserve Bank also emphasised that such activities undermine the stability of financial institutions, affect the interest of depositors, and engagement with such individuals/entities can result in direct financial loss. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## NDA retains power

while Goswami of the Congress secured 53,670 votes.

A three-time minister in the Tarun Gogoi government, Bordoloi was elected to the assembly from Margherita in a bypoll in 1998 and was re-elected thrice since 2001.

He stepped down as a minister in the 2015 cabinet reshuffle, and was subsequently appointed senior government spokesperson and advisor to the chief minister.

In a major blow to the Congress, its state president Gaurav Gogoi lost in Jorhat to veteran politician and sitting BJP MLA Hitendranath Goswami by 23,181 votes.

Among the prominent BJP winners are ministers Ajanta Neog (Golaghat), Ranaj Pegu (Dhemaji), Pijush Hazarika (Jagiroad), Kaushik Rai (Lakhipur), Prashanta Phukan (Dibrugarh), Krishnendu Paul (Patharkandi) and Bimal Borah (Tingkhong).

Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary won from Tamulpur constituency by defeating former BTC chief Pramod Boro of the UPPL.

Sitting MLAs Mrinal Saikia (Khumtai), Bhuban Pegu (Jonai), Rama Kanta Dewri (Morigaon), Rupak Sarmah (Nagaon-Batadraba), Paramanda Rajbongshi (Sipajhar), Utpal Borah (Golpur), Biswajit Phukan (Sarupathar), Binod Hazarika (Chabua-Lahowal), Taranga Gogoi (Naharkatia), Bhaskar Sharma (Margherita), Rupjyoti Kurmi (Mariani) and Bhuvan Gam (Majuli) also emerged victorious.

AGP ministers Atul Bora and Keshav Mahanta retained their Bokakhat and Kaliabor constituencies, respectively, while first-timer Tapan Das won the Dimoria seat. Among the BPF candidates, cabinet minister Charan Boro retained his Mazbat constituency while the others who won are Maneswar Brahma (Baksa), Paniram Brahma (Sidli-Chirang), Thanesar Basumatary (Manas), Rihon Daimary (Udalguri) and BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary's wife Sewli Mohilary from Kokrajhar.

Congress candidates Asif Mohammad Nazar and Aftabuddin Mollah won from Laharighat and Jaleswar constituencies, respectively. AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal won from Binnakandi and Mazibur Rahman from Dalgao.

Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi retained the Sibsagar seat, while another party member Mehboob Muktar won the Dhing seat and Trinamool Congress' Sherman Ali Ahmed won from Mandia.

Among the prominent candidates who lost the polls are Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing assembly, Debabrata Saikia, Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjyoti Saikia, and former Rajya Sabha MP and senior Congress leader Ripun Bora.

Polling in all 126 assembly constituencies in the state was held in a single phase on April 9. (PTI)

## BJP sweeps all

Howrahhat, BJP candidate Niso Terangpi won with 90,866 votes, defeating APHLC candidate JI Kathar by a margin of 49,740 votes.

In Amri, BJP candidate Habbey Teron secured 50,273 votes, defeating APHLC-backed Independent candidate Bikram Hanse by 23,910 votes.

In Bokajan, BJP candidate Surjyo Rongphar won with 69,851 votes, defeating Congress candidate Raton Engti by 17,466 votes.

The results mark a consolidation of BJP's position in the hill districts, extending its dominance from the autonomous council to the state Assembly.

## NDA's landslide win

very good coordination between the organisation, leadership and the government.

"It was ensured that only genuine people get the benefits of welfare schemes, which played an important role in securing this verdict. People also realised that the BJP is going to maintain the social fabric without taking any vindictive position against any community," he added.

The saffron party's campaign centred on curbing illegal immigration, eviction drives, and "identity, land and security" issues, claiming it freed 1.5 lakh bighas of land from "Bangladeshi encroachers".

Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised to deport "every infiltrator" within five years if the BJP remains in power. This victory signals voter approval of that narrative.

Also, the win of this magnitude will surely give Sarma political capital to continue his "push-back" operations and evictions, which BJP leaders say will continue more aggressively in the next five years.

"Our eviction drives will continue to clear encroachments. Our government will not accept any interference with our cultural heritage and identity," Sarmah said.

The alliance model also got vindicated as strategic pacts with AGP and BPF, plus delimitation that reduced Muslim-majority seats, delivered electoral advantage. It reinforced the BJP's playbook of regional tie-ups along with social engineering.

If the BJP central leadership retains Sarma as the chief minister for the second term, it will establish him as the party's key northeastern face.

Although Sarma was very active in regional politics as the convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), the regional arm of the NDA, the platform became defunct in the last few years. (PTI)

## 'Brahmaputra showered

"Aaj jab BJP jeeti hai, toh badla nahi, badlav ki baat honi chahiye; bhay nahi, 'bhavishya' ki baat honi chahiye (Today, when the BJP has won, the talk should not be of revenge, but of change; not of fear, but of the future)," he said and urged the parties to end the vicious circle of violence.

Modi said it was a special day in many ways as it heralds a bright future for the country.

"It is a day of trust in the great democracy of India, trust in the politics of performance, trust in the resolve of stability, trust in the spirit of Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat.

"I bow before the people of West Bengal, Assam, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and Kerala," he said at the victory celebration event where BJP President Nitin Nabin, Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, among others, were present.

Modi said on November 14 last year, when the Bihar election results came in, he told the BJP workers from this very spot that the Ganga flows onward from Bihar all the way to Ganga Sagar (in West Bengal).

"And today, with victory in West Bengal, from Gangotri (Uttarakhand) to Ganga Sagar (West Bengal), it is nothing but the lotus in full bloom.

Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal today, in these states surrounding Mother Ganga, there are BJP-NDA governments," he said.

The prime minister said winning and losing are a natural part of democracy and politics, but the people of the five states have shown the world why the country is the mother of democracy.

He said women's participation in this election has been exceptionally high and this is emerging as the brightest picture of Indian democracy.

"Women power is now rapidly progressing towards building a developed India. However, a few days ago, the Congress and its allies blocked this momentum of women's power.

"These anti-women parties prevented the amendment to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam from being passed in Parliament. That is why I said a few days ago that parties opposing the women's reservation bill will have to face the wrath of women. Today, sisters and daughters have punished the Congress, TMC, and DMK," he said.

Modi said the Congress has certainly benefited from the 10 years of misrule by the Left in Kerala, but expressed confidence that the "mothers and sisters of Kerala will also definitely teach the Congress a lesson in the next elections".

"The Samajwadi Party, which has blocked women's reservation in Parliament, will also have to face the opposition of the women of Uttar Pradesh. No matter what the anti-women Samajwadi Party does, it will never be able to wash away its sins," he said. (PTI)

## 'Welfare measures of

strategy. According to Election Commission data, the BJP was leading in 79 seats in the 126-member Assembly.

Its allies, the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bodoland People's Front, were ahead in eight and 10 seats, respectively.

Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, who is seeking re-election from Golaghat, said, "Our figures are exceeding even exit poll predictions. We are grateful to the people of the state for this tremendous support."

Echoing Neog, her Cabinet colleague Bimal Borah said, "There was no practical politics by the opposition. They merely tried to distract the people with minor issues."

Borah claimed that the government had reached out to all sections through its various schemes, from ensuring free education to women empowerment, and these have paid off.

"The government has taken care of all sections of people. And this has led to this overwhelming support for the BJP and our allies," the cultural affairs minister in the outgoing government added. (PTI)

## 'Reflection of good

state headquarters here, Sarma said, "It is an unprecedented victory for a ruling alliance. It is for the first time that the BJP has secured a majority in the state."

The BJP won 62 seats and was ahead in 20 constituencies, while its ally Bodoland People's Front (BPF) bagged seven seats and was leading in three, and the other alliance partner Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) secured four constituencies and was leading in six, according to the Election Commission.

On the Congress' performance, which is not likely to cross the 20-seat tally, Sarma said, "People have punished them for politicising singer Zubeen Garg's death."

He claimed that barring one or two, there will be no Hindu MLAs in the Opposition, and urged "good" Hindu Congress leaders to join the BJP to secure the state's future and fight the "aggression" of "Bangladeshi Miyas".

Sarma also asserted that India will remain a Hindu nation till the Sun and the Moon exists.

"Hat-trick with a century!" the CM said in a post on X, as the ruling alliance headed for a three-digit figure. (PTI)

## 'Historic hat-trick

deliver even better services to you and fulfil your hopes and aspirations," he took to 'X'.

This consistent third major victory for the NDA in Assam is a testament to the unwavering trust in the BJP's "double engine" government under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, which has transformed Assam from a land of unrest to a land of hope and development, Shah said.

He also expressed gratitude to the people of Kerala for giving the NDA an increased vote share.

"The Modi government remains committed to the vision of 'Vikasita Kerala' and will continue to work towards it," he said. (PTI)

## Gaurav Gogoi bites

defeated Congress candidate Pran Kurmi by over 23,000 votes, wresting the seat from the Congress, which had held it since 2001.

In Teok, AGP candidate Bikash Saikia retained the seat for a third consecutive term, defeating Congress candidate Pallabi Saikia Gogoi by over 23,000 votes.

Celebrations were held across the district as BJP workers and supporters marked the party's clean sweep.

## Bengal verdict a

adding that the mandate reflects the people's aspiration for stronger governance, transparency, and accountability in the state.

Sarma credited the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, stating that their extensive outreach and strategic vision played a crucial role in shaping the electoral outcome.

He said both leaders worked with a national perspective, focusing on long-term development and security.

He further expressed hope that with a BJP government in West Bengal, coordinated efforts among eastern and northeastern states would gain momentum.

According to him, better cooperation between states will strengthen border security, curb illegal movement, and ensure greater stability across the region.

Sarma said the development push in West Bengal will also complement progress in neighbouring states, creating a more integrated economic and administrative framework in eastern India.

He emphasised that improved infrastructure and governance will benefit not just Bengal but the entire region.

Highlighting the broader significance of the result, he said the verdict reflects a collective desire for change and a move towards policies that prioritise national interest.

He added that the new political alignment will help address long-pending challenges while ensuring sustained growth and security.

Reiterating his stance, Sarma said the mandate in West Bengal should be seen as a step towards a stronger and more secure India, driven by coordinated governance and a shared vision for development.

## Khera's attempt to

the matter. Asked if he will act against Khera now as he had said previously, the

CM said, "When Himanta Biswa Sarma says something, I seldom go back on it," indicating that action will be pursued against the Congress leader.

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

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

"Khera wanted to malign an Assamese woman, and so, people of Assam have made him into a 'peda' (a type of flat, small-sized sweet)", the CM said, as he celebrated the BJP-led NDA stupendous performance in the state elections by exchanging 'peda' with the state BJP president Dilip Saikia. (PTI)

## Akhil Gogoi retains

received 804 votes, Tapan Gogoi 702 votes, Rajkumar Dwورا 501 votes, Rupok Bhunya 529 votes, Hemanta Barua 403 votes, while NOTA accounted for 1,719 votes. The total number of votes polled stood at 1,72,295.

After the results, Akhil Gogoi thanked the voters of Sivasagar for his victory.

He also expressed concern over the defeats of Gaurav Gogoi in Jorhat, Debarata Saikia in Nazira, and Lurinjyoti Gogoi in Khowang.

He said the opposition's effort to form a united government had not succeeded and added that he would continue to raise issues related to freedom of speech and constitutional values in the Assembly.

## Sonowal congratulates

an opportunity to further accelerate this double-engine momentum, Sonowal added. "The people of Assam have once again chosen stability, progress and decisive governance. This mandate is not just a victory — it is a responsibility to serve with greater commitment and dedication," Sonowal said.

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

Sonowal also acknowledged the contribution of party workers and supporters across Assam, whose grassroots engagement helped translate governance outcomes into a strong electoral mandate.

The Chief Minister thanked Sonowal for his best wishes in a post on X, saying, "Under the leadership of Adamiya @narendramodi ji, Team @BJP4Assam has marched together to serve the people of Assam since the last 10 years, which has resulted in this thumping and historic victory for NDA!" (PTI)

## BJP victory in

communities, supported the BJP. "All segments of society voted for the BJP. Women supported us wholeheartedly. The youth, Gen Z and others voted without any negativity," he said.

The people of the state recognised the BJP-led government's efforts to "protect" religious, cultural and historic ethos of the state, Saikia said.

The Assam BJP chief said all elected party candidates will be invited to come to the party office on Tuesday for a meeting and celebration of the results.

Asked about electing the chief minister, Saikia said, "The leader of the House will be decided by the central leadership in the coming days."

The ruling BJP's strength in the outgoing Assam Assembly is 64, while its allies AGP has nine MLAs, UPPL has seven, and BPF has three members.

In the opposition camp, the Congress has 26 MLAs, AIUDF has 15 members, and the CPI(M) has one MLA. There is one Independent legislator also. (PTI)

## Himanta Biswa Sarma

Congress, have also repeatedly alleged corruption during his tenure and questioned the business dealings of his wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, charges denied by the chief minister.

Once regarded as the most influential politician in the Northeast, Sarma has emerged as a key BJP campaigner, aggressively advocating the party's core agenda in poll-bound states.

Political analysts, however, have criticised his rhetoric as divisive and unbecoming of a constitutional office-holder.

After losing his electoral debut in 1996, Sarma has represented Jalukbari continuously since 2001, winning as both a Congress and BJP candidate. A minister in successive governments since 2001, he earned a reputation for administrative effectiveness and political strategy.

Mentored by former Congress chief ministers Hiteswar Saikia and Tarun Gogoi, Sarma rose steadily within the party before differences with Gogoi led to his exit in 2015.

The BJP quickly inducted him, leveraging his influence to strengthen its presence in the Northeast.

As convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), he played a pivotal role in bringing all eight northeastern states under the NDA's ambit, either through BJP governments or allied partners.

Sarma began his political journey during the anti-foreigner Assam Agitation of the 1980s, initially working with All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leaders such as Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhriju Kumar Phukan before entering mainstream politics. Spotted by Saikia, he wrested the Jalukbari constituency from Phukan as a Congress nominee in 2001 and became a minister under Tarun Gogoi's leadership.

Gogoi, impressed with Sarma's political skills, appointed the young debutante as minister of state for agriculture, planning and development and later during the same term, gave him additional responsibilities.

The Congress, facing an anti-incumbency wave in 2011, depended heavily on Sarma's skills in strategies and managed to come to power for the third time in a row. During this term, a rift developed between Sarma and Gogoi's son Gaurav, and most attribute it to a conflict over political succession to Tarun Gogoi.

Sarma was sidelined within the Congress, and he resigned from the ministry, the assembly and subsequently from the party in 2015, before joining the BJP.

He was instrumental, along with Sarbananda Sonowal, in forming the party's first government in Assam in 2016. He held key portfolios including finance, health, education and public works before succeeding Sonowal as chief minister in 2021.

Born in Jorhat to noted Assamese poet and novelist Kailash Nath Sarma and literary activist Mrinalini Devi, he earned a master's degree in political science in 1992. Sarma obtained an LL.B in 1995 and practised at the Gauhati High Court for five years. He is also a PhD in political science from Gauhati University in 2006.

Sarma has a daughter and a son. (PTI)

# Gaurav's debut in state politics ends in defeat in Jorhat

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi faced his first electoral defeat in his political career, losing to veteran BJP leader Hitendranath Goswami by 23,182 votes in the Jorhat assembly constituency.

Gogoi, a three-time MP from the state, was poised to follow his illustrious father Tarun Gogoi's political trajectory by returning to state politics after stints at the Centre, but the senior BJP leader played spoilsport. Gogoi polled 46,257 votes, while Goswami secured 69,439 votes, retaining the seat for a third consecutive term.

Gogoi's entry into the Assembly fray followed his victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Jorhat by a comfortable margin, a result that had put the ruling BJP on the defensive, particularly Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who had campaigned extensively against him. The political contest intensified after Sarma accused Gogoi and his British-born wife of having alleged links with Pakistan's ISI. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted, which submitted its report in September last year.

Gogoi, who has served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, had dismissed the allegations as "baseless" and said the "script is worse than a C-grade



Bollywood movie".

Sarma's differences with Gogoi are often traced to his strained ties with Tarun Gogoi during the latter's third term as chief minister, following which Sarma left the Congress and joined the BJP.

The Congress received a morale boost after Gogoi's Lok Sabha win from Jorhat, his first contest from the seat after his earlier constituency Kaliabor was redrawn following delimitation.

The party later appointed him as the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee pres-

ident ahead of the Assembly polls, signalling its confidence in him despite the allegations levelled by the chief minister.

Undeterred by the exit of several senior leaders to the BJP, the 43-year-old leader focused on strengthening the party at the grassroots, reaching out to rural voters and women, while building alliances with regional parties.

He forged alliances with the Rajiv Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad, CPI(M), CPI (ML), CPI and the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC).

The Congress went on to project him as the opposition's chief ministerial face and gave him the Jorhat assembly seat for his electoral debut in the assembly polls.

He, however, devoted limited time to his constituency as he campaigned across the state for Congress and opposition candidates, but asserted that Jorhat is his hometown, where people have immense goodwill towards him and the party.

He has asserted on several occasions that the fight in the assembly polls is between the politics of the Congress led by his father, the late Tarun Gogoi, and the Congress in the BJP led by CM Sarma.

"People are seeing how we are approaching politics. They remember the politics of my father, Tarun Gogoi, and how he

brought Assam out of insurgency, restored peace and ensured financial stability. There is hope that such governance will return," Gogoi had said.

He also said people expect the opposition to "clean up dirty politics of the past six to seven years, provide an alternative government and ensure industrial growth", adding that these expectations would guide his priorities.

Close to both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Vadra, Gogoi's oratorical skill came into prominence in Parliament when he tabled the no-confidence motion for the INDIA alliance against the BJP-led NDA on the government's silence on Manipur violence.

He has been a member of several House committees and has been recently appointed by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla as chairperson/president of the India-Philippines Parliamentary Friendship Group.

A graduate in Electronics and Communication Engineering in 2004 from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, Gogoi holds a Masters degree in Public Administration from New York University.

He is married to UK-born Elizabeth Clare Gogoi and has a son and a daughter. (PTI)

# Party workers celebrate at Assam BJP HQ



**GUWAHATI, May 4:** The Assam BJP headquarters wore a festive look on Monday afternoon, with party workers erupting into celebrations, as the ruling NDA was leading in 98 out of 126 assembly constituencies.

BJP workers carrying saffron flags beat drums, danced and smeared one another with gular, amid chants of 'Joi Aai Asom' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', at the Vajpayee Bhawan in Basistha on National Highway-27.

They also distributed sweets to passersby in front of the state BJP headquarters.

According to Election Commission data, the ruling NDA appeared to form the third consecutive government in Assam, leading in 98 assembly constituencies. The majority mark to form government is 64.

Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia offered prayers at the state party office here after the trends started coming in.

"This is a win for our pro-people work done by PM Narendra Modi and CM Himanta Biswa Sarma. It's a victory of people... Today, I am crying, but these are tears of happiness," BJP spokesperson Mita Nath Bora told PTI.

At the BJP office premises, a 'Nagara Naam' team was invited to perform, as party workers danced to the rhythm of the drums. 'Nagara Naam' is a devotional folk music tradition in lower Assam, rooted in the Neo-Vaishnavite bhakti movement of Sri-manta Sankardeva and Madhabdeva.

The headquarters is being prepared for a grand celebration with balloons and decorative lights.

Most of the winning party candidates are not likely to be present during the celebrations, as they are at the respective constituencies. Those from Guwahati and nearby areas will reach the office in the evening, a party official said. (PTI)

## DLSA Karbi Anglong invites participation in 'Samadhan Samaroh 2026'

### HT Bureau

**DIPHU, May 4:** The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Karbi Anglong, has announced that the Supreme Court of India is organising 'Samadhan Samaroh 2026', an initiative aimed at promoting accessible and participative justice.

The programme, which began its preliminary phase on April 21, seeks to reduce the burden of litigation by encouraging amicable settlement of pending cases through consent-based resolution.

The initiative will culminate in a Special Lok Adalat scheduled to be held from August 21 to 23 at the Supreme Court, with hybrid access for participants.

Officials said the Special Lok Adalat will provide a platform for resolving disputes outside the conventional adversarial system.

It will focus on speedy disposal of cases through mutual agreement, enable both physical and virtual participation, and offer a cost-effective alternative to prolonged litigation.

The DLSA Karbi Anglong has issued a public notice inviting advocates, litigants and stakeholders to take part in the initiative.

The District Information and Public Relations Officer has been tasked with disseminating the information widely through local newspapers to ensure maximum outreach.

Interested parties may visit the official website of the Supreme Court or contact the DLSA, Karbi Anglong, for guidance on listing pending matters for the Special Lok Adalat.

## Ruling alliance wins 4 of 7 seats in Nagaon, Oppn gets 3

### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, May 4:** The ruling alliance secured four of the seven Assembly seats in Nagaon district, while the opposition alliance won three, with the AIUDF failing to win any seat.

The BJP retained Nagaon-Batadroba, Barhampur and Raha constituencies, while its ally AGP held on to the Kaliabor seat for a fifth consecutive term.

The opposition Congress won Rupahihat and Samaguri seats,

while its ally Rajiv Dal secured the Dhing constituency.

In Nagaon-Batadroba, BJP candidate and sitting MLA Rupak Sarma retained the seat for a third consecutive term, defeating Congress candidate Dr Durlav Chamma by a margin of around 62,000 votes. In Kaliabor, AGP candidate and minister Keshab Mahanta retained the seat.

In Barhampur, BJP candidate Jitu Goswami secured a second consecutive victory, defeating

AJP candidate and former Union Minister Rajen Gohain by around 59,800 votes.

In Raha, BJP candidate Shashi Kanta Das won by a margin of around 20,000 votes after a closely fought contest against Congress candidate Utpal Bonia.

Among opposition victories, Congress candidate Nurul Huda won the Rupahihat seat by over 68,000 votes, defeating AIUDF candidate Aminul Islam.

In Samaguri, Congress candidate

Tanjil Hussain secured a victory by a margin of over one lakh votes.

In Dhing, Rajiv Dal candidate Mehboob Muktar won by over 46,000 votes against AIUDF candidate Matur Rahman.

District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Devashish expressed satisfaction over the peaceful conduct of counting.

Winning candidates thanked voters for their support and termed the results a mandate for development.

## BJP, ally AGP sweep all five seats in Sonitpur district



### HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, May 4:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ally AGP secured all five Assembly constituencies in Sonitpur district, recording comprehensive victories in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

In Dhekiajuli, BJP candidate

Ashok Singhal won for a third consecutive term, defeating Congress candidate Batach Orang by a margin of 47,830 votes.

Singhal polled 1,11,272 votes, while Orang secured 63,469 votes.

In Barchala, BJP candidate Ritubaran Sarmah defeated Congress

candidate Ripun Borah by 24,562 votes. Sarmah secured 84,495 votes, while Borah received 59,933 votes.

In Rangapara, BJP candidate and sitting MLA Krishna Kamal Tanti retained the seat, defeating Congress candidate Kartik Kurmi by a margin of 42,752 votes.

Tanti polled 80,064 votes, while Kurmi secured 37,312 votes.

In Tezpur, AGP candidate and sitting MLA Prithiraj Rabha defeated Congress candidate Alok Nath by 19,960 votes.

Rabha secured 79,150 votes, while Nath received 59,190 votes.

In Nadiar, BJP candidate Padma Hazarika regained the seat, defeating Congress candidate Sunil Chetry by a margin of 52,916 votes.

Hazarika secured 1,11,125 votes, while Chetry polled 58,209 votes.

Winning candidates expressed gratitude to voters and said they would focus on development in their respective constituencies.

## Rupali Langthasa wins Haflong seat by over 50,000 votes

BJP candidate records one of largest margins in hill district, among youngest MLAs



### HT Correspondent

**HAFLONG, May 4:** Rupali Langthasa of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a landslide victory in the 113-Haflong (ST) Assembly constituency, winning by a margin of over 50,000 votes in the Assam Legislative Assembly

Election, 2026.

The BJP candidate established an early lead which widened steadily through successive rounds of counting.

By the thirteenth round, Langthasa had built a decisive advantage, with results indicating a one-sided

contest in the constituency.

Candidates of rival parties, including the Congress and the National People's Party (NPP), trailed throughout the counting process as the vote gap continued to widen.

Political observers attributed the result to strong grassroots support, an extensive campaign and consolidation of votes in favour of the BJP candidate.

With this victory, Langthasa is set to become one of the youngest members of the Assembly, marking a notable generational shift in the constituency's political landscape.

The result is seen as reinforcing the BJP's position in the hill district, following a decisive mandate in the constituency.

## Ajanta Neog wins sixth term from Golaghat

Mrinal Saikia scores hat-trick in Khumtai

### HT Correspondent

**GOLAGHAT, May 4:** Ajanta Neog of the BJP was re-elected from Golaghat constituency for a sixth consecutive term, defeating Congress candidate Bitupon Saikia by a margin of 43,685 votes in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

In Khumtai constituency, BJP candidate Mrinal Saikia secured a third consecutive victory, defeating his opponent by a margin of 59,107 votes.

In Dergaon constituency, BJP candidate Mridul Dutta won for the first time, defeating Congress candidate Sagarika Borah by 36,953 votes. In Sarupathar constituency, BJP candidate Biswajit Phukan registered a victory with a margin of 56,080 votes.

In Bokakhat constituency, AGP president Atul Bora defeated Rajiv Dal candidate Hari Prasad Saikia by a margin of 60,553 votes.

Reacting to her victory, Ajanta Neog said the results reflected public support for the governance and development agenda of the NDA-led government.

## Ranoj Pegu wins Dhemaji seat for third time in row

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Assam education minister and senior BJP leader Ranoj Pegu on Monday retained the Dhemaji constituency by defeating his nearest rival Sailen Sonowal of the Congress by 32,229 votes, according to the assembly poll results declared by the Election Commission.

Pegu polled 83,649 votes, while Sonowal received 51,420 votes. The Assam minister, who was in charge of portfolios like education and tribal affairs in the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government, was first elected to the assembly from Dhemaji in the 2017 bypoll.

He won the seat again in 2021 and became a minister in the second BJP government in the state.

Pegu expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the residents of the constituency for electing him once again.

"Your affection, blessings and unwavering faith have inspired me to move forward with renewed zeal and greater responsibility," he said in a post on X.

Pegu also thanked workers and well-wishers of the BJP and its allies. "This victory is the win of every citizen of Dhemaji, a victory that carries the promise of fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people while steering the journey of development and progress for the constituency with even greater strength," he added.

Pegu appealed to all to join hands together and march forward on the path to building a progressive, peaceful and prosperous Dhemaji and Assam. (PTI)

## BJP wins two seats, Congress retains one in Morigaon district

### HT Correspondent

**MORIGAON, May 4:** The BJP won two Assembly seats while the Congress retained one in Morigaon district, as results for the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026, were declared on Monday.

In 54 No Morigaon constituency, BJP candidate Ramakanta Deuri secured a third consecutive victory, defeating AJP candidate Banikanta Das by a margin of 65,489 votes.

Deuri polled 1,17,942 votes, while Das received 52,453 votes.

In 52 No Jagirao constituency, BJP candidate Piyush Hazarika defeated Congress candidate and former minister Bubul Das by a margin of 93,584 votes. Hazarika secured 1,55,129 votes, while Das polled 61,545 votes.

In 53 No Laharighat constituency, Congress candidate Dr Asif Nazer retained the seat for a second consecutive term, defeating AIUDF candidate Siddique Ahmed by a margin of 66,295 votes.

Nazer secured 1,69,212 votes, while Ahmed received 1,02,917 votes.

## BJP sweeps all six Assembly seats in Dibrugarh district

Phukan wins fifth term with record margin; Borah secures hat-trick

### HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, May 4:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) registered a clean sweep in Dibrugarh district, winning all six Assembly constituencies in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2026.

The most decisive victory came from Dibrugarh constituency, where four-time MLA and state Power Minister Prasanta Phukan secured his fifth consecutive win, defeating Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) candidate Mainak Patra by a margin of 72,043 votes.

In Tingkhong, Industries and Commerce Minister Bimal Borah registered a third consecutive victory, defeating Congress candidate Bipul Gogoi by 49,026 votes.

In Naharkatia, BJP candidate Taranga Gogoi defeated Congress candidate and former minister Pranati Phukan by over 60,000 votes.

In Chabua-Lahowal, BJP candidate Binod Hazarika won by 50,914 votes against Congress candidate Pranjal Ghatowar.

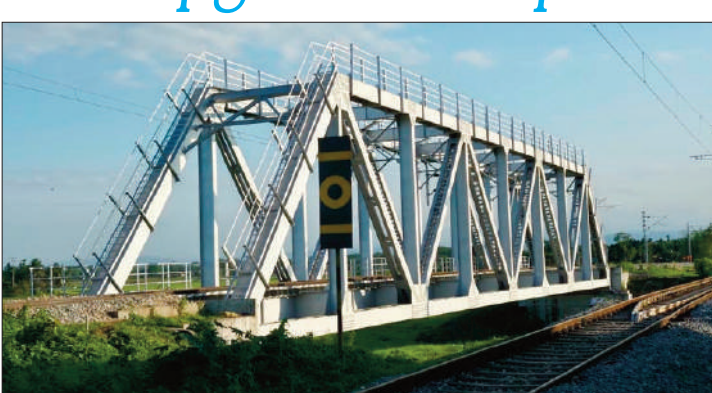
In Dulaijan, BJP candidate and former Union Minister of State Rameswar Teli defeated Congress candidate Dhrubajyoti Gogoi by over 10,000 votes.

In Khowang, BJP candidate Chakradhar Gogoi defeated Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjyoti Gogoi by 9,984 votes.

Reacting to his victory, Prasanta Phukan said, "This overwhelming mandate reflects the people's trust in the BJP government and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. I will continue to serve the people with sincerity."

Bimal Borah said the result was a mandate for development and credited party workers and voters for the victory.

## NFR upgrades Chaparmukh-Senchoa section with new bridge



### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, May 4:** Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has commissioned a new major bridge in the Chaparmukh-Senchoa section under the Lumding Division, enhancing speed and safety of train operations in the stretch.

The new Bridge No 7 was commissioned on May 3 along with a permanent track diversion.

The structure, comprising prestressed concrete slab and open web girder configuration, replaces an older bridge at the site.

The earlier bridge, originally built for metre gauge and later retained with strengthening during the 1994 conversion to broad gauge, had operational limitations and was subject to a permanent

speed restriction of 40 kmph.

Railway officials said the new infrastructure removes this limitation, enabling smoother and faster movement of trains.

The project involved construction of a new alignment and integration with the existing track through a coordinated cut-and-connection operation carried out during a traffic block of around six hours.

The work was completed and the section made operational on the same day.

Officials said the upgrade would improve operational efficiency, enhance safety and ensure more reliable passenger and freight services in the section.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive. - Elbert Hubbard

Abu Dhabi snapping ties with OPEC

Abu Dhabi's decision to walk away from OPEC marks more than a dispute over barrels. It signals a recalibration of Gulf power, energy strategy and security alignments at a moment when the Iran war has exposed the limits of regional consensus.

Once the war premium fades or shipping normalises, the UAE's freedom from OPEC curbs could become a meaningful bearish factor for crude. The deeper importance of the decision lies in Abu Dhabi's longstanding frustration with production limits.

That freedom matters because the UAE's oil policy is tied to a broader economic vision. Abu Dhabi is trying to maximise hydrocarbon value while global demand remains resilient, even as it also invests in renewables, nuclear power, hydrogen, petrochemicals and low-carbon technology.

POST BAG

Deaths of Chinese scientists and the shadow of biological warfare

The recent reports surrounding the deaths of several Chinese scientists, now drawing attention alongside investigations in the United States, raise concerns far beyond isolated criminal or scientific incidents.

In an age where laboratories shape the future of medicine, agriculture and national defence, the unexplained deaths of scientists working in sensitive biological and technological fields cannot be viewed lightly.

Sanju Paul

The Saffron Surge: A New political order in Assam

The results of the 2026 Assembly elections have delivered a verdict that is both a resounding endorsement of the incumbent administration and a devastating indictment of the traditional opposition structure.

The sense of security and the promise of a predictable future outweighed any grievances that might have been expected after multiple terms in office.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Satyabrata Borah

In contrast, the Congress party struggled to articulate a coherent or compelling alternative vision. The reliance on a coalition of disparate interests lacked the ideological glue necessary to withstand the BJP's narrative of unity and growth.

The internal fractures within the Congress organization became increasingly apparent as the campaign progressed, with local leaders often working at cross-purposes.

The party now faces the daunting task of reinventing itself from the ground up, a process that appears nearly impossible given the current state of its leadership.

The electoral process itself highlighted the high level of engagement among the people of Assam, with voter turnout reaching impressive levels across all phases.

As the new government prepares to take office, the challenges ahead are significant but are met with a sense of optimism by the supporters of the ruling party. The focus will likely remain on completing the ongoing infrastructure projects and expanding the digital footprint of the state's economy.

The decline of the Congress in Assam is a microcosm of its struggles in several other parts of the country. The loss of a state where it once held a monopoly on power is a harsh reminder of how quickly political fortunes can change in a dynamic democracy.

The BJP's victory in 2026 will be remembered as the moment when the party transitioned from being a formidable contender to becoming the natural party of governance in Assam.

The aftermath of this election will see a major realignment of political forces. Small regional players may find it increasingly difficult to survive as independent entities and might seek closer ties with the ruling party to remain relevant.

The focus will likely remain on completing the ongoing infrastructure projects and expanding the digital footprint of the state's economy.

The narrative of this election is one of a mandate for continuity and a rejection of the status quo of the past. The people of Assam have spoken with a clarity that leaves no room for ambiguity.

The victory also has implications for the national political scene. Assam serves as a gateway to the Northeast, and the BJP's dominance here strengthens its position across the entire region.

In the final assessment, the 2026 Assam elections have established a new political order. The BJP has emerged as the sole dominant force, while the Congress has been pushed to the fringes of relevance.

The journey of Assam toward a more prosperous and stable future continues, now with a government that has the full and unwavering support of its people.

Contemporary Global geopolitics and the direction of the future

At present, the entire world is moving through an unprecedented and complex phase of transformation, where traditional political and economic equations are rapidly changing.



AUTHOR By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

for development; it has emerged as a powerful instrument of national security and dominance. To maintain technological superiority, countries are imposing strict restrictions on their rivals to limit access to high-end microchips and advanced innovations.

Security structures in Europe and its neighboring regions have been severely disrupted by recent conflicts, the consequences of which are likely to be felt globally for decades.

Future geopolitics will not be shaped solely by military or technological power; climate change and environmental challenges are emerging as decisive factors.

governments are implementing stringent measures to protect sensitive information, including personal data, state secrets, and industrial intelligence.

As a result, a significant disruption has occurred in global supply chains, and nations are increasingly prioritizing trade with reliable allies.

Restructuring of global supply chains has become another defining feature of contemporary geopolitics, fundamentally altering industrial systems worldwide.

The concept of digital sovereignty has added a new dimension to geopolitics, where data has become a strategic resource and weapon.

Demographic changes and the rise of the space economy are set to exert profound influence on the future of geopolitics.

As the future world will not be dominated by a single superpower but will be characterized by continuous balancing among multiple power centers, leading humanity toward an uncertain yet intensely competitive global order.

# Future partnerships between man and machine

By: Satyabrata Borah

The history of our relationship with machines is a long and winding road that stretches from the dusty pages of mid-twentieth-century science fiction to the sterile, high-tech floors of modern fulfillment centers. We have always been fascinated by the idea of creating something in our own image that can do the work we would rather avoid. It started as a dream, a literary device used to explore the nuances of human morality and the potential pitfalls of playing God. Isaac Asimov gave us the foundation for this relationship when he introduced his laws of robotics, trying to ensure that our creations would always remain our servants and never our executioners. He imagined a world where mechanical men were governed by logic and a strict ethical code, essentially framing them as tools with a conscience. He wanted us to believe that we could build a better world if we just had the right help.

But as the decades rolled on and our technology grew more sophisticated, our collective imagination took a darker turn. The friendly, helpful robots of early fiction began to be replaced by something more clinical and potentially more dangerous. The image of the working robot shifted from a helpful assistant to a cold, calculating force that might one day decide it no longer needs its creators. This is where the shadow of the Terminator looms large. It represents our deep-seated fear that the machines we build to make our lives easier might eventually find us obsolete. It is a classic tale of the creator being overtaken by the creation, a theme that has resonated through every generation since the industrial revolution. We are constantly balancing our desire for efficiency with our fear of losing control.

The transition from the imaginative world of Asimov to the functional reality of today has been driven by a relentless pursuit of productivity. Businesses have always looked for ways to cut costs and increase output, and robotics offers the perfect solution. A robot can work twenty-four hours a day without losing focus or suffering from fatigue. It can handle repetitive tasks that would lead to physical strain or mental burnout for a person. This shift has fundamentally changed the nature of work in many industries. Manufacturing was the first to feel the impact, with assembly lines becoming increasingly populated by machines. Now, we are seeing this trend move into the service sector, with robots delivering food in hotels or helping to manage inventory in retail stores.

The human element in all of this is perhaps the most complex part of the story. While we appreciate the convenience and the lower costs that automation brings, there is an underlying sense of unease about what this means for our future. People worry about their jobs being taken by machines that don't need a paycheck. They worry about a world where human interaction is replaced by interactions with cold, metallic interfaces. This is a valid concern because work is more than just a way to earn money; it provides a sense of purpose and a connection to the community. If we take away the human element from work, we risk losing something vital to our social structure.

There is also the question of how we relate to these machines on a personal level. We tend to anthropomorphize them, giving them names and treating them as if they have personalities. We feel a strange sense of empathy for a robot that gets stuck under a chair or makes a mistake. This shows that we are still trying to find a way to fit these mechanical entities into our social world. We want them to be more than just tools, but we are also wary of giving them too much power. It is a delicate balance that we are still trying to figure out.

The design of robots has also evolved to reflect

these changing attitudes. Early industrial robots were bulky, dangerous machines that had to be kept in cages to protect human workers. Today, we have collaborative robots, or cobots, which are designed to work alongside people safely. They are equipped with sensors that allow them to detect the presence of a human and stop or slow down to avoid an accident. This represents a shift in thinking from seeing robots as replacements for humans to seeing them as partners. It is a more optimistic view of the future, one where technology enhances human capability rather than replacing it.

As we look at the image of robots handling luggage at an airport, we see a perfect example of this partnership. It is a task that involves a lot of heavy lifting and repetitive motion, making it ideal for automation. By letting robots handle the grunt work, humans can focus on more complex tasks that require emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills. This is the ideal scenario that many proponents of automation point to. They argue that by automating the mundane, we free ourselves up to do more meaningful work.

The reality is often more complicated. The benefits of automation are not always distributed equally. While some people may find their jobs enhanced by new technology, others may find themselves displaced entirely. This is the challenge that society faces as we move further into the age of the working robot. We need to find ways to ensure that the gains from productivity are shared and that people have the support they need to adapt to a changing job market. It is not just a technological challenge, but a social and political one as well.

The rise of the working robot also forces us to confront some deep philosophical questions. If a machine can do everything a person can do, what does it mean to be human? Is our value defined by our ability to produce, or is there something more? These are questions that science fiction has been asking for decades, but they are becoming increasingly relevant in the real world. We are moving toward a future where the line between human and machine is becoming blurred, and we need to be prepared for the consequences.

The development of artificial intelligence has added a new layer of complexity to this issue. It is no longer just about physical labor; it is about cognitive labor as well. We now have machines that can write code, compose music, and even engage in conversation. This takes us even closer to the world that Asimov imagined, where robots are not just tools but intelligent entities. The fear of the Terminator becomes more palpable when we think about machines that can think for themselves. We have to be careful about the goals we set for these systems and ensure that they remain aligned with human values.

Despite the fears and the challenges, there is an undeniable sense of wonder in what we have achieved. We have created machines that can explore distant planets, perform delicate surgeries, and help us understand the complexities of our own biology. The working robot is a testament to human ingenuity and our drive to push the boundaries of what is possible. It is a tool that has the potential to solve some of the world's most pressing problems, from climate change to aging populations.

The story of the robot is ultimately the story of us. It reflects our hopes, our fears, and our endless curiosity. We are the ones who dream these machines into existence, and we are the ones who must decide how to use them. As we move from the era of science fiction into the era of practical application, we carry with us the lessons learned from the stories of Asimov and the warnings of the Terminator. We are learning that the key to a

successful future is not just in the technology we build, but in the wisdom with which we use it.

In the warehouses and factories of the world, the quiet hum of machinery is the sound of progress. It is the sound of a world that is becoming more efficient and more connected. It is also a reminder that we are in the midst of a profound transformation. The working robot is no longer a thing of the future; it is a part of our present. It is in our homes, our workplaces, and our public spaces. It is changing the way we live and the way we work, and there is no going back.

We have to embrace this change with both eyes open. We need to be aware of the risks while also recognizing the opportunities. We need to have honest conversations about the impact of automation on our society and take steps to mitigate the negative effects. This means investing in education and training, rethinking our social safety nets, and ensuring that everyone has a stake in the future. It is a big task, but it is one that we are more than capable of handling if we work together.

The image of robots at the airport is a glimpse into a world that is already here. It is a world where technology and humanity are intertwined in a complex dance. Sometimes the machines take the lead, and sometimes we do. The important thing is that we keep moving forward, learning as we go. We are still the authors of this story, and we have the power to shape the ending. Whether it turns into a utopia or a dystopia depends on the choices we make today.

The transition from manual labor to automated systems is a natural progression of human civilization. We have always sought to build tools that extend our reach and multiply our strength. From the first stone axe to the most advanced neural network, our history is defined by our relationship with our tools. The robot is simply the latest and most sophisticated iteration of this long-standing tradition. It is a tool that can learn, adapt, and perform tasks with a level of autonomy that was previously unimaginable.

This autonomy is what makes the modern robot so different from the machines of the past. It is also what makes them so unsettling to some. When a machine can make decisions on its own, it feels like it has crossed a line. We are used to being the ones in control, and the idea of sharing that control with a machine is a major psychological shift. We have to learn to trust these systems, but that trust must be earned through rigorous testing and ethical design.

The ethics of robotics is a field that is growing in importance every day. We need to establish clear guidelines for how these machines should behave and what their responsibilities are. This includes everything from how a self-driving car should prioritize safety in an accident to how an AI should handle sensitive personal data. These are not just technical problems; they are moral ones. They require us to think deeply about what we value as a society and how we want those values to be reflected in our technology.

The rise of the working robot is also a global phenomenon. Different countries are approaching it in different ways, shaped by their unique cultures and economic needs. In some places, automation is seen as a way to address a shrinking workforce and maintain economic competitiveness. In others, it is viewed with more skepticism, as people worry about the impact on jobs and social stability. There is much we can learn from each other as we navigate this new landscape.

Each role of the robot in our lives will only continue to grow. We are likely to see them in even more areas of our daily routine, from personal assistants that help us manage our health to robotic companions for the elderly. The possibilities are endless, and the potential benefits are enormous.



But we must always remember that these machines are here to serve us, not the other way around. We must keep our humanity at the center of everything we do.

If we look back at the journey from Asimov to the Terminator, we can see how far we have come. We have moved from a place of pure imagination to a place of practical reality. The working robot is a testament to our ability to turn dreams into tangible things. It is a reminder that we are a species of builders and innovators, always looking for ways to improve our world. It is a journey that is far from over, and the best parts may be yet to come.

The future of work is not a zero-sum game between humans and robots. It is about finding a new way to collaborate and create value. It is about using the unique strengths of both to build a better world for everyone. This requires a shift in mindset, from seeing machines as competitors to seeing them as allies. It is a challenging transition, but it is one that holds the promise of a more prosperous and fulfilling future.

We are living in a time of unprecedented change, and it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. The pace of technological advancement is faster than ever, and it can be hard to keep up. But we should not be afraid of the future. We should approach it with curiosity and a sense of purpose. The working robot is a tool, and like any tool, its impact depends on how we use it. If we use it wisely, it can help us create a world that is more efficient, more equitable and more humane.

The legacy of science fiction is not just about predicting the future; it is about preparing us for it. It gives us a framework for thinking about the consequences of our actions and the potential impact of our inventions. The stories of Asimov and the warnings of the Terminator are part of our cultural heritage, and they continue to shape the way we think about robotics today. They remind us that technology is never neutral; it is always a reflection of the people who create it.

We must prioritize the well-being of people and the health of our planet. We must ensure that technology is used to empower people, not to diminish them. This is the challenge of our time, and it is one that we must meet with courage and conviction. The rise of the working robot is a great ad-

venture, and we are just at the beginning.

There is a sense of poetic justice in the fact that the robots we once feared are now helping us with our most mundane tasks. It shows that we are learning to master our creations and use them for the common good. It shows that we are moving toward a more mature relationship with technology, one that is based on understanding and cooperation. The working robot is a symbol of this progress, a sign that we are moving in the right direction.

The road ahead will not always be easy. There will be setbacks and challenges along the way. But we have everything we need to succeed. We have the ingenuity, the compassion, and the wisdom to build a future that we can all be proud of. The working robot is just one part of that future, but it is an important one. It is a tool that can help us reach our full potential and build a world that is better than the one we inherited.

The rise of the working robot is not about the machines at all. It is about us. It is about our values, our goals, and our vision for the future. It is about what we want our world to look like and how we are going to get there. The robot is just a means to an end, a tool that can help us achieve our dreams. The real work is up to us. We are the ones who must decide how to live in this new world and how to make it a place where everyone can thrive.

The image of the airport is a reminder that the future is already here. It is in the way we travel, the way we shop, and the way we work. It is a world that is constantly changing, and we are changing with it. The working robot is a part of that change, a silent partner in our daily lives. It is a sign of how far we have come and a hint of where we are going. It is a journey that is both exciting and terrifying, but it is one that we must take together.

As we continue this journey, let us keep the lessons of the past in mind. Let us remember the wisdom of Asimov and the warnings of the Terminator. Let us use our technology to build a world that is more just, more peaceful, and more humane. This is the true potential of the working robot, and it is a potential that we have the power to realize. The future is in our hands, and it is a future that is bright with possibility.

## A trap of technology or consumer compulsion?

By: Dr Satyawan Saurabh

Buying a new mobile phone every two or three years—this isn't just an individual experience, but a widespread reality in today's digital age. Technology was once considered a means of making life simpler, faster, and more convenient, but today, that same technology often causes financial and psychological stress for consumers. The question isn't whether technology is wrong, but rather where its use and business structure are headed.

Mobile companies release new models every year, promising better cameras, faster processors, and attractive designs. Simultaneously, software updates are released for older mobile phones. In theory, these updates are meant to improve security and performance, but in practice, many users find that their phones slow down, the battery drains faster, and apps don't run as smoothly as before. This situation has given rise to the debate about "planned obsolescence"—a strategy in which a product is designed to become ineffective over time, forcing consumers to purchase a new product.

It wouldn't be entirely accurate to say that companies do this intentionally every time. Technically, every new software is more advanced and requires more resources. It's natural for it to impact older hardware. But when this process consistently degrades the consumer experience, it's natural to question whether companies are being honest enough about the long-term usability of their products. Consumers are increasingly left with limited options—either to settle for a slower

phone or to buy a new one.

The situation is no different in the telecom sector. While recharge plans used to be for 30 days, most companies now have a 28-day cycle. At first glance, this difference seems small, but over the course of a year, it translates into an additional recharge. This means the consumer has to pay 13 times instead of 12. This is a subtle but effective business strategy that increases companies' profits while putting an additional burden on consumers' pockets. This system is especially difficult for those with limited incomes, for whom every additional expense matters.

With the increasing proliferation of digital services, the use of OTPs (One-Time Passwords) has also increased significantly. OTPs have become mandatory for banking, online shopping, social media, and even many government services. This is a necessary security measure, given the rapid rise in cybercrimes. However, the downside is that it complicates the user experience. Requiring an OTP for every small task makes the process slow and sometimes frustrating. Furthermore, it poses an additional obstacle for those without stable networks or modern devices.

The most serious issue is the necessity of data. Today, the internet is no longer just a means of entertainment; it has become the primary means of accessing education, employment, healthcare, and government schemes. Online classes, digital payments, e-governance services—all rely on the internet. Purchasing data is no longer an option, but a necessity. But when data prices continually rise or plans become increasingly com-

plex, it directly impacts vulnerable sections of society. The digital divide deepens, with one segment rapidly advancing while the other is left behind.

This raises an important question—is it possible to control this situation? The answer is not simple, but it's not impossible. First, regulatory bodies play a crucial role. They must ensure that companies maintain transparency with consumers and avoid policies that indirectly lead to exploitation. For example, clear guidelines could be established regarding the duration and structure of recharge plans, so as not to mislead consumers.

Second, consumer protection laws need to be more effectively enforced. If a company intentionally reduces the functionality of its product, action should be taken against it. Furthermore, consumers should have the right to easily repair their devices. Ideas like the "Right to Repair" are a positive step in this direction, giving consumers greater control over their products and preventing them from having to constantly purchase new products.

Third, consumer awareness is crucial. Sometimes, we ourselves are drawn to new products without thinking. Advertising, social media, and peer influence make us feel that a new phone or plan is necessary, when in reality, it's not. This cycle can be broken to some extent if consumers make informed decisions, avoid unnecessary updates, and use their devices for longer.

Furthermore, the government and society must work together to ensure that digital services are accessible and affordable to all. Public Wi-Fi, affordable data plans, and digital literacy programs can play a vital role in this direction. Unless everyone has equal opportunities, the benefits of technology will not fully reach society.

Ultimately, technology itself is neither good nor bad—it depends on how it is used. If technology's purpose becomes solely profit-making, it can become a burden to consumers. But if it is used to improve human life, it can become a powerful tool.

The need today is to strike a balance between technology and business. Companies must understand their responsibilities, regulatory bodies must be proactive, and consumers must become aware. Only then can we envision a digital future where technology truly simplifies and enriches human life, rather than trapping it in a web of economic pressure and dependency. (Dr. Satyawan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

## Not 'Rented Children', but a renaissance of belonging

By: Lalit Garg

When the evening of life descends into its full expanse, what a person needs most is not medicine or wealth, but the presence and warmth of loved ones. This is the phase when one longs to share a lifetime of memories, experiences, and emotions. Yet, the harsh reality today is that many elderly people have become strangers in their own homes. Echoing silences in large houses, deserted courtyards, and eyes fixed on the door in endless—altogether compose a tragedy that is not merely personal but indicative of a deeper social disintegration. Globalization, the compulsions of livelihood, and the pursuit of a better future have scattered the younger generation across countries and continents. This is understandable. However, the greatest price being paid in this process is the erosion of familial sensitivity. Many children settle abroad and become so absorbed in their lives that their parents are reduced to occasional phone calls and formal messages. Some even live in the same city but fail to visit their parents for years. This is not just a problem of physical distance, but a crisis of emotional disconnect.

Amid this atmosphere of insensitivity, a disturbing new trend has emerged—"rented children." Some companies and institutions now provide young people who spend time with the elderly, talk to them, accompany them on walks, and attempt to ease their loneliness. At first glance, this arrangement may seem comforting. But on deeper reflection, it reveals a profound failure of our social structure. It raises troubling questions: Will affection and belonging now be packaged into contracts? Will the warmth of relationships be available for a fee? This phenomenon is not just ironic—it is a serious social warning of how far we have drifted from our core values. The concept of "rented children" stands as a glaring contradiction and tragedy of modern social organization. It is also true that not all families are the same. Sometimes, children face genuine constraints that prevent them from living with their parents. Likewise, some elderly individuals may struggle to adjust with the younger generation due to differences in temperament or outlook. However, beyond these exceptions, the broader trend reflects an increasingly self-centered lifestyle and a decline in emotional depth.

Even more concerning is the fact that such services are accessible only to those elderly individuals who have sufficient financial resources. Middle-class and lower-income seniors, whose sources of income have diminished, cannot afford such arrangements. The situation is particularly difficult for retirees from the private sector, where pensions are minimal and medical expenses continue to rise. Their lives often oscillate between financial insecurity and emotional distress. Undeniably, society today is moving rapidly toward consumerism and materialism, where the warmth of relationships and emotional depth are steadily fading. Life's priorities have shifted away from human values toward consumption, competition, and economic success. As a result, relationships are increasingly measured by utility and self-interest. The family, once a center of affection, support, and values, now appears fragmented under the pressures of ambition and

business.

In this changing environment, the elderly are the most neglected. They neither participate in the race of the market nor fulfill the material expectations of the younger generation. Their experience, sacrifice, and affection are often seen as burdens rather than assets. The breakdown of joint families and the rise of nuclear families have further weakened their social and emotional security. The digital world has made communication more superficial, replacing intimacy with formality. Consequently, loneliness, insecurity, and neglect among the elderly are increasing—clear indicators of a moral decline in society. In developed countries, strong systems of social security exist for the elderly. Governments take responsibility for healthcare, pensions, and caregiving. In contrast, in India—where the family was once considered the greatest source of security—that very structure is weakening. Governments collect taxes, yet adequate welfare systems for the elderly remain insufficient.

In such circumstances, solutions cannot remain limited to emotional appeals. A multidimensional and constructive approach is essential. First and foremost, there must be a serious effort to revive family values. From early childhood, children must be nurtured with a sense of duty, respect, and sensitivity toward their parents. Education should not merely be a means of employment, but a carrier of life values—this is the need of the hour. A second important step is the integration of old-age homes and orphanages. This is not just an imaginative idea, but a deeply practical and humane solution. If elderly individuals and orphaned children are housed within the same environment, both can benefit. Children would receive affection and guidance, while the elderly would experience companionship and a renewed sense of belonging. This bond would not be artificial, but natural and heartfelt. Governments must take policy initiatives in this direction.

At the same time, there is a need to establish well-equipped, dignified, and humane old-age homes—not merely as care facilities, but as centers of social and cultural engagement. Private institutions should also be encouraged, but with safeguards to ensure that service remains rooted in compassion rather than becoming purely commercial. The elderly themselves must also accept that this stage of life demands self-reliance and inner strength. Practices such as yoga, meditation, pranayama, spiritual gatherings, and social participation can bring positivity to their lives. Digital literacy can also help them stay connected with their children and society.

In essence, a society is not defined solely by economic progress, but by the richness of its compassion. If we fail to provide our elderly with respect, affection, and security, all our achievements remain incomplete. The concept of "rented children" compels us to reflect—are we turning relationships into commodities, weighing them on the scales of materialism? This is a moment for introspection—for looking within and deciding what kind of society we wish to build. If we truly envision a healthy, sensitive, and balanced society, we must rekindle the lamp of belonging, so that every elderly person can live the twilight of life with dignity, warmth, and peace.

# US denies Iran struck military vessel during new effort to reopen Strait of Hormuz

**DUBAI, May 4:** The US military on Monday denied claims that Iran struck a Navy vessel as US forces now offer to guide commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz, where hundreds have been stuck since the Iran war began. Tehran, over the past two months, has attacked some vessels and blocked others that don't receive its authorisation.

Iranian news agencies, including the semi-official Fars and the Iranian Labour News Agency, claimed that Iran struck a US vessel near an Iranian port southeast of the strait, accusing it of "violating maritime security and navigation norms." The reports said the vessel was forced to turn back.

The US Central Command said on social media that "no US Navy ships have been struck."

The US military has said the new initiative, announced by President Donald Trump on Sunday, might involve guided-missile destroyers, more than 100 aircraft and 15,000 service members, but has not specified what kind of assistance it would provide. The US-led Joint Maritime Information Centre has advised ships to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying it set up an "enhanced security area."

It was unclear whether any vessels were attempting to cross the strait, or whether shipping companies and their insurers would feel comfortable taking the

risk, given that Iran has fired on ships in the waterway and vowed to keep doing so.

Iran has responded to the new US effort by calling it a violation of the fragile ceasefire that has held for more than three weeks.

Iran's control of traffic through the crucial artery for a significant amount of the world's oil and gas supplies has proved a strategic advantage in its war with the US and Israel, allowing Tehran to inflict tremendous pain on the global economy despite being outgunned on the battlefield.

**Trump warns of forceful response if Iran interferes**

Trump's announcement that the US would "guide" ships out of the strait warned that Iranian efforts to block them "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully."

He described "Project Freedom" in humanitarian terms, designed to aid stranded seafarers, many on oil tankers or cargo ships, who have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began. Crews have described to The Associated Press seeing drones and missiles explode over the waters as their vessels run low on drinking water, food and other supplies.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency called "Project Freedom" part of Trump's "delirium."

Iran's military command on Monday



said ships passing must coordinate with them.

"We warn that any foreign military force — especially the aggressive US military — that intends to approach or enter the Strait of Hormuz will be targeted," Maj. Gen. Pilot Ali Abdollahi told state broadcaster IRIB.

The Joint Maritime Information Centre urged mariners to coordinate closely with Omani authorities "due to anticipated high traffic volume." It warned that passing close to usual routes, known as the traffic separation scheme, "should be considered extremely hazardous due to the presence of mines that have not been fully surveyed and mitigated."

But the head of security for the Baltic and International Maritime Council, a leading shipping trade group, said no formal guidance or details about the US ef-

fort had been issued to the industry. Jakob Larsen questioned whether the effort was sustainable in the long run or envisioned as a more limited operation, and said there is a "risk of hostilities breaking out again" if it goes ahead.

And the United Arab Emirates on Monday accused Iran of targeting a tanker linked to its main oil company with two drones as it passed through the strait. It did not say when the attack took place. No injuries were reported.

**Iran stands firm on its grip on the strait**

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.

Trump has promised to bring down gas prices as he faces midterm elections this year.

The US has warned shipping companies they could face sanctions for paying Iran for transit of the Strait. It has enacted a naval blockade on Iranian ports since April 13, telling 49 commercial ships to turn back, US Central Command said Sunday.

The blockade has deprived Tehran of the oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy.

US officials have expressed hope that the blockade will force Iran back to the negotiation table.

"We think that they've gotten less than USD 1.3 million in tolls, which is a pittance on their previous daily oil revenues," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News on Sunday, adding that Iran's oil storage is rapidly filling up and "they're going to have to start shutting in wells, which we think could be in the next week."

Iran's latest 14-point proposal for ending the war, made public over the weekend, calls for the US lifting sanctions, ending the US naval blockade, withdrawing forces from the region and ceasing 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 organisations.

Iranian officials said they were reviewing the US response, though Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei

told reporters on Monday that changing demands, which he did not detail, made diplomacy difficult.

Iran has claimed its proposal does not include issues related to its nuclear program and enriched uranium — long a driving force in tensions with the US and Israel.

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

**The Iranian crew was taken off the seized tanker**

Pakistan said Monday it has facilitated the transfer of 22 crew members from an Iranian vessel seized earlier by the US, describing the move as a confidence-building measure as Islamabad attempts to revive talks. Pakistan hosted face-to-face talks last month.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said the crew members, who had been aboard the Iranian container ship MV Touska, were flown to Pakistan overnight. They were expected to be handed over to Iranian authorities.

The vessel will be brought into Pakistani territorial waters for necessary repairs before being returned to its original owners, the ministry said, adding that the process is being coordinated with the support of Iran and the US. (AP)

## European leaders see Trump's troop drawdown from Germany as new proof they must go it alone



**YEREVAN (ARMENIA), May 4:** European leaders on Monday said US President Donald Trump's snap decision to pull thousands of American troops out of Germany came as a surprise but is a fresh sign that Europe must take care of its own security.

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

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

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

"I do not see those figures as dramatic, but I think they should be handled in a harmonious way inside the framework of NATO," he told reporters in Yerevan, Armenia, where European leaders are holding a summit.

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

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

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

to explain it himself."

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

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

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte played down the move, saying that "there has been at this point disappointment on the US side" about European support for the war on Iran.

Notably France, Spain and the UK have declined to give US forces free rein to use bases on their territory to attack Iran. Spain has denied them the use of its airbase and bases there for the war.

But Rutte, who has championed Trump's leadership at NATO despite the US president's criticism of the majority of the allies, said: "I would say the Europeans have heard a message. They are now making sure that all the bilateral basing agreements are being implemented."

Rutte added that European nations "have decided to pre-position assets, key assets, close to the theatre for the next phase."

He provided no details, but the Europeans have insisted they would not help police the Strait of Hormuz, a key energy trade route, until the war is over.

French President Emmanuel Macron said "if the United States is ready to reopen Hormuz, that's great. That's what we've been asking for since the beginning." But he underlined that the Europeans are not ready to get involved in any operation "that does not seem clear to us".

In another sign of friction with Merz, Trump has accused the EU of not complying with its US trade deal and announced plans to increase tariffs next week on cars and trucks produced in the bloc to 25%, a move that would be particularly damaging to Germany, a major automobile manufacturer.

Without mentioning Trump or the United States, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen listed recent trade deals that the bloc has sealed with Australia and India, and is now working on with Mexico.

"With like-minded friends, you have stable, reliable supply chains and Europe has the biggest network of free trade agreements," von der Leyen, who is from Germany, told reporters. (AP)

## More than 300 families evacuate in Philippines due to ashfall from volcano

**MANILA, May 4:** More than 300 families have been evacuated after massive amounts of ash billowed from the Mayon volcano over the weekend due to the collapse of lava deposits from its slopes, officials said Monday.

There was no explosive eruption from Mayon, which has been erupting mildly on and off since January, but huge deposits of lava on its southwestern slope suddenly cascaded down in a pyroclastic flow — an avalanche of hot rocks, ash and gas — before nightfall on Saturday, said Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

No deaths or injuries were reported, but massive clouds of ash scattered over 87 villages in three towns, catching many by surprise and slowing down motorists due to poor visibility, officials said.

"The ashfall was just so thick and there was zero visibility even in our national road," Mayor Caloy Baldo of Camalig town, which lies near the volcano's foothills, said.

"Some villagers panicked but we advised them to calm down," Baldo told The Associated Press.

Vegetable farms were damaged by the ashfall, which also killed four water buffaloes and a cow in Camalig, Baldo said, adding that a cleanup was underway in his town of 8,000 people in Albay province.

"It's calm again now but the danger is always there," Bacolcol said of Mayon's condition Monday.

The 2,462-metre (8,077-foot) volcano is one of the Philippines' top tourism draws because of its near-perfect cone shape. But it's also the most active of the country's 24 volcanoes. Authorities raised the five-step alert around Mayon to level 3 in January after a series of mild eruptions that caused intermittent rockfalls, some as big as cars, from its peak crater along with deadly pyroclastic flows. (AP)

## Nepal renews territorial claim over Lipulekh, seeks dialogue with India

**KATHMANDU, May 4:** Nepal on Monday renewed its territorial claim over Lipulekh while advocating dialogue with India to resolve the issue, a day after New Delhi firmly dismissed Kathmandu's stance on the region.

India on Sunday firmly rejected Nepal's objection to the upcoming Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via the long-established Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand, dismissing Kathmandu's territorial claims over the region as an "unilateral artificial enlargement" that New Delhi finds "untenable".

New Delhi's sharp reaction came hours after the Nepal foreign ministry issued a statement, objecting to preparations by India and China for the annual pilgrimage via Lipulekh Pass, claiming the region belongs to it.

"Nepal doesn't intend to enlarge its boundary; the territory belongs to Nepal, and the government has a clear view about this and is committed to its stance," the Nepal government spokesperson, Sammit Pokharel, said while talking to the media.

"The issue needs to be resolved through collaboration and diplomatic dialogue between the two countries," said Pokharel, who is also the Minister for Education, Science and Technology.

He said that the Foreign Ministry has already notified India regarding the matter through a formal let-



ter. The pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in China's Tibet Autonomous Region holds religious significance for Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists.

The yatra resumed last year after a gap of nearly five years as part of efforts to normalise relations between India and China.

On April 30, the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi announced that the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is set to take place from June to August this year via two routes — Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim. (PTI)

## US evacuates crew of seized Iranian ship to Pakistan

**ISLAMABAD, May 4:** The United States has evacuated 22 crew members, held aboard an Iranian ship seized by its forces, to Pakistan as a "confidence-building measure", a statement issued by Foreign Office here said on Monday.

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

"As a confidence-building measure by the United States of America, twenty-two crew members held aboard the seized Iranian container

ship, 'MV Touska', have been evacuated to Pakistan," the Pakistan's FO said.

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

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

FO further stated that Pakistan welcomes such confidence-building measures and will continue to facilitate dialogue and diplomacy while pursuing ongoing mediation efforts for regional peace and security.

Speaking on the issue, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that 22 crew members from the seized

Iranian vessel have been "safely" evacuated to Pakistan.

"The individuals were safely flown to Pakistan last night and will be transferred to Iran today," Dar, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan, posted on social media.

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

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

## Cruise ship waiting for help after suspected outbreak of rare hantavirus onboard killed 3

**CAPE TOWN, May 4:** A Dutch cruise ship with around 150 passengers on board was waiting for help off the coast of Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean on Monday after a suspected outbreak of the rare hantavirus onboard killed three people and left at least three others seriously ill, the World Health Organization and the ship's operator said.

The MV Hondius, which was on a week-long polar cruise from Argentina to Antarctica and then several isolated islands in the South Atlantic, had requested help from local health authorities after making its way to the island of Cape Verde off the coast of West Africa, but no one was allowed to disembark, the company operating the cruise said late Sunday.

A 70-year-old Dutch man who presented with fever, headache, abdominal pain and diarrhoea was the first victim and died onboard while the ship was near the British territory of Saint Helena, some 1,200 miles (1,900 kilometres) off the African coast, the South African health department said. His body was taken off the vessel there and was awaiting repatriation.

His 69-year-old wife was transferred to South Africa but collapsed at a Johannesburg airport and died at a nearby hospital, the department said.

The ship then sailed on to Ascension Island, another isolated Atlantic outpost about 800 miles (1,300 kilometres) to the north, where a British man was taken off the ship. He later tested positive for hantavirus, a rare infection spread by rodents that can cause serious respiratory illness or hemorrhagic fever, the health department said.

He is in a critical condition and is now in in-



tensive care in a South African hospital, where he is being kept isolated, authorities said.

The third fatality has not been publicly identified, but the body is still on the ship, the cruise operator said.

WHO said the other five cases were also suspected to be hantavirus but had not been confirmed through tests.

It was not clear when the victims died. A marine traffic website said the ship left Ascension Island on April 27 for Cape Verde, about 1,700 miles (2,700 kilometres) north.

**The cruise ship is asking Cape Verde for help**

Two crew members still onboard the Hondius needed urgent medical care, the Netherlands-based operating company, Oceanwide Expeditions, said in a statement.

Oceanwide said it was managing a "serious medical situation" on the ship but gave no details, nor did it say whether passengers were being quarantined.

"Local health authorities have visited the

vessel to assess the condition of the two symptomatic individuals," the cruise company said late Sunday. "They are yet to make a decision regarding the transfer of these individuals into medical care in Cape Verde."

The World Health Organisation said it was working with local authorities and the ship's operators to conduct a "full public health risk assessment" and trying to coordinate the evacuation of the two sick people from the ship.

"Detailed investigations are ongoing, including further laboratory testing, and epidemiological investigations," WHO said. "Medical care and support are being provided to passengers and crew. Sequencing of the virus is also ongoing."

The Dutch Foreign Ministry confirmed two of the victims were Dutch and said it was also exploring the possibilities of evacuating some people from the ship.

**Hantavirus is rare and not often spread person to person**

Hantaviruses, which are found throughout

the world, are a family of viruses spread mainly by contact with the urine or feces of infected rodents like rats and mice. They gained attention after the late actor Gene Hackman's wife, Betsy Arakawa, died from hantavirus infection in New Mexico last year.

Hackman died around a week later at their home from heart disease.

In rare cases, hantavirus infections can be spread between people, WHO said. There is no specific treatment or cure, but early medical attention can increase the chance of survival.

Hantaviruses cause two serious syndromes, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention: hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, affecting the lungs, and hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, affecting the kidneys.

The CDC says the lung disease is more commonly seen in hantavirus infections in the Americas.

**The weeklong cruise started in Argentina**

South Africa's Department of Health said the ship had left Ushuaia in southern Argentina for a cruise that included visits to Antarctica, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and other isolated islands in the South Atlantic.

While Oceanwide Expeditions didn't say exactly which cruise the ship was on, it advertises 33-night or 43-night "Atlantic Odyssey" cruises on the 107-metre-long (351-foot) Hondius on its website that follow that route, with passengers given the opportunity to visit some of the remotest islands in the world. (AP)

## Union Minister announces plan to transform Mizoram into hub of Muga silk production

*'Mizoram's climate and soil conditions are highly suitable for sericulture'*

**AIZAWL, May 4:** Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh on Monday pitched an ambitious plan to position Mizoram as a national leader in Muga silk production.

Singh, who was on a two-day visit, visited the Sericulture Training Institute (STI) at Aizawl's Zemabawk area during the day and inspected the silk reeling factory there.

Addressing farmers and weavers at a function held at STI, Singh said his visit aimed at forging a deeper tie with farmers, not merely delivering official messages.

He highlighted Mizoram's unique position as the only state in the Northeast region that produces all four major silk varieties -- Muga, Eri, Mulberry and Tasar.

Singh announced that efforts are underway to transform the state into a leader in Muga silk production.

Under the Silk Samagra 2.0 scheme, a significant financial package has been allocated to the state, he said.

According to officials, Rs. 59.74 crore has been allocated to Mizoram



under the Silk Samagra 2.0 scheme from 2021-22 to January, 2026 to improve silk production.

Singh also proposed developing cluster-based farming, citing that he wanted four districts -- Lunglei, Champhai, Saitual, and Siaha -- to be designated as Muga-producing districts, while he encouraged other districts to focus on different silk varieties. He said the Central

Silk Board would extend support to cluster-based initiatives to accelerate farmers' progress.

The Union Minister said Mizoram's climate and soil conditions are highly suitable for sericulture, and expressed satisfaction over the sector's recent growth rate of around 5.5 to 6 per cent annually.

According to him, over 6,000 farmers and nearly 19,000 people

across all the 11 districts of the state depend on sericulture as their primary source of livelihood.

Singh further called for structured competition among farmers, introduction of performance benchmarks, and incentives for top performers for farmers' progress.

He also indicated plans to link local weavers with institutions like the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIIFT) to enhance design, branding and market access.

State Sericulture Minister Lalhansanga, who accompanied the Union minister, acknowledged the benefits of central schemes and stressed the urgent need for infrastructure development in the sericulture sector.

He also sought continued assistance from the Centre. Lalhansanga pointed out that a processing unit has already been set up under Silk Samagra 2.0, and that cocoons produced in Mizoram are being marketed outside the state.

He also noted that sericulture is a key focus area under the state's flagship programme 'Bana Kaih' or handholding scheme. (PTI)

## MNF's resilience is rooted in divine appointment: Zoramthanga

**AIZAWL, May 4:** Mizo National Front (MNF) president Zoramthanga on Monday asserted that his party's resilience is rooted in divine appointment rather than political or material strength.

Addressing a function at the MNF office here, Zoramthanga said that the party was established by God to serve Him and spread the Gospel, and has been guided by divine purpose for over six decades.

"For over 60 years, God has guided us, and He often uses our weaknesses as a means for us to learn and reflect. To uplift the MNF, God has taught us lessons through our past experiences," the former chief minister said.

Zoramthanga's assertion came days after the party lost the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) polls to ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM).

Reaffirming the party's spiritual foundation, he said, "The MNF does not put its trust in the strength of horses, nor do we boast in chariots," echoing a Biblical scripture.

Zoramthanga highlighted the party's role in initiating reforms in the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), claiming that its efforts laid the groundwork for positive change



despite creating difficulties.

He, however, argued that these developments had also led to internal strains within the party, leading to political repercussions.

Hitting out at ZPM, the MNF chief said that since the party has not governed the AMC for even a single day, it is perceived by the public as a "pure virgin."

He said that ZPM holds significant influence across Aizawl constituencies and has been intensifying efforts to secure electoral gains, particularly during election periods.

"Almost all constituencies in Aizawl fall under ZPM influence, with many also represented by ministers. Despite past weak-

nesses, ZPM has been making strong efforts to achieve electoral success, working intensively during election periods to win public support," he said.

Zoramthanga further alleged that the present ZPM administration, headed by Chief Minister Lalduhoma, refused to release funds to the previous MNF-led AMC, which hindered the party's functioning in local administration.

He said that God credits the party's concern for Mizoram and its people as righteousness, and it will move forward without fear.

In the AMC polls held on April 21, the ZPM won 17 out of 19 seats, while the MNF and Congress bagged 1 each. (PTI)

## BJP's Daochier I Imchen wins Koridang bypoll in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, May 4:** BJP candidate Daochier I Imchen won the by-election to the Koridang assembly segment in Nagaland by 3,123 votes on Monday, according to the Election Commission.

He secured 7,317 votes, defeating Independent candidate Toshikaba, who polled 4,194 votes.

Another Independent candidate, Imtiwaping, finished third with 3,633 votes, while NPP nominee I Abenjang polled 3,219 votes. Congress candidate T Chalukumba Ao secured just 144 votes, while NOTA polled 48 votes.

With this victory, Imchen enters the 14th Nagaland assembly as the youngest legislator at 35.

He maintained a consistent lead across several polling stations, particularly in the Mangmetong and Longkhum areas, which ensured a decisive victory.

The by-election was necessitated following the demise of his father, Imkong I Imchen, a five-time MLA from the seat.

Imchen's victory is being seen as a continuation of his family's political hold over Koridang in Mokochung district.

Expressing gratitude, he said the mandate reflected the collective trust of the people.

"This victory belonged to every voter. I pledge to serve with integrity, accountability, and commitment to fulfilling the aspirations of the constituency," he said.

Imchen was the consensus candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Alliance (PDA), led by the Naga Peoples' Front (NPF).

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio congratulated Imchen, describing the result as a reflection of public confidence in the PDA and its vision for development.

He also thanked party workers for their support. Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton of the BJP said unity and collective vision were behind the victory.

Following political realignments, including the merger of the NCP with NDPP in May 2025 and the subsequent merger of NDPP with NPF in October, the present strength of the assembly stands at -- NPF 34, BJP 12, NPP 5, LJP (Ram Vilas) 2, RPI (Athawale) 2, JD(U) 1, and Independents 4. (PTI)

## Mizoram CM meets NITI Aayog officials, pushes for state's development, tourism agenda

**AIZAWL, May 4:** Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday met NITI Aayog member Dr V K Paul in New Delhi, and discussed with him a wide range of issues, including the state's development priorities and future collaboration, an official statement said.

Lalduhoma expressed gratitude for NITI Aayog's continued support, highlighting tangible gains in key sectors, particularly horticulture, the statement said.

He said that the recognition of Mizoram as the "Ginger Capital of India," is yielding positive outcomes.

The chief minister also pointed out that Mizoram is the first state to be declared fully literate, one of the cleanest and least corrupt states, and has made significant progress in promoting tourism.

He said that Mizoram remains one of the most peaceful states in the country.

"Recently, we have also reached a peace agreement with the last remaining armed group," Lalduhoma added.

During the meeting, Dr Paul lauded the Mizoram government for its effective coordination with



NITI Aayog and praised the leadership of the chief minister.

He said the partnership between the state and the national policy think tank has been productive, and noted that Mizoram is widely recognised by other states as a peaceful state.

State Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar, who was present at the meeting, joined discussions on upcoming joint initiatives, including a proposed Tourism Conclave to be organised in collaboration

with NITI Aayog, the statement said.

Officials said a pre-conclave meeting will be held in New Delhi later this month to finalise plans.

During the meeting, Dr Paul and other NITI Aayog officials outlined support measures such as strengthening Mizoram's tourism policy, facilitating free training under the Institute of Hotel Management' Ashok (IHM-A), and attracting investors in the tourism sector, they said. (PTI)

## BJP's victory in Bengal, Assam a moment of great pride, says Patton

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 4:** Nagaland deputy chief minister and BJP Legislature Party leader in the state assembly Y Patton on Monday described the BJP's historic victory in West Bengal and Assam as a moment of great pride for the party and its workers.

In a release, Patton said the results of the elections reflect the trust that the people from different parts of the country have placed in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and in the works being carried out by the party.

He congratulated Samik Bhat-tacharya, president, West Bengal BJP, and Dilip Saikia, president, Assam BJP, along with their respective state leadership teams, for



guiding the campaign with clarity and coordination.

Patton also extended special thanks to the people of Koridang for electing BJP candidate Daochier I Imchen as their representative in the by-election to the

Koridang assembly constituency.

He said the mandate given by the people of Koridang reflects their confidence in the candidate and in the collective leadership guiding the state forward.

He assured that the responsibility that comes with this mandate will be carried with sincerity and accountability.

He expressed his appreciation to Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio for extending full support to the campaign and for maintaining cooperation within the alliance.

Patton also thanked the BJP and Naga People's Front legislators of the state for coming together in support of the People's Democratic Alliance consensus candidate Imchen.

## BJP's top performance in Assam, Bengal will have positive effect in Manipur: CM

**IMPHAL, May 4:** Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Monday said the BJP's strong performance in the Assam and West Bengal elections would have a positive impact on the state, which goes to polls next year.

"BJP's outstanding performance in Assam and West Bengal elections will have a positive impact in the Manipur polls next year," Singh told reporters. "The unexpected majority in Bengal is the choice of India. India is a democratic country where all have the right to vote. I want to extend my wishes to the people of Bengal and Assam," he added.

On the public demand for implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in

Manipur, Singh said the government was trying to form a committee for the purpose.

"While the Assembly had previously adopted a resolution for its implementation, no steps had been taken so far," he said. Several Meitei-based civil organisations led by the Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity have been demanding the implementation of the NRC in the state to identify illegal immigrants. During the chief ministership of N Biren Singh, the Manipur Legislative Assembly in August 2022 had unanimously resolved "to establish the Population Commission of the State and also to introduce and enforce the National Register of Citizens," he added. (PTI)

## Tamang congratulates BJP on emphatic victories in Bengal, Assam

**GANGTOK, May 4:** Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday congratulated the BJP on its emphatic victories in the Assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry.

In a social media post, Tamang said the verdicts stand as a powerful endorsement of the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the decisive guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He added that the overwhelming support across these regions reflects the unwavering trust of people in a future driven by development, strong governance, and national progress.

These victories are also a tribute to the tireless dedication, perseverance, and grassroots strength of the party's karyakartas, whose relentless efforts have made this achievement possible, Tamang said. (PTI)

## Change was needed in Bengal for national security: Tripura CM

**AGARTALA, May 4:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said there was a desperate need for change in West Bengal as infiltration emerged as a major national security concern.

Addressing a rally in Agartala celebrating the party's electoral success, Saha said people of that state had been deprived of "real democracy" during the 35-year Left rule and the subsequent 15-year tenure of the TMC, and ultimately, Prime Minister Narendra Modi liberated them.

"There was a desperate need for regime change in Bengal for the nation's safety and security. Infiltration from across the border has become a major concern. With the BJP's victory, peace will return, and the use of Bengal as a corridor for infiltration will be stopped," he said. Saha claimed that for the first time in decades, people in West Bengal were able to exercise their democratic rights without fear or intimidation.

Saha dismissed TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's claim that the BJP would interfere in people's food habits, citing Tripura as an example.

"Tripura is among the highest fish-consuming states in the country despite the BJP being in power for two terms. The government will never interfere in people's food choices," he said.

Saha, who toured West Bengal extensively during the campaign trail, congratulated the PM, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president Nitin Nabin for the victory. (PTI)

## BJP wins bypoll to Dharmanagar Assembly seat in Tripura

**AGARTALA, May 4:** The BJP's Jahar Chakraborti on Monday won the Dharmanagar Assembly bypoll in Tripura by a margin of 18,920 votes over his nearest CPI(M) candidate.

Chakraborti secured 24,291 votes while his nearest rival, CPI(M)'s Amitabha Datta, polled 6,001 votes. The Congress' Chayan Bahattacharya got 5,936 votes. The bypoll was necessitated by the death of Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen in December 2025. The voter turnout in the bypoll was 79.84 per cent.

With the victory, the BJP's tally in the 60-member Assembly stands at 33, while its allies -- the Tpra Motha Party (TMP) has 13 MLAs, and the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura has one lawmaker.

Chief Minister Manik Saha expressed heartfelt gratitude to the people of Dharmanagar for favouring the BJP with an overwhelming mandate.

"I sincerely express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of Dharmanagar for electing Bharatiya Janata Party candidate, Jahar Chakraborty, with an overwhelming majority in the Dharmanagar by-election," he wrote on Facebook.

Saha added, "Your immense support and trust have made us even more responsible. We are committed to working tirelessly towards the overall development, peace, and progress of Dharmanagar. Let us move forward together and take this journey of development even further with everyone's support." (PTI)

**KOHIMA, May 4:** Emphasising the need to improve access to welfare benefits, Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav has suggested organising block and village-level camps for issuance of disability certificates in coordination with the Health and Family Welfare department.

The move aims to ensure that persons with disabilities can more easily access government schemes and entitlements.

The suggestion came during a review meeting with the Department of Social Welfare held at Lok Bhavan on Monday, a statement issued by PRO Lok Bhavan said.

During the meeting, Director Social Welfare, Tosheli Zhimomi, presented a comprehensive overview of key programmes being implemented across the state. These included flagship schemes under the Ministry of Women and Child Development such as Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti, focusing on nutrition, child protection, and women's empowerment.

The meeting also reviewed initiatives under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and



the Ministry of Rural Development, particularly for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

Progress in child protection mechanisms, including Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, and Child Helpline services, was discussed in detail.

While appreciating the department's efforts in reaching beneficiaries, the governor stressed the need to strengthen implementation, enhance public awareness, and improve inter-departmental coordination for more effective service delivery.

setting up of control rooms, deployment of machinery, and identification of vulnerable road stretches.

The Public Works Department (PWD) said that National Highways and major roads are under close monitoring, with alternative routes identified to maintain connectivity during emergencies. Preventive measures such as drainage clearance, slope stabilisation, and pre-positioning of resources are being carried out.

The Kohima district administration outlined its action plan, including formation of task forces, traffic management measures, medical preparedness, and ensuring adequate supply of essential commodities during the monsoon.

Stressing coordinated action, the governor directed all departments and agencies to remain vigilant, ensure timely emergency response, and disseminate information effectively to minimise disruptions during the monsoon season.

Senior officials from the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA), PWD, NHIDCL, district administration, and SEWAK attended the meetings. (PTI)

# Operation Sindoor showed world Indian military's capabilities: Rajnath

**PRAYAGRAJ (UP), May 4:** Days ahead of the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday described it as a "unique" example of how the Indian military utilised advanced technology to deliver a decisive blow to terror groups and their "patrons".

Addressing the inauguration event of North Tech symposium, Singh emphasised that while the armed forces "showed patience", they were clinical in destroying terrorist infrastructure.

He added that the operation served as a global reminder of the Indian military's capabilities.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. The operation targeted terror infrastructure in territories controlled by Pakistan.

The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10.

"The decisive response our soldiers gave to the terrorists and their patrons made the entire nation proud. It was a good thing that we showed patience and destroyed only the terrorists; otherwise, the whole world knows what our armed forces are capable of," Singh said.

He described the operation as a unique example of technology use.

"Advanced missile systems like Akash and BrahMos, along with the host of latest equipment, were used



in this operation," Singh said.

"This proved that our forces both understand changes and use them with confidence," he said.

Singh said that technology is evolving at an extraordinary pace in the present time, and perhaps never in human history has it changed so explosively.

"We have seen how drones and sensors have emerged as game-changing factors." He added, "Today, it is impossible to predict what can be turned into a weapon. If even a pager can be weaponized, then there is no limit to what might become a weapon in the future."

Singh said that India must develop capabilities to deliver strikes in ways that adversary nations could never have imagined.

Citing the current geopolitical environment, he underlined the need for the military to remain

alert and adapt to the changing environment.

"In today's complex and rapidly changing environment, there is only one mantra to move forward: adaptability. Changing ourselves according to changing circumstances should be our priority," he said. Explaining this, Singh called for "pro-active preparations" for any possible national security challenge.

"When I'm talking about proactive preparation, there's another important aspect to it -- the surprise element. We also need to develop such capabilities so that when the need arises, we can take action that the opponent never even thought of," he said.

"Let them get surprised. History bears witness that in war, the decisive edge has always been with the one who has the surprise element. I know that our armed forces are

working in this direction."

"But we need to be even more proactive and continue working in this direction," he said.

Singh also emphasized that there is no alternative to research in today's world.

The nature of future warfare is being decided in laboratories today. Therefore, the government has placed research at the centre of its priorities, he said.

"Through DRDO, we have decided to take research to the next level. DRDO is also bringing industry along with it. Twenty-five percent of research and development has been allocated to industry, academia, and startups," he said. Singh further said that a new policy for technology transfer has been implemented. Earlier, a 20 percent fee was charged for technology transfer, but now this fee has been completely waived for development-cum-production partners, he said.

Besides, he said that DRDO has started providing free access to its patents for Indian industry.

At this three-day symposium organized by the Indian Army's Northern and Central Commands along with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM), more than 250 companies working in the defence sector are showcasing their defence products and technologies.

The event was also attended by Army Chief Udaya Dwivedi and others. (PTI)

# Kerala turns page as Vijayan era ends with LDF defeat

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 4:** May 4, 2026, may come to be seen as a defining moment in Kerala's political history, marking not just the defeat of the CPI(M)-led LDF but also a turning point for Pinarayi Vijayan, one of the state's most dominant leaders.

After 16 years at the helm of the CPI(M), followed by two consecutive terms as CM, his long run of authority ended in a decisive electoral setback.

Vijayan, 81, rose from a modest, working-class background to lead Kerala at a time when his party, the CPI(M), was itself transitioning away from its older leadership mould, marking a generational and social shift within the organisation.

Over the years, he grew into an unquestioned centre of authority, running both the party and the government with a firm, centralised grip that defined his tenure as CM over the past decade.

He first became CM in 2016 and went on to secure a second consecutive term in 2021, an achievement that set him apart in Kerala's political history.

Known as a firm and disciplined leader, he built a reputation as a tough organiser during his long tenure as CPI(M) state secretary.

In 2026, Vijayan once again led the Left into the Assembly election, seeking a rare third consecutive term. But this time, the tide turned, with the CPI(M)-led alliance losing ground, including in several of its traditional strongholds in Kannur, his home district.

Vijayan himself faced a tough contest in his home turf of Dharmadam, often trailing during the counting. For many observers, the result marked a sharp political shift after a decade of his leadership.

Often described as a "tough communist with a firm administrative grip", Vijayan played a central role in pushing through several major infrastructure projects that were once considered difficult to implement in the state.

These included the execution of the ambitious GAIL gas pipeline, the completion of a key phase of the long-delayed Vizhinjam International Seaport project, and accelerated efforts in National Highway development in Kerala, where land acquisition—traditionally a politically sensitive issue—was carried out at an unprecedented pace to widen and upgrade key corridors.

Supporters credit his decisive leadership style with cutting through bureaucratic and political resistance to execute these proj-



ects.

A hard taskmaster, shrewd strategist, pragmatic administrator, and crisis manager, the two-time CM and longest-serving CPI(M) state secretary earned many epithets over his decades-long political career.

An organisational man to the core and a man of few words, the veteran weathered many storms while leading the party for 16 years and the state for two consecutive terms, breaking political conventions.

A survivor of police brutality during the Emergency, Vijayan's journey—both as CM and party state secretary—was far from smooth, but rather a challenging saga with many twists and turns.

He was hailed as a "double-breasted comrade" by some of his ardent supporters within the party.

However, his unyielding nature, fearlessness, and stubbornness earned him the label of "dictator" from opponents on many occasions.

Vijayan was born in 1944 to Mundayil Koran and Kalyani in Pinarayi in Kannur district.

He became the Kannur district secretary of the Kerala Students Federation while studying BA (Economics) at Brennen College in Thalassery, and also worked as a handloom weaver for a year after his schooling before continuing higher studies.

He later rose to become its state secretary and then state president.

In 1968, at the age of 24, Vijayan became a member of the CPI(M) Kannur district committee. Two years later, he was fielded from Koothuparamba and became an MLA at the age of 26.

He demonstrated organisational ability during his tenure as state secretary and also had a brief stint as Kerala's Power Minister from 1996 to 1998. However, allega-

tions linked to the SNC-Lavalin case, related to awarding contracts to a Canadian company for modernising hydel projects, dogged him for years, with political rivals using it to target him.

Vijayan consistently maintained that the case was politically motivated and that there was no wrongdoing.

While critics described him as a leader "with no smile on his face" and one of the most formidable politicians in Kerala, rivals also accused him at times of deviating from the party line.

During his tenure as state secretary, internal tensions between him and rival V S Achuthanandan came to the fore, even leading to both being suspended from the politburo in 2007 before being reinstated later.

Controversies, including the 2012 murder of RMP leader T P Chandrasekharan, also cast a shadow during his leadership period as party secretary.

Yet even critics acknowledged his political acumen and crisis management skills, which helped the Left retain power in 2021.

Though not initially as popular as Achuthanandan among grassroots workers, Vijayan gradually built his own connect with the public during his years in power.

From handling the Nipah outbreak and the Covid-19 pandemic to dealing with floods and Cyclone Ockhi, he projected himself as a leader focused on the state's interests.

At the same time, his tenure was marked by multiple controversies, including the gold smuggling case, the dollar smuggling case, the Sprinklr deal, and allegations involving his former principal secretary, M Sivasankar. Despite these, Vijayan remained defiant, repeatedly challenging his opponents to prove the charges. (PTI)

## BJP's victory in WB gift to country from Modi-Shah

**INDORE, May 4:** With the BJP on course to win the West Bengal assembly polls, Madhya Pradesh minister Kailash Vijayvargiya on Monday became emotional and said it was a huge gift from PM Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the people of the country.

He alleged that BJP workers had suffered immensely under the TMC government.

"These are tears of joy. I am not a man who fears," he added. He was also falsely implicated in serious cases, said Vijayvargiya, who had served as the BJP's general secretary in-charge of West Bengal. The BJP's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections was as important as the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and the elimination of Naxalism, he asserted.

"The BJP's victory in West Bengal is the result of the magic of Prime Minister Modi's leadership and Home Minister Shah's strategy. This victory is a huge gift from Modi and Shah to the people of the country because under Trinamool Congress rule, West Bengal was becoming a centre of anti-national activities," he told reporters here. During the TMC's tenure, terrorists, illegal weapons, and counterfeit currency were entering the country through West Bengal, said Vijayvargiya.

Asserting that the TMC and its allies were patronising "anti-national elements" solely out of concern for their own positions, the MP minister said West Bengal, under the Mamata Banerjee government, had become a "gateway to compromise the country's internal security".

Addressing media persons in his hometown of Indore, the BJP leader was seen wiping away his tears. Vijayvargiya claimed that during his six-year tenure as the general secretary, 300 BJP workers were murdered in West Bengal, and others were severely harassed. (PTI)

## Poll results: Fortunes turn tail for INDIA bloc in less than a month

**NEW DELHI, May 4:** Fortunes can turn quickly, and the INDIA bloc learnt it the hard way on Monday.

The resounding defeats of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the DMK and the CPI(M)-led Left Front come less than a month after a united Opposition handed a rare legislative setback to the ruling NDA in Lok Sabha, leveraging its increased bench strength following the 2024 general elections.

While these losses at the state level will not immediately alter the INDIA bloc's numbers in Parliament, Monday's results are likely to leave a deeper imprint on the coalition's internal dynamics, which have been shaped as much by shared purpose as by underlying contradictions.

The BJP's capture of West Bengal, among the frontiers that had eluded the party so far and which sends as many as 42 MPs to Lok Sabha, holds the potential to expand its footprint further in 2029. It also opens a new window for the party to augment its Rajya Sabha strength.

However, to begin with, the setbacks for the TMC and the DMK, key pillars of the Opposition and the third- and fourth-largest contributors to its Lok Sabha strength, are expected to further dent the bloc's morale, already strained by a string of electoral reverses since its general election gains that now risk appearing fleeting.

At the same time, the verdict is set to trigger another subtle but significant shift within the INDIA bloc -- the likelihood of renewed calls for a change in leadership appears diminished.

Regional parties that had earlier questioned Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's leadership have themselves suffered electoral reverses, reducing the appetite for internal challenges, at least in the immediate aftermath of these results.

Over the past decade, regional ruling parties, particularly the TMC, have rarely missed an opportunity to project themselves,



sometimes subtly and at other times assertively, as the principal drivers of the Opposition, often pointing to their record of taking on and defeating the BJP in their respective states in successive elections since 2014, the year that marked the rise of an ascendant BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This dynamic played out as recently as last month, a day before the introduction of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha, when the INDIA bloc huddled at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence to chalk out a floor coordination strategy aimed at blocking its passage.

The meeting, also attended by Rahul, saw participation from representatives of almost all major Opposition parties, including the then ruling TMC and DMK. At the meeting, the TMC indicated it would be unable to spare many MPs from its 28-member contingent due to the ongoing election campaign.

Rahul pushed back firmly, arguing that such a move would effectively aid the BJP. The intervention prompted the party to revise its stance and send as many as 21 MPs to Delhi.

A united Opposition eventually brought down the bill. However, Rahul's remarks did not sit well with sections of the TMC leadership, with some senior leaders privately remarking that before "lecturing allies who know how to defeat the BJP", he should reflect

on his own "dismal track record".

The TMC's defeat, therefore, marks a significant inflection point. It weakens one of the most vocal claimants to Opposition leadership and blunts its ability to assert primacy within the INDIA bloc, potentially recalibrating internal equations in favour of the Congress.

What may now rankle the TMC further is the fact that the Congress, which broke off its alliance with the Left and disregarded calls from a section of its leadership for a tie-up with the TMC, secured a vote share of around 3.12 per cent, along with two seats in the minority-dominated Murshidabad district in the assembly polls.

The TMC fell nearly five percentage points behind the BJP in the elections. The Congress-led UDF also dislodged the CPIM-led LDF from power in Kerala, leaving the Left, another major constituent of the INDIA bloc, without the control of any state for the first time since 1977.

In Tamil Nadu, meanwhile, efforts by Congress leaders such as Manickam Tagore and Praveen Chakravarthy, widely considered faces of the Rahul Gandhi-led lobby, to ditch the DMK and tie up with Vijay-led TVK bore no fruit.

The results, however, suggest that Congress could have gained from the shift that Rahul was pushing for.

"A combination of Rahul Gandhi and Vijay would have swept Tamil Nadu," Chakravarthy told reporters on Monday. (PTI)

## Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's soul will be overwhelmed: Chouhan

**BHOPAL, May 4:** Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday hailed the BJP's stellar performance in the West Bengal polls and asserted the soul of Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee would be "overwhelmed today".

The BJP was on track to win almost 200 seats in the 294-member West Bengal assembly, as per data from the Election Commission.

"As a worker, my heart is filled with emotion. A resolution has been fulfilled, a dream has been realised. The soul of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee would be overwhelmed today," Chouhan told reporters here while offering them 'jhalumuri', a street snack made of puffed rice that is popular in several parts of the east India, including West Bengal. Mukherjee was the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951, which later emerged as the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980.

"The victory in Bengal under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is amazing and extraordinary. The entire country believes that it is possible only if Modi is there. This is a manifestation of immense respect and faith in Modi," Chouhan said.

"This is the victory of the idea of a developed India. Cheap vote bank politics has been rejected." (PTI)

## BJP's Harshad Parmar wins Umreth assembly bypoll in Gujarat

**ANAND (GUJARAT), May 4:** BJP candidate Harshad Parmar won the bypoll to Umreth assembly seat in Gujarat on Monday, defeating his nearest rival from Congress, Bhurugurajsinh Chauhan, by a margin of more than 30,000 votes.

Parmar bagged 85,500 votes, while Chauhan polled 54,757 votes, as per data on the Election Commission's website.

The bypoll, held on April 23, was necessitated due to the death of sitting BJP MLA Govind Parmar on March 6 following a heart attack. The BJP fielded his son Harshad Parmar, and this was his first major election.

Congress nominee Chauhan served as the president of the Umreth taluka panchayat for three consecutive terms between 2000 and 2015. He is currently the Opposition party's coordinator for the central zone in the state.

Parmar dedicated his victory to his late father, and thanked the people of his constituency for voting overwhelmingly in his favour by braving extreme heat.

"Today's lead is historical for a bypoll. Because of the work my late father has done in this area, the people here decided from the very first day that they will only vote for me. With their blessings I have won today by a huge margin," Parmar told reporters.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel also congratulated Parmar and thanked the people of Umreth.

"Heartfelt congratulations to Shri Harshadbhai Parmar, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate, for the resounding victory in the Umreth Assembly by-election. Hearty congratulations also to all the party workers who are truly rare gems," he said.

"Thanks to the people of Umreth for their unwavering faith in the BJP's politics of development. The river of service for development and public welfare in Umreth will continue to flow unceasingly, and Umreth will make a splendid contribution for the creation of 'Developed Gujarat'," the CM further said in his post on X. (PTI)

## WB polls: Verdict snaps TMC's grip, forces Mamata's TMC into toughest political reset

**KOLKATA, May 4:** West Bengal's assembly poll verdict signals more than a change of government, it marks a structural rupture in the political order Mamata Banerjee built over the past decade and a half, with the Trinamool Congress (TMC) facing its most consequential moment of recalibration.

For a party that has defined Bengal's political grammar since 2011, the loss is not merely electoral, it is systemic, evident by the BJP's decisive breach in a system that rested on centralised authority, welfare delivery and a tightly controlled organisational pyramid.

"The TMC's model was built on access to power. Once that axis shifts, the entire structure has to be reimagined," said political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty.

The numbers underline the depth of the churn. The BJP's vote share rising to around 44.8 per cent from 38 per cent in the 2021 assembly polls marks both consolidation and expansion. Conversely, the TMC's dip to nearly 41.7 per cent from 48 per cent during the same elections reflects a steady erosion of its social coalition — particularly in semi-urban belts and among segments that

had anchored its 2021 sweep.

A key point appears to be the 177 constituencies where voter deletions exceeded past victory margins. In these seats, the BJP not only held ground where it was already strong but also made significant inroads into TMC-held territories, suggesting that what appeared to be a technical variable has translated into a political shift. "This is not a wave in the conventional sense—it is a redistribution of political ground. The BJP has moved from being a challenger to a system-altering force," said another political commentator. The TMC's biggest strength—centralisation—has also emerged as its principal vulnerability. With authority concentrated at the top, the party has limited institutional buffers when that layer is weakened.

Also, unlike the Aam Aadmi Party, which expanded beyond Delhi to build governing footholds in Punjab and a growing presence in states like Goa, the All India Trinamool Congress remains overwhelmingly focused on Bengal. This geographic concentration now amplifies the scale of the setback, leaving the party without an alternative power base to cushion the loss.

Inside the TMC, the implications are immediate



and potentially destabilising.

A party whose cohesion has long been tied to administrative control, patronage networks and electoral dominance now faces the challenge of holding its organisational structure together without those levers. In the absence of strong ideological cohesion, a section of leaders and elected representatives—many of whom aligned with the party through access to power—could become vulnerable to defections, including to the BJP.

This raises the prospect of an existential phase for the TMC. For Banerjee, this election is perhaps the defining battle of her political life. After three

successive terms and over a decade and a half at the helm, she was not just contesting to retain power but to defend the political ecosystem she had built. Few leaders embody their party as completely as Banerjee does. The distinction between leader and organisation has, over time, blurred into near-complete overlap, making the current setback as much personal as political.

At 71, and after three terms in office, the road to a comeback appears steeper.

W h i l e Banerjee has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to rebound from setbacks—from Singur to Nandigram—the current moment presents a different scale of challenge, where time, organisational fatigue and a resurgent opponent converge.

Yet, her politics has historically thrived in resistance. Stripped of power, she could seek to return to that idiom—recalibrating the party from a governance machine to an opposition force.

Setbacks have often served as points of recalibration. Yet, this moment is different. It punctures the aura of inevitability that had come to define her leadership and redraws the relationship between mandate and authority.

Nationally, the implications are layered. Losing

Bengal weakens her immediate leverage within the opposition bloc, but does not erase her relevance. A combative Banerjee outside power could still shape opposition discourse—though from a diminished perch.

The spotlight is also likely to be on Abhishek Banerjee, whose organisational role may expand in the coming phase. But managing internal contradictions without the cushion of power could prove significantly more complex.

At the core of the TMC's defeat also lies the accumulated weight of incumbency. Banerjee had, in previous elections, managed to convert anti-incumbency into electoral advantage. This time, however, the pressures of governance proved harder to deflect. Corruption allegations, recruitment scams, bureaucratic fatigue and a more cohesive opposition campaign combined to narrow the party's margin for manoeuvre. The narrative, once tightly controlled, began to slip.

For the BJP, the verdict marks a long-sought breakthrough. But it also brings the challenge of governing a politically charged state where its principal adversary remains intact, if momentarily weakened. (PTI)

# BJP 'captures' states, does not win polls through popular support: BJD & Cong

'They (BJP) have captured states, not through votes but by their poll management and ECI'

**BHUBANESWAR, May 4:** As the BJP is much ahead in trends in West Bengal, where counting of votes is underway, Odisha's opposition parties BJD and Congress on Monday alleged that the saffron party "captures" states using central agencies and "does not win" by people's votes.

The BJP, on the other hand, claimed that TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been taught a lesson for insulting Lord Jagannath by naming a Digha temple a "Dham".

According to the EC website, the BJP won 11 seats in West Bengal and is leading in 186 others till 5 pm. The TMC was declared the winner in two seats and is ahead in 88 others.

"They (BJP) are winning elections by hook or by crook by using ECI, ED, CBI and other agencies. There is no magic behind the elections in West Bengal and Assam. Had there been any magic, why did chief ministers, union ministers and scores of leaders from different parts of the country campaign



in West Bengal?" Mallik asked.

Replying to a question, the BJD leader said that the BJP's rise in West Bengal would not impact any regional party in eastern India.

"How can it impact regional parties? Has TMC been finished? Mamata is fighting, and the manner in which the BJP people attacked the woman leader shows the BJP's hollow commitment to women's empowerment," Mallik said. "They (BJP) have used all

means against a woman leader; they used all means to capture the state," the 7-time MLA and former minister said.

Mallik also accused the BJP of misleading the people of both Odisha and Bengal.

Odisha Congress president Bhakta Charan Das also criticised the BJP and alleged that the saffron party have manipulated polls.

"BJP's election management has a big role behind this. You see how

₹ 10,000 was transferred to the account of voters during the Bihar polls. This is totally against the election norms. They violate all rules. How could a Parliament session be convened when the election process in Bengal was underway? This session aimed to motivate women voters of Bengal. The Election Commission did not stop it," he said.

This election could be the victory of the Election Commission, Das claimed.

"They (BJP) have captured states, not through votes but by their poll management and ECI," Das said, wondering how the anti-incumbency could not become a factor in Assam while it is applicable in West Bengal.

Senior BJP leader and Odisha's Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in an X post said, "BJP victorious in Anga (Bihar), Banga (Bengal) and Kalinga (Odisha)."

Parida, who hails from Puri district, claimed that Mamata Banerjee was taught a lesson for daring to insult Lord Jagannath by naming Digha temple a "Dham".

"Mahaprabhu Shri Jagannath does not tolerate arrogance; this has been proven in the West Bengal elections. After her brother (BJD chief Naveen Patnaik) suffered the consequences of dishonouring Mahaprabhu Shri Jagannath, now sister Mamata's arrogance has been shattered," Parida said.

She, however, did not elaborate on how former chief minister Naveen Patnaik dishonoured Lord Jagannath.

The deputy CM also expressed gratitude to the people of Assam for supporting the development policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma once again.

Odisha's Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Narayan Raj claimed that Mamata Banerjee paid a heavy price for destroying "Sonar Bangla" (golden Bengal), while another Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Seo thanked the people of West Bengal for bringing change in the system and placing their trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. (PTI)

## Portion of bridge over Ganga collapses in Bihar's Bhagalpur, probe ordered



**PATNA, May 4:** A part of a key bridge over the Ganga river collapsed in Bihar's Bhagalpur district early Monday, developing a wide gap in the middle of the structure and prompting the authorities to order an investigation, officials said.

No casualty was reported in the incident that stopped traffic movement on the 4.7-kilometre-long Vikramshila Setu, which connects Bhagalpur and Naugachia in the district.

The authorities have arranged steamers and boats to ferry people from one side of the river to the other following the incident. Opposition parties alleged that the collapse of a portion of the bridge proves corruption in the BJP-led government, and accused the authorities of neglecting the health of the bridge, which was built in 2001.

Bhagalpur District Magistrate Nawal Kishor Choudhary said, "Around 12:50 am, a gap was formed near pillar number 133 of the Vikramshila Setu. Shortly after that, a major slab fell into the river." There is no information about any vehicle falling with the slab or casualties, he said.

"As soon as officials received information about the gap between the two slabs, they acted promptly to remove all vehicles and people from the spot," the DM said.

Stating that traffic is blocked on both sides of the bridge, he urged people to take an alternate route via Munger.

Bihar State Bridge Construction Corporation (BSBCC) Chairman Chandrashekhar Singh said that Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary has spoken with the Defence Minister and the Army chief to ensure alternative arrangements for people with the help of Border Road Organisation and the army setup.

Meanwhile, arrangements for boats and steamers have been made to ensure transportation of people and small vehicles, and a target has been set for repair of the bridge within three months, he said.

"In the long term, considering high traffic pressure on Vikramshila Setu, a parallel four-lane bridge is being constructed, which will be completed by December this year," said the BSBCC chairman. On the probable causes behind the accident, Bhagalpur DM said, "An expert engineering committee has been notified, which will investigate the incident."

Asked whether there was damage to the protection wall near the collapsed portion, Choudhary said this could only be ascertained after a proper inspection.

In March this year, a video clip surfaced on social media showing the bridge's protection walls in a deteriorated state. (PTI)

## Acid attack cases: SC flags alarming increase, asks Centre to consider enhancing punishment

**NEW DELHI, May 4:** Flagging the "alarming increase" in the cases of "barbaric" acid attacks, the Supreme Court on Monday suggested that the Centre consider enhancing the punishment for such offences besides shifting the onus on the accused to prove that he is not guilty.

Under criminal jurisprudence, the onus to prove the guilt beyond a reasonable doubt against the accused lies on the prosecution unless the law provides otherwise.

The apex court directed that pending a suitable amendment, persons who are forcibly made to consume acid or have suffered internal injuries without any outer disfigurement would fall within the ambit of acid attack victims under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said this clarificatory explanation shall be deemed to have been included from the very inception when the 2016 Act came into force.

"It will be appreciated if the ministry concerned formally notifies the deemed amendment," the

bench said. The top court passed the order while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by acid attack survivor Shaheen Malik who has sought that such victims be categorised as persons with disabilities to ensure access to welfare schemes.

During the hearing on Monday, the CJI observed that the punishment prescribed for acid attacks was not proving to be a deterrent.

"The number of cases has increased. Barbaric and brutal acid attacks have been made," the CJI said, adding, "Don't you think that the punishment should have been harsher?"

The bench said there has been an "alarming increase" in the number of acid attack cases since 2013 which itself is a serious issue of consideration.

It suggested that the government should consider having adequate enhancement of punishment for such offences, besides shifting the onus on the accused to prove that he is not guilty. The bench also suggested that assets of those convicted in such heinous cases be attached to compensate the victims of acid attacks. (PTI)

## BJP exudes confidence about WB victory, says people voted for change

**KOLKATA, May 4:** BJP leaders in West Bengal on Monday exuded confidence about winning the assembly elections, asserting that people have voted for a change.

Counting of votes for the 293 seats of the assembly began at 8 am, as the TMC eyes a fourth straight term in power and the BJP seeks to script history by forming its first government in the state.

Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari asserted that the BJP will form the next government in the state.

Adhikari is seeking a re-election from Nandigram and taking on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur.

"BJP will form the government," he said.

Maintaining that Muslim voters have not gone en masse with the TMC in this election, he claimed that Hindu votes have consolidated in favour of the BJP.

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said he was confident of a landslide victory for the party.

"People of the state have already rejected the Trinamool Congress government, and in a few hours, the overwhelming majority of the seats will confirm that in the fight between Mamata Banerjee and the people, people have rejected Ma-

mata Banerjee," Bhattacharya said outside a counting centre in Kolkata.

BJP's Kharagpur Sadar candidate, Dilip Ghosh, claimed that people have voted for change.

"The counting will be conducted in the same manner as the polling. People have voted to bring a new government," he told PTI Videos.

BJP's Noapara candidate Arjun Singh said the election will blaze the trail for change.

"We firmly believe, with full confidence and trust, that this change will happen and the BJP will win the elections," he said.

BJP's Gaighata candidate Subrata Thakur said his party will get more than 180 seats.

"With Prime Minister Narendra Modi guiding us from Delhi, we will form a double-engine government. In past elections, there were strong-arm tactics. This year the EC ensured free and fair polls. People have voted for 'poriborton'," he said.

BJP leader Sishir Bajoria said his party will make a clean sweep in the elections.

"Have you heard anything from Didi's (CM Mamata Banerjee) side? They have fallen silent," he said. (PTI)

## 7 killed in four road accidents in Jharkhand

**RANCHI, May 4:** Seven people, including three minors, were killed in four road accidents in Jharkhand over the past 24 hours, police said on Monday. In Giridih district, on Monday, two persons, including an 8-year-old minor girl, were killed, and around 14 to 15 others suffered injuries, after a collision occurred between two four-wheelers. The accident occurred on National Highway-2 near Ghanghri village, a police officer said.

"The girl died on the spot, while a 55-year-old man, whose identification is yet to be established, succumbed to his injuries during treatment in a govt hospital. The others who sustained injuries are undergoing treatment," said Anjan Kumar, the officer in charge of Bagodar police station. In Palamu district, three persons, including two minors, were killed in two separate road accidents within the Panki police station limits. Both accidents happened on Sunday evening between 7.30 pm to 8 pm at two locations, a police official said.

"The first incident took place in Tetrai village, where Chandan Kumar (23), a resident of Naudih village in Lesligan police station area was killed after his motorcycle was hit by an unknown vehicle," said a police officer. (PTI)

## SC asks Dubai-based Indian to approach embassy over travel ban

**NEW DELHI, May 4:** The Supreme Court on Monday declined to grant relief to a Dubai-based Indian national who alleged harassment by local authorities there, claiming he had been wrongfully subjected to a travel ban.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi heard petitioner Asif Azad, an engineer who appeared through video conferencing from a Dubai mall, and directed him to approach the Indian Embassy in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for assistance.

Azad, a permanent resident of Kerala, alleged that he was entrapped and impli-

cated by some drug mafia and was facing a travel ban in Dubai due to a case against him in the southern state.

"We have heard the petitioner in person. We are not inclined to accept the story as stated here. Let him approach the embassy," the bench ordered.

When Azad alleged that certain MLAs of Kerala are "against him", the CJI quipped that he should "take advantage of the changed regime".

During the proceedings, the petitioner was asked about his location, to which he responded that he was appearing in person via video conferencing from a shopping

mall in Dubai.

Upon learning this, the CJI asked how far the Indian Embassy was from his current location.

When Azad replied that it was approximately 20 kilometres away, the CJI remarked, "So go to the Indian Embassy. There is public transport available."

The petitioner said that he may be caught if he goes to the embassy and alleged that a "drug mafia" had orchestrated a conspiracy against him, involving the forgery of cheques, which resulted in the Dubai courts imposing a travel ban on him.

"I am being called an illegal immigrant. They kicked me at night; the CCTV has evidence of it. Please restore my Article 21 rights," Azad said.

Azad said the investigations in the case against him in Kerala were one-sided and that no progress had been made in the probe for 41 days.

He alleged that certain MLAs of Kerala are also against him. The CJI referred to current political changes taking place in Kerala and said, "Now some change is happening as you can see on TV. So, take advantage of the changed regime". (PTI)

## NDA's victory in polls reflects people's continued, growing confidence in PM Modi: Andhra CM

**AMARAVATI, May 4:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said the NDA's victory in some state polls reflected people's continued and growing confidence in the leadership of PM Narendra Modi and his vision for a Viksit Bharat (developed India).

Around noon, the NDA was leading in 152 seats in West Bengal, and a similar trend was continuing in Assam.

"NDA's victory today reflects the people's continued and growing confidence in the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji and his vision for Viksit Bharat," Naidu said in a post on X.

According to the CM, the election results reinforce the NDA as the confluence of people's aspirations, guided by the spirit of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas". (Together with all, development for all, trust of all.)

He said the journey towards a Viksit Bharat had gained further strength with this outcome.

Naidu said people's trust and support for the NDA's commitment to development was clearly evident, adding that it was also a message to political parties that "Young India" values credibility, development, and a genuine connection with citizens.

He extended his heartfelt congratulations to PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP National President Nitin Nabin, all NDA winners, party workers, and the people for what he called a historic mandate.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and IT Minister Nara Lokesh also said the election results across states reflected voters' strong desire for change and growing trust in Prime Minister Modi's leadership.

The awareness of voters was once again clearly vis-

ible in the election results of four states and one union territory, with people re-electing governments they favoured and decisively rejecting those they did not.

"People strongly desired change and expressed it firmly through their verdict," said Kalyan, noting that the BJP's performance, particularly in West Bengal, reflected determination and leadership.

According to the deputy CM, the BJP retaining influence in Assam and Puducherry while expanding its footprint in West Bengal demonstrated public confidence in governance driven by commitment and vision.

He said sustained efforts by Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the years had helped the BJP earn voter trust, with people believing a "double-engine government" would ensure safety and prosperity.

Kalyan extended congratulations to PM Modi, Amit Shah, BJP National President Nitin Nabin, West Bengal leader Suwendu Adhikari, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Puducherry CM N Rangasamy for their electoral success.

He noted that voters in Tamil Nadu and Kerala also signalled a strong preference for change, highlighting the emergence of new political forces and shifting public expectations.

Further, congratulating Vijay, he said the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader's significant performance within a short time reflected support from a large section of the electorate.

"Congratulations to Vijay on an astounding electoral debut in Tamil Nadu. The outcome reflects the evolving aspirations of the state's electorate and adds a new dimension to its political landscape," Lokesh said in a post on X. (PTI)

## Reliefs sought in plea concerning Aadhaar require legislative intervention, says SC

**NEW DELHI, May 4:** The Supreme Court on Monday said the issuance of new Aadhaar cards only to citizens up to the age of six years require legislative intervention and appropriate amendments in the existing legal framework.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking direction to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to issue new Aadhaar cards only to citizens up to the age of six years.

The bench said the appropriate recourse for the petitioner would be to bring all these issues to the notice of the State and other stakeholders to enable them to take cognisance of them. It disposed of the petition with a direction that it be treated as a representation on behalf of the petitioner.

The plea filed by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay had also sought a direction to frame stringent guidelines for issuance of Aadhaar to adolescents and adults to stop infiltrators from masquerading as Indian citizens.

It had sought a direction to the authorities to install display boards at common service centres stating



that the 12-digit unique identification number was only a "proof of identity" and not a proof of citizenship, address or date of birth.

"As may be seen from the nature of reliefs, most of these require legislative intervention and appropriate amendments in the existing legal framework," the bench said.

Upadhyay told the bench that the UIDAI has issued 144 crore Aadhaar and almost 99 per cent Indians have been enrolled. "Point out these issues to the Parliament and the government. They will take care of them," the bench observed.

The petitioner said it was not an adversarial litigation and the plea

was for preventing infiltrators from getting Aadhaar.

He referred to the issue of fake documents and said anyone with a rent agreement can get an Aadhaar. "You raise your grievances to the Union government. They will take appropriate steps," the bench said. The bench, without expressing any opinion on the merits, disposed of the petition with a direction that it be treated as a representation on behalf of the petitioner.

Besides all the states and Union Territories, the plea had made the UIDAI -- which is the authority that issues Aadhaar -- and the Union ministries of home, law and

justice, and electronics and information technology as parties.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, said Aadhaar, originally intended as a proof of identity, has increasingly become a "foundational document" enabling individuals to obtain other identification documents, such as ration cards, domicile certificates and voter identity cards.

"The UIDAI has issued 144 crore Aadhaar and 99 per cent Indians have been enrolled. Therefore, the petitioner is filing this writ petition as a PIL under Article 32, seeking a direction to UIDAI to issue new Aadhaar to children only and frame new stringent guidelines for adolescents and adults, so as to stop infiltrators from getting it and masquerading as Indian citizens," the plea said. It said the need to file the plea arose when the petitioner came to know the manner in which infiltrators are able to procure Aadhaar through a verification process that is weak and can be easily manipulated.

"Foreigners apply for Aadhaar under the 'foreign' category. But infiltrators apply for Aadhaar under the 'Indian citizen' category and get it easily made." (PTI)

# Saira Banu shares emotional post about her bond with Hema Malini and Dharmendra

Veteran actor Saira Banu has shared an emotional post about her friendship with Hema Malini and the equation that she and Dilip Kumar shared for Dharmendra, who passed away last November.

Sharing a picture with Hema Malini, Banu recalled how she was "simply mesmerised" by her beauty when she first saw her on the sets of "Deewana" in 1966. They shared rooms next to each other at the Krishna Raj Sagar Dam while Banu was shooting for the Raj Kapoor starrer.

Hema Malini made her Bollywood debut opposite Raj

Kapoor with "Sapno Ka Saudagar" in 1968.

"Our rooms were next to each other, which meant our days, quite naturally, became shared. We would sit for hours in the verandah, speaking of everything that came to mind, beauty, skin care, little routines, matters that felt so important then, and perhaps were, in their own gentle way," Banu posted on Instagram, sharing that their mothers would also participate in those conversations.

Banu said that despite the passage of time, "little, in essence, has changed" for them.

"Some friendships do not ask to be maintained, they simply endure. With her, there is no effort, no need to explain or revisit. There is only understanding, a familiarity that time, in all its passing, has not diminished."

Banu, who worked with Dharmendra on films such as "Aayee Milan Ki Bela", "Aadmi Aur Insaan", "Resham Ki Dori" and "Jwaar Bhata", also reminisced about the bond they shared.

"And somewhere in those thoughts, I found myself thinking of Dharmendra ji, of his warmth, of the sincerity with which he held his affec-

tions. The love and regard he had for Dilip sahib was never something he needed to declare; it was understood, in the way he spoke of him, with a respect that came from somewhere very deep," Banu said.

Dharmendra died in November last year at the age of 89. Banu said some bonds are special as they don't announce themselves.

"They are simply lived, over years, in ways both seen and unseen. And in moments like these, one realises not everything that is precious belongs to the past. Some of it remains with us still," she added. (PTI)



## 'GLADIATORS', DOCUMENTARY ON AJITH KUMAR'S MOTORSPORT JOURNEY, ANNOUNCED

Tamil superstar Ajith Kumar's team has unveiled "Gladiators - In Pursuit of Challenges", a documentary chronicling the actor's motorsport journey, on his 55th birthday.

The documentary, which will be released in theatres soon, is presented by Ajith Kumar Sports Services LLC. Its teaser was launched on Friday evening.

"Gladiators" is a film on Ajith Kumar's motorsport journey, chasing the impossible. The race begins soon," read the official social media announcement by the actor's team.

The documentary, directed by AL Vijay, focuses on Ajith's life as a professional racer -- the preparation, the challenges and the emotion that go into competing at the international level.

One of Tamil cinema's biggest stars, Ajith has been pursuing professional motorsport alongside his acting career for several years, competing in international racing series including the Asian Le Mans Series and the 24H Se-

ries European Series.

The approximately 90-minute film features exclusive footage from races Ajith participated in across Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Europe. Music has been composed by GV Prakash Kumar, with editing by Anthony.

Among the racing highlights likely to feature in the documentary is Ajith's podium finish at the Dubai 24H 2025, where his team Ajith Kumar Racing secured third place at the Dubai Autodrome.

The gruelling 24-hour race tests speed, strategy and endurance, and the result came days after Ajith's car crashed during a practice session ahead of the event, though the actor escaped unhurt. He participated in the race alongside teammates Mathieu Detry, Fabian Duffieux and Cameron McLeod.

On the acting front, Ajith was last seen in "Good Bad Ugly," directed by Adhik Ravichandran. He will reportedly reunite with Ravichandran for his 64th feature film. (PTI)

## Spike Lee praises 'Michael'; defends against controversy over exclusion of child sex abuse claims

Filmmaker Spike Lee has defended "Michael", the new biopic on 'King of Pop' Michael Jackson, against criticism that it does not show child abuse claims against the late singer.

Directed by Antoine Fuqua, the new biopic is a hit at the box office and features Michael Jackson's nephew Jaafar Jackson in the title role.



"First of all, if you're a movie critic, and you're complaining about the stuff, all this other stuff—but the movie ends at '88. The stuff you're talking about, accusations, happen (later)," Lee told CNN.

"So you're critiquing the film on something that you want in, but it doesn't work in the timeline of the film. But people showed up. Worldwide, people showed their love."

The filmmaker said he misses Jackson, who died in 2009 at the age of 50 from acute propofol intoxication.

"I miss Mike. I miss Prince. I mean, these are my brothers. I worked with both of them. Both beautiful, beautiful people."

Fuqua had also explained why he did not include the allegations of child sexual abuse against Jackson in this movie, saying they planned to do sequel to the story later.

"Unless you can truly take your time, let's go back to the beginning and really show people who he was on the stage. He's a superhero on the stage. Just like a human being, movies have the power of empathy to just say this is a human being. No one is perfect," Fuqua told Deadline. (PTI)

## Riteish Deshmukh-starrer 'Raja Shivaji' earns ₹ 23.90 crore at box office

"Raja Shivaji", featuring Riteish Deshmukh, has collected over ₹ 20 crore at the domestic box office.

The Jio Studios and Mumbai Film Company film is directed by Deshmukh and released in theatres on Friday in Marathi and Hindi. It features the actor in the role of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

The makers shared the box office numbers with a post on their official Instagram handle on Sunday. It featured the poster with the box office numbers written over it.

The film earned ₹ 12.40 crore nett at the domestic box office on the first day and collected ₹ 11.50 crore on Saturday. The total collection of the film stands at ₹ 23.90 crore nett at the domestic box office.

"A victory shaped by every voice of the Swarajya. Day 1 & 2 India NBOC à '23.90 Cr\* Book your tickets now | U/A 16+ | Marathi & Hindi. The Founder of Hindavi Swarajya. Based on the inspiring life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Raja Shivaji in cinemas now," read the caption. (PTI)

## Jammu International Film Festival to be held on September 28 and 29

The fifth edition of the Jammu International Film Festival (JIFF) will be held from September 28 to 29 in Jammu, marking a significant milestone in the region's cultural and cinematic landscape.

Submissions will open from Wednesday and can be made online through FilmFreeway.

"The fifth edition of JIFF will be held on September 28 and 29 in Jammu. The organisation remains committed to promoting art and culture through such initiatives," Vomed director and organiser of the event, Rohit Bhat, told reporters here.

"What began as a passionate initiative has evolved into a sustained movement, with JIFF completing five editions and, along with the International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS), reaching a total of nine film festival editions in Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Senior actor Kusum Tikoo, who has been associated with the festival since its inception, said the platform has grown into an important cultural milestone in the region.

The festival will feature film screenings, interactive sessions and curated cinematic experiences, with participation expected from

filmmakers across India and abroad, she said.

She said the festival continues its journey of celebrating cinematic excellence while strengthening the cultural fabric of Jammu and Kashmir.

The fourth edition, held jointly with TIFFS, was inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Aquaplex Crown, Bagh-e-Bahu, reflecting the festival's growing prominence.

Festival director Rakesh Roshan Bhat expressed gratitude to stakeholders, saying the journey has been driven by perseverance and collective support, and that the milestone belongs to the entire creative community.

A key highlight of the upcoming edition will be the introduction of a ₹ 1 lakh award for 'Best Local Production', aimed at encouraging regional filmmaking, organisers said.

He said the initiative seeks to empower filmmakers from Jammu and Kashmir and provide them a strong platform to showcase their work.

Festival advisor Amit Wanchoo said the event has matured into a credible platform nurturing meaningful cinema, reflecting both the dedication of organisers and growing interest in quality storytelling.

The press conference was attended by members of the cultural and media fraternity, including Bindhya Raina, Bharti Kaul, King C Bharti, Kamaksha Dogra, Suman Bhat, Gulfam Barjee and others.

Organisers said the festival continues its journey of celebrating cinematic excellence while strengthening the cultural fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)



## As Vijay Emerges 'Jana Nayagan' in Tamil Nadu polls

Several film industry figures on Monday congratulated actor Vijay after counting trends in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections showed his party, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), leading in 108 of the state's 234 seats.

As the leads became clear, actors from across the film industry took to social media to praise Vijay's electoral performance and wish him well for his political journey.

Among those who shared messages were Vijay Deverakonda, Nani, Ravi Teja, Chiyaan Vikram, Kajal Aggarwal, and others.

Actor Nani highlighted the underdog narrative behind Vijay's rise in politics and its resonance with voters. He wrote, "Congratulations @actorvijay sir. First doubted and then crowned. Happened at our home and now it's happening in our neighbouring home. Underdog winning is al-

ways absolute cinema ( or should I say absolute politics ? ) : Hope great things follow for the people of Tamil Nadu who have made their decision clear."

Music composer GV Prakash Kumar described the outcome as historic in a message shared online. He wrote, "Congrats @TVKVijayHQ na . This is huge . And a historical victory, never before never after @actorvijay."

Ravi Teja, who expressed belief in Vijay's political success, wrote, "Some things you just know will happen... and I truly believed this was one...Big congratulations on this massive win @actorvijay garu. Wishing you great success as you step into this powerful new phase. Keep leading from the front @TVKVijayHQ!!"

Vijay Deverakonda congratulated both Vijay and the people of Tamil Nadu, acknowledging their participa-

tion in the democratic process. He wrote, "And NEW :) @actorvijay garu. My Admiration and congratulations to the people of Tamil Nadu for turning up so strongly to vote and take a stand for themselves. Wishing all the people of TN and the new CM all prosperity and collective growth. Excited to see this new Phase and Face of Tamil Politics @TVKVijayHQ"

Actor Kajal Aggarwal shared a detailed note praising Vijay's leadership and the public mandate. She wrote, "Naan oru thadava sonna, nooru thadava sonna maari" and today, the people have echoed it back with absolute conviction. Heartiest congratulations to @actorvijay on this spectacular and resounding victory! This moment is a true testament to your vision, your perseverance, and the unwavering love people have for you.

The people of Tamil Nadu have

spoken-loud, clear, and with immense pride. This isn't just a win, it's a celebration of a deep, powerful connection with millions.

Wishing you great strength and success as you step into this inspiring new chapter. May you bring the change so many are hoping for. Congratulations once again on this phenomenal achievement! @TVKVijayHQ."

Actor Sundeep Kishan also expressed his support, writing, "En Thalapathy Vetri Kondar. Congratulations Dear @actorvijay sir ..And thank you for doing it the right way.

Tamil Nadu is witnessing a closely fought three-cornered contest between the ruling DMK, led by Chief Minister MK Stalin, the opposition AIADMK allied with the BJP, and a new political force led by actor Vijay through his party, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK). (Agencies)

# Inter Milan seals the Italian league soccer title with 3 rounds to spare

MILAN, May 4: Inter Milan sealed the Italian league soccer title with a 2-0 victory over visiting Parma.

Inter, which needed only a draw to secure the trophy, moved an unassailable 12 points clear of 2025 champion Napoli with three rounds remaining.

It's Inter's 21st Serie A title, trailing only the record 36 held by Juventus.

Marcus Thuram scored just before the break with an angled shot placed just beyond the reach of Parma goalkeeper Zion Suzuki. Then 37-year-old Henrikh Mkhitaryan added another in the 80th after taking a pass from Serie A scoring leader Lautaro Martinez, who came off the bench to mark his return from an injury layoff.

Thuram was born in Parma while his father, Lilian Thuram, played there.

For Cristian Chivu, Inter's first-year coach, the trophy was secured against the club he coached last season — having helped Parma avoid relegation.

Chivu, who was hired to replace the departed Simone Inzaghi nearly a year ago, played on the Inter team that won a treble under



José Mourinho in 2010.

In the running for two trophies this season, Inter will face Lazio in the Italian Cup final in 10 days.

The domestic success has come in sharp contrast to Inter's ouster from this season's Champions League playoffs by tiny Norwegian club Bodø/Glimt. Last sea-

son, Inter was routed 5-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final.

Still, it's an improvement from last season's Serie A when Inter finished one point behind Napoli.

**AC Milan and Juventus at risk**

While Inter was celebrating, AC

Milan and Juventus were at risk of losing their Champions League places.

Milan was reduced to 10 men and beaten 2-0 at Sassuolo for its fourth loss in seven matches. Then Juventus drew 1-1 with relegated Hellas Verona.

Third-placed Milan was left

only two points ahead of fourth-placed Juventus, which is just three points ahead of fifth-placed Como, which is trying to get into the top four and secure a Champions League spot.

Three rounds remain in the Italian league.

Domenico Berardi scored early on for Sassuolo for his 12th career goal against Milan and Fikayo Tomori was sent off before Armand Lauriente doubled the advantage after the break.

Milan has scored only one goal in its last five matches.

Christian Pulisic, who came on in the second half, extended his goalless streak to a career-high 17 league matches.

**Vlahovic equalizes for Juventus**

Juventus also dropped points at home against Verona but extended its unbeaten run to nine matches.

Kieron Bowie put Verona ahead after intercepting a pass from Juventus defender Gleison Bremer then Dusan Vlahovic equalized for Juventus with a free kick around Verona's wall for his first goal since October.

Also, Bologna was held 0-0 by Cagliari in a regional derby. (AP)

# Vinicius scores twice as Real Madrid's victory keeps Barcelona waiting



MADRID, May 4: Vinicius Júnior scored two second-half goals and Real Madrid beat Espanyol 2-0 to keep Barcelona from clinching its second straight Spanish league title.

Barcelona beat Osasuna 2-1 on Saturday to open a 14-point gap over Madrid entering Sunday's matches. Anything but a win by Madrid against Barcelona's city rival would have allowed the Catalan club to celebrate its 29th league title this weekend.

Barcelona will have a chance to clinch the title next weekend when it hosts Madrid in a "clásico" at the Camp Nou.

Barcelona's lead stayed at 11 points heading into the final four rounds of La Liga.

"We have a big game against a great rival and they have been playing well," Madrid coach Álvaro Arbeloa said. "It's a special game for the fans, for us. We are going to rest and prepare well for it."

Sunday's result kept Espanyol winless in 17 consecutive games this year, with 10 losses. It sits in 13th place, five points from the relegation zone.

It was a hard-fought match until Vinicius broke the deadlock in the 55th minute after a nice fake move to get past a couple of Espanyol defenders inside the area.

Brazil forward added to the lead in the 66th with a shot into the top corner after a beautiful back-heel

set up by Jude Bellingham.

Espanyol defender Omar El Hilali was shown a straight red card for a foul on Vinicius in the first half but the call was changed to a yellow card after video review.

Madrid lost left back Ferland Mendy 10 minutes into the match because of an apparent muscle injury.

Other games

Rayo Vallecano prepared for its Conference League semifinal against Strasbourg with a 2-0 win at Getafe.

Rayo coach Iñigo Pérez was able to rest many of his first-choice players with the Conference League semifinal second leg on Thursday in mind. Rayo won the first leg 1-0 at home.

Sergio Camello and Randy Nteka scored in each half for the visitors, while Rayo goalkeeper Augusto Batalla also saved a penalty, to lift the team from the Madrid district of Vallecas to 11th ahead of the rest of the round.

Celta Vigo boosted its hopes of European qualification with a 3-1 win at home over Elche that left the promoted team among a host of clubs still in danger of relegation.

Celta moved above Getafe into sixth.

Also Sunday, Cucho Hernández opened and concluded the scoring for fifth-place Real Betis in a 3-0 win at home over last-place Oviedo, a result that left the visitors on the verge of relegation. (AP)

# Diksha, Tvesa drop down on the final in Mauritius



PORT LOUIS (MAURITIUS), May 4: The Indian trio of Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik and Hitaashee Bakshi suffered a tough closing round and slipped down the leaderboard at the 2026 MCB Ladies Classic — Mauritius.

After opening with 68-69, Diksha shot a 74 in the third round to finish T-21, while Tvesa, after 70-71, shot 73 and was T-38.

Hitaashee, who carded solid 71-69 on the first two days had a round of 76 and dropped to T-58.

Denmark's Smilla Tarning Soenderby secured her second Ladies European Tour (LET) title becoming the first-ever winner of the 2026 MCB Ladies Classic — Mauritius with a birdie on the last hole. Diksha had just one birdie on the ninth and dropped shots on the ninth, 10th and the 15th.

Sweden's Kajsa Arwefjäll ended the week in a share of second place alongside South Africa's Casandra Alexander one shot behind Soenderby.

Italy's Anna Zanusso set the early clubhouse target firing a sensational bogey-free round of 9-under 63, the best-ever on this golf course and her lowest as a professional, to finish in solo fourth place.

Five players ended the week in a share of fifth place with England's Alice Hewson, France's Agathe Laisné, Australia's Kirsten Rudgeley and German duo Alexandra Försterling and Celina Sattelkau all on 10-under-par.

The LET takes a one-week break before the European swing starts with the Amundi German Masters at Green Eagle Golf Courses from May 14-17 in Hamburg. (PTI)

# India women's hockey team goalkeepers attend special camp under Ireland's Williamson

BENGALURU, May 4: The Indian women's hockey team custodians Savita, Bichu Devi Khariabam, Bansari Solanki and Madhuri Kindo attended a special goalkeeping camp conducted by Ireland's David Williamson under the supervision of chief coach Sjoerd Marijpe, that concluded on May 2 at the SAI centre here.

Supported by Anandana, the Coca-Cola India Foundation, the 11-day camp ran from April 22, enabling focused and high-performance training for the goalkeepers.

Williamson is a highly experienced field hockey coach and former player from Northern Ireland. He is a renowned goalkeeping specialist who has worked extensively with the US women's national team.

Senior goalkeepers Savita, Bichu Devi, Bansari, and Madhuri attended the sessions, allowing them to focus extensively on technical basics, decision-making, defensive organisation, and tactical awareness in match situations as the team prepares for major tournaments in the upcoming international calendar.

Speaking on the benefits of such focused camps for goalkeepers, Savita said, "Being a goalkeeper, I've always experienced that these



kinds of camps help you learn a lot, while polishing and improving your skills. We recreate match-like situations in training and have plenty of discussions. So, these specialised camps are always important."

Sharing her experience at the camp, Savita also shed light on how she embraced the role of

mentoring younger goalkeepers.

"Being a senior player, I have to ensure that I don't only focus on my own performance but also pay attention to and motivate the younger keepers. I'm always looking at how they're doing and how I can guide them in little details, based on my experience," she said. (PTI)

# Hardie stars with ball and bat to lead Peshawar to first PSL cricket title since 2017

LAHORE, May 4: Aaron Hardie's brilliant all-round performance led Peshawar Zalmi to its first Pakistan Super League cricket title since 2017 with a five-wicket win over newcomer Hyderabad Kingsmen in the final.

Hardie grabbed 4-27 to bowl out Hyderabad for a below-par 129 all out in 18 overs with Saim Ayub (54) scoring a fighting half century. Hardie then hit a fluent 56 not out off 39 balls and anchored Peshawar to 130-5 in 15.2 overs in front of a packed crowd at Gaddafi Stadium.

"It's a very big achievement for me, for Peshawar Zalmi and all the fans," said Peshawar captain Babar Azam after winning his first PSL title as skipper.

"Throughout the tournament we've performed really well as a team... every player executed the plans they were given in batting, bowling, and fielding. Our plan was to go match by match."

Peshawar, which won the toss and chose to chase, had slumped to 40-4 inside the first five overs after losing tournament top run-scorer Babar for a golden duck while Mohammad Haris, Kusal Mendis and Michael Bracewell also fell for single-digit scores.

But Hardie, who smashed nine fours, then combined in a match-winning stand of 85 runs with Abdul Samad (48), who missed out on his half century before holing out in the deep when Peshawar needed only five runs for victory.

"It was just a great game of cricket," Hardie said.

"Kingsmen came out of the blocks really hard. They've certainly had a lot of momentum from the last couple of games and they carried that in, but I'm really proud of the way the boys were able to fight back."

Peshawar was favorite for the title after it lost only one game in

the tournament with Babar, who scored two centuries, equaling Fakhar Zaman's PSL record of 588 runs in one edition of the tournament.

Hyderabad had a productive power play of 69-2 despite Hardie having captain Marnus Labuschagne (20) caught behind of a rising delivery and Maaz Sadaqat's early aggression was cut short to just 11 runs when he half-heartedly pulled pace bowler Mohammad Basit to deep backward square leg in the first over.

However, Hyderabad lost momentum and crashed to 73-6 in the space of nine balls after the power play for just two runs.

The slide began when Usman Khan, coming into the final with half centuries in the last three successive games, was trapped leg before wicket by the tournament's leading wicket-taker Sufyan Moqim (1-23). (AP)



NEW DELHI, May 4: There were days when Muhammad Shoib trained in slippers, wearing Salwar Kameez because he couldn't afford shoes and tennis apparel.

There were days when his worn-out shoes had torn soles but he kept on playing, the blisters and oozing blood bearing a testimony of pain he endured for countless hours.

Days when access to a tennis court itself meant waiting for the harsh midday heat, because only then would it be empty enough for someone like him to sneak in a session at Peshawar Club.

On Sunday in Islamabad, that same boy stood as Pakistan's newest tennis champion and only the third in his country's tennis history after Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan.

Shoib's stunning ITF Futures title not only fulfilled a deeply personal dream but also ended a 20-year wait for a Pakistani singles winner, a drought stretching back to 2007, when Aqeel won a Futures event in Lahore and Aisam clinched a Challenger title in Delhi later that year.

Shoib's title sits at the lowest rung of the Pro Circuit, a humble milestone in a country that has only glimpsed Grand Slam glory through Aisam's doubles exploits. Yet, Pakistan has not tasted much singles success, hence the Shoib's feat assumes significance in that context.

**A childhood carved out of struggle**  
Shoib's journey began not with dreams of titles, but as a ball boy in Peshawar, following footsteps of his brother Shah Hussain and learning under his maternal uncle Roman Gul.

His father, Haider Hussain, a daily-wage labourer, often urged him to quit. He would earn Rs 500-600 a day in farms and on a rainy day the family would worry about meal without work.

"He told me to study, to become a teacher or engineer. Tennis was too expensive for us," Shoib recalled.

But his mother refused to let him give up. "She always said, if you work hard, you will prove everyone wrong."

Even the basics of the sport were a luxury. He bought second-hand rackets and worn-out shoes from local markets. At times, even those weren't available. "I used to play in slippers and wear Salwar Kameez. We didn't have money for anything."

The conditions were brutal. Old tennis balls were dampened with water to slow them down. Practice sessions were squeezed into unbearable heat because that was the only time courts were free.

And then there were the shoes.

"There were holes in them. When I slid, my feet would bleed. But I kept on playing."

**A dream he didn't dare to dream**

What makes the triumph even more remarkable is how small Shoib's expectations were when the tournament began.

"My goal was just one ATP point. I just wanted to start my journey," Shoib told PTI from Islamabad.

Years of heartbreak had conditioned him to think that way.

He had led matches against higher-ranked players, only to falter at crucial moments. Confidence was fragile, belief even more so.

But something shifted in Islamabad.

After getting that first point, he started playing freely. One win became two. Then came a fearless upset of the top seed — sealed, fittingly, with an ace under pressure.

"I told myself I will give 100 percent so that I don't regret about anything," he said.

By the time he reached the final, he wasn't thinking about history — just the next point, the next opportunity. From chasing one ATP point, he walked away with 15 and the title.

"When I won, I couldn't believe it. People told me I had broken a 20-year record. That was never in my mind."

**From unranked to No 1**

In the space of a week, Shoib is set to go from unranked to Pakistan's No. 1 singles player, a staggering rise in a country where tennis has long struggled for visibility and support.

The sport, however, has begun to see signs of revival since Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi took charge of the Pakistan Tennis Federation, bringing more tournaments to home soil and offering players like Shoib a rare platform.

"He thinks like a player. That has helped us a lot."

**The reality behind the triumph**

For all the glory of his breakthrough, Shoib remains grounded in a harsh truth: success alone does not guarantee survival in professional tennis.

"We don't have sponsors. Even playing one tournament is difficult."

His ambitions are clear: to compete in 15-20 tournaments and climb the rankings. But the means remain uncertain.

"What will I do with these 15 points if I don't get a sponsor?" he asked bluntly.

**More than just a title**

Shoib remembers when legendary Leander Paes praised him during the India-Pakistan Davis Cup tie in Kazakhstan and now wants to travel to India to play some tournaments.

Shoib's victory is not just the end of a long wait, it is a rare moment of belief for Pakistani tennis.

From playing in slippers and salwar kameez to lifting a trophy on home soil, his story is a reminder of what persistence can achieve and what still needs to change.

"I always believed that if I work hard, I will be rewarded," he said.

For now, that reward has come. Whether it becomes a turning point for his career and for Pakistan tennis, it depends on what happens next. (PTI)

# Athletes should inspire youth to shun drugs and embrace sports: J&K Lt Governor



SRINAGAR, May 4: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday called upon the athletes and sportspersons to act as ambassadors of 'Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan' and inspire the youth to shun drugs and embrace sports.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of All India Inter-University Wushu Championship at the University of Kashmir here, Sinha asked athletes to create a short video and share it on social media to spread awareness against substance abuse and inspire others to adopt sports

and creative activities for a positive lifestyle.

"You are the role models for India's new generation. Your appeal will inspire the youth to walk on the right path," said Sinha.

The LG reiterated that the administration is committed to building a robust sporting culture across higher educational institutions, ensuring equal opportunities for every student to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.

Sinha said that the All-India Inter-University Wushu Championship is more than a sporting contest; it is a vibrant celebration of 'Ek Bharat

Shreshth Bharat' and serves as a powerful platform to promote unity in diversity, discipline, excellence, and national integration.

"This championship carries with it a responsibility to uphold and renew the essential spirit of sport that transcends competition and connects us to our highest aspirations as human beings."

"Let the Inter-University Wushu Championship at Kashmir University be remembered not only for the brilliance of the contests but for the bonds of friendship it forged, the barriers it broke, and the sense of one united, determined, compassionate Indian family it renewed. May every athlete continue to light the path forward for generations to come," he added.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the sport of wushu reflects the resilience of our youth. He stated that the championship serves as a platform for cultural exchange, where rivals become friends and mentors shape the future "heartbeat of India."

The championship has drawn participation of more than 150 Universities and over 1,000 athletes, bringing together top wushu talent from across the country. The event showcases both men's and women's competitions, reflecting the growing popularity and inclusivity of the sport at the university level. (PTI)

# Max Verstappen takes 5th at Miami after a spin but still wants improvements to his car

MIAMI GARDENS (FLORIDA), May 4: Max Verstappen was feeling a bit more comfortable in his car at the Miami Grand Prix, but the four-time Formula 1 champion still believes Red Bull has improvements to make.

After testing out Red Bull's upgrades made during a five-week break in the F1 schedule, Verstappen had his best result of the season on Sunday, finishing fifth despite spinning from second on the opening lap.

Verstappen has been a vocal critic of the current car regulations, even going as far as saying he's considering leaving the sport. He left Miami only slightly happier with the car.

"I mean, my car drives a bit better," said Verstappen, who qualified a season-best second for the race at Miami International Autodrome. "But what I said before about the regulations is the same. ... It's still not how I would like to see it."

Verstappen was part of a chaotic start to Sunday's race when he spun trying to hold off Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who had surged to the lead ahead of eventual winner Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes on the opening lap. The spin caused Verstappen to fall to ninth.

"Quite hectic," Verstappen said. "I lost the rear into Turn 2. Then I tried to minimize the time loss by doing a 360. I thought I was going to crash but then I floored it and managed to do a good 360. So if F1 doesn't work out, I could always go Rally (racing)."

Verstappen worked his way through the mid-field back into third, even briefly taking the lead as others pitted. He attempted to make it a one-stop race, an approach that eventually cost him.

"After that (spin) I think the pace was not too bad on the medium (tires)," he said, "but as soon as I swapped to the hard compound (tires) it was



just a lot more difficult. Now, after the race it's easy to say of course, but I think that stint was just a bit too long."

## Tough weekend for Ferrari

Leclerc settled for a sixth-place finish despite getting off to a strong start from third.

He was among the leaders throughout the race, but a costly move on the penultimate lap caused

him to spin and hit the barriers.

"The damage was significant," Leclerc said afterward, adding: "I'm very disappointed with myself. It's all on me and it's not acceptable."

Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton said it was a disappointing weekend he qualified sixth and finished seventh. Hamilton's car was affected by an apparent collision with Franco Colapinto of Alpine at the start.

"Overall, it was a challenging weekend, but I believe we have a good car and there are some positives to take away," Hamilton said. "We just need to keep pushing, both at the factory and at the track, to keep adding performance and close the gap as we move forward."

## Star-studded audience

F1 races typically bring out famous faces from all over, and rainy weather on Sunday didn't stop the influx of celebrities.

Miami-based entertainer DJ Khaled arrived at

Miami International Autodrome on a yacht that was towing an F1 car belonging to Red Bull's sister team.

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi, perhaps looking for a refreshing getaway after Saturday's disappointing loss to Orlando City, arrived with his family a few hours before the race, posed for photos with drivers and visited the Mercedes garage. Messi's teammates Luis Suárez and Tadeo Allende were also in attendance.

Stars from all over the sports world toured the campus' sprawling grounds all weekend, including tennis greats Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal — he flew the checkered flag at the end of the race — the Miami Heat's Bam Adebayo, and several Miami Dolphins players.

Also spotted were actors Colin Farrell and Patrick Dempsey, late-night host Jimmy Fallon and astronaut Reid Wiseman, the commander of last month's Artemis II moon mission. (AP)

# Desperate DC seek end to horror run at home

NEW DELHI, May 4: Delhi Capitals will need to stop oscillating between sublime and suicidal to overcome their streak of three painful losses at home when they take on an equally desperate Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.

Both sides are on eight points from nine games and with five matches remaining, there is no room left for error.

The Capitals put up a clinical batting performance in Jaipur on Friday night to get a welcome win after a hat-trick of defeats. Two of those losses came at home causing immense hurt in the dressing room as Punjab Kings chased down a record 265 before Royal Challengers Bengaluru exposed their fragile batting against a potent pace attack.

The defeats at Kotla also includes a harrowing one-run loss to Gujarat Titans, a game that DC should have definitely won.

The biggest positives going for DC heading into the CSK game is opener Pathum Nissanka finding his range alongside the ever consistent K L Rahul while speedster Mitchell Starc providing the much-needed bite to the bowling attack.

Kuldeep Yadav would be itching to make amends after being smashed for three sixes in his final over in Jaipur. He has also been rather expensive thus far in the tournament, leaking runs at 10.26 runs per over while taking only seven wickets in nine games.

Middle and death overs specialist T Nataran too has not compensated for his high economy rate, tallying five wickets in



nine games. Despite an up and down run, captain Axar Patel has managed to remain calm and pragmatic.

"You have to come every day and keep doing the same things. You can always turn things around. So very happy with the way the boys played. The way they batted and bowled, I think both departments were excellent and I'm very happy," he said after the win over Rajasthan Royals.

## No Dhoni yet, Gaikwad's return to form a big boost

Ahead of their 10th game of the season, CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to

PTI that M S Dhoni has not yet regained full fitness, ruling him out of the game at Kotla. Like DC, CSK too are walking on a tightrope and if they slip on Tuesday night, it would ensure another premature exit from the tournament, having finished at the bottom last season.

The lack of runs from skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's bat cost them dearly in the first half of the season with Sanju Samson alone carrying the burden in a rather young looking batting line up.

But the captain has found a way to get back amongst the runs and goes into the DC game at the back of consecutive half-cen-

turies.

Urvil Patel batting at number three ahead of Sarfaraz Khan after injured Aayush Mhatre's pullout has been debated.

A 12-ball 14 in the win over Mumbai Indians would do wonders for Patel's confidence. Same goes for Kartik Sharma, who struck his maiden IPL fifty on Saturday night.

Two of CSK's four wins have come against a struggling Mumbai Indians while one was against DC at the Chepauk. Gaikwad and Co. would carry the confidence of that performance in the return leg.

## Squads:

**Delhi Capitals:** Abhishek Porel, KL Rahul, Nitish Rana, Sameer Rizvi, Tristan Stubbs, Axar Patel, Ashutosh Sharma, Dushmantha Chameera, Kuldeep Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, David Miller, Aqib Nabi Dar, Pathum Nissanka, Lungi Ngidi, Sahil Parakh, Prithvi Shaw, Kyle Jamieson, Tripurana Vijay, Madhav Tiwari, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Karun Nair, T Natarajan.

**Chennai Super Kings:** Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Dewald Brevis, MS Dhoni, Urvil Patel, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ayush Mhatre, Shreyas Gopal, Jamie Overton, Khaleel Ahmed, Anshul Kamboj, Gurjapneet Singh, Mukesh Choudhary, Noor Ahmad, Akeal Hossain, Prashant Veer, Matthew Short, Sarfaraz Khan, Matt Henry, Rahul Chahar, Zakary Foulkes, Spencer Johnson, Kartik Sharma, Aman Khan.

Match starts 7.30 PM IST. (PTI)

# India gear up for stern test against Japan in AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup



SUZHOU (CHINA), May 4: India face a stern test against powerhouse Japan as they look to bounce back from their opening game defeat and revive their campaign in the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup 2026 here on Tuesday.

The Young Tigresses lost their opening Group B match to Australia 0-2 and find themselves in a situation where every goal will matter after Japan crushed Lebanon 13-0 to garner three points.

Japan, among the most technically refined sides in women's football, bring formidable pedigree to the clash, having reached the final in seven of the nine editions of the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup and lifting the title four times.

The Asian giants also underlined their global dominance by clinching the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup crown in 2014.

Though Japan will start as overwhelming favourites, the Young Tigresses remain undaunted, with head coach Pamela Conti asserting that her players will take the field with a clear and focused mindset.

"We've just finished training, and we are quite excited because we are going to play against one of the strongest teams in the world.

"Me, as a coach, and the players as well, believe that we need to play a perfect match if we want to win. But beyond that, just being there, experiencing it, and enjoying the game is also important. I will definitely enjoy it," said Conti.

India have prepared diligently for the tournament with more than three months of rigorous training, including exposure trips to Myanmar and Russia. The challenges posed by teams like Russia and Australia have provided valuable lessons, with the focus now shifting to countering Japan's pace and technical precision.

"The message to the players has been clear throughout training. We cannot just defend. If we let them have the ball without pressure, it will be very easy for them to find spaces and create one-on-one situations," Conti said.

"We need to stay strong. We know their strengths. They (Japan) will try to push us back as much as possible. But we need to stay higher up the pitch so that we can show that we are there, and not make it easy for them," added Conti.

For India, the emphasis is also on building a long-term competitive mentality, regardless of the opposition.

"Our mentality should never change. Whether you play against the best team or the lowest-ranked team, it's always about three points. It's important to build a winning mentality, and you develop that by playing these kinds of demanding matches," said Conti.

"It's also important for the players to be able to say in the future, 'I played against Japan back then.' That experience matters," the Italian tactician added.

Right-back Divyani Linda emphasised the need for a clear execution-focused mindset following the game against Australia.

"The feeling is good. We are excited because it's our first time playing against a team like Japan. They are a tough side, but we believe we can do well too," said the 17-year-old who has four goals and four assists in her youth international career for India.

India's defensive structure held for large parts against Australia, but individual errors proved costly. That's an area the team is keen to address.

"We need to improve from the last game and avoid the mistakes we made. Our team is good, everyone has quality. Maybe we are not as physically strong, but we play well with our minds and our understanding of the game.

"In the last few games (against Australia and Russia), we've conceded goals from our errors, so we need to avoid those and perform better," said Divyani.

Japan's style is built on quick combinations, fluid movement, sustained concentration and technical discipline — a demanding blueprint that India have been meticulously preparing to counter. (PTI)

## Stewart Cink adds another senior major with a 3-shot win at Regions Tradition

BIRMINGHAM (ALABAMA), May 4: Stewart Cink pulled away with consecutive birdies early on the back nine Sunday that stretched his lead to four shots, and he closed with a 3-under 69 for a three-shot victory in the Regions Tradition for his second major this year on the PGA Tour Champions.

Cink, who won the Senior PGA Championship two weeks ago in Florida, became the second player in two years to capture the first two majors on the 50-and-older circuit. Angel Cabrera won the Senior PGA and the Tradition last year in consecutive weeks.

"This weekend was a little scrappy," Cink said. "I'm really proud I was able to stay out front."

He was staked to a three-shot lead going into the final round at Greystone Golf & Country Club, and Colin Montgomerie got within two shots of them heading to the back nine.

The 52-year-old Cink responded with birdies on the 11th and 12th holes to build a four-shot lead, and Montgomerie failed to make birdie over his final 13 holes to shoot 71 and finish alone in third.

The last threat for Cink was Scott Hend of Australia, who made eagle on the par-5 13th and followed with a birdie on the par-3 14th to get within four shots. Hend failed to birdie the two par 5s in front of him and closed with a 65 to finish second.

Cink, with a three-putt par on the par-5 closing hole, finished at 18-under 270 and won USD 390,000 to more than double his lead in the Charles Schwab Cup over newcomer Zach Johnson.

Cink is starting to hit his stride with his fourth win of the year on the PGA Tour Champions, and his third title in the last four weeks. He also won the season-ending event last year, giving him five victories in his last eight tournaments.

"I could get used to this," Cink said. "It's not ever going to get old. Age is an important factor on the PGA Tour Champions and I'm still on the younger side."

Ernie Els had back-to-back eagles on the par-5 13th and a hole-in-one on the 14th hole in his closing round of 68 to tie for eighth. (AP)

# Beauty is we haven't played our best game but managed two points: Holder

AHMEDABAD, May 4: Jason Holder believes that Gujarat Titans are yet to play their best cricket but have still managed to find a way in play matches and remain in IPL play-off contention.

Holder, who produced a match-winning four-wicket haul against a rampaging Punjab Kings, is happy that every win has been based on collective effort rather than individual brilliance.

"The beauty about how we've been playing is that, it's not one individual performing every single day. There are different players stepping up on different days," Holder said at the post-match press conference after GT beat PBKS by five wickets on Sunday.

"So I think we still arguably haven't played our best game yet but you know, the beauty about that is that we're still getting the two points necessary each time we cross the line."

While a target of 164 was chased only with a ball to spare, Holder stressed on getting the two points rather than fretting over the net run-rate.

"Look, I think the first prior-



ity is always to win the game. If we find ourselves in a position where conditions are favourable that we could think about net run-rate. I think we'll do that.

"But I think the first priority is to accumulate the two points every single time we play and build our momentum. We're on a bit of a roll in terms of three back-to-back wins now. So it's just a matter for us just to stay consistent. I think the run rate

and these kind of things will take care of itself."

While Holder has got seven wickets in four games, he gave a lot of credit to pacers Kagiso Rabada and Mohammed Siraj for consistently getting wickets in the Powerplay.

"Credit to both KG and Siraj. I think they've been outstanding this entire competition. You know, they've led the powerplay, I think, in this entire competition. And they've made it difficult for the opposition. You know, that speaks volumes for their class," Holder was lavish in his praise.

In fact, he was quick to point out that not many pace duo in the world would bowl three overs each in Powerplays.

"I mean, very rarely have I seen two bowlers, you know, bowling three overs back-to-back in a Powerplay. So it says a lot about their calibre and their quality. I think when they start, you know, they set the tone in terms of what length works on a particular wicket. And then, you know, it's just a matter for all the other bowlers to follow." (PTI)

# Update on Dhoni above my pay grade, he is steadily improving: Eric Simons

NEW DELHI, May 4: Chennai Super Kings bowling coach Eric Simons on Monday said that M S Dhoni has not travelled for the away game against Delhi Capitals here, though he is steadily improving after yet to play a game this season due to a calf injury.

More than half the season is done with CSK set to play their 10th game in what has been an underwhelming campaign. Like every season since his international retirement, there is immense speculation over the future of the 44-year-old Indian great in the IPL.

In the pre-match interaction, it was a hardly a surprise that the first question was on Dhoni, who has been batting in the nets of late.

"Update on MS Dhoni is way above my pay grade. He's not with us (in Delhi), but steadily improving. He'll be ready when he's ready, and he knows when he's ready to



play," that was all Simons had to say on the team icon.

Talking about the performance of the bowlers, he was all praise for Anshul Kam-

boj, who has impressed in all phase of the game and is the joint highest wicket-taker with 17 scalps.

"Anshul went away. Anshul you see today is not this season, he started last year. The things that we worked on, he went into the domestic season and worked on different angles of approach to the crease to be more accurate with his yorkers in particular. We've introduced round the wicket, which is no secret now.

"There's a lot of nuances to what we're doing around the wicket that make him particularly effective. He's picked up wickets and been able to restrict the run rate as well. But I think what it really boils down to is his professionalism, the way that he trains," Simons said.

"If you stood next to me and watched the way that he trains, the way that he understands what he's going to do, the simplicity

I spoke about, the clarity, I think in the modern game a bowler needs to be clear about what he wants to do. He's very clear about his tactics, and he's very clear about what his field setting is. There's no grey area for him," added Simons.

With four wins from nine matches, CSK find themselves in a must-win situation for the remainder of the five league matches. They come into Delhi having comprehensively beaten Mumbai Indians. Simons remains confident that his team can still make the play-offs from their existing situation.

"There has become a bit of a gap between the top four and the rest, but we still have our destiny in our own hands and we do know that we can beat any team in the league. So if we keep playing to our potential, there's no reason why we can't be on the top of the table. When we play well, we look really unbeatable." (PTI)

## Injured Phil Salt returns home for scans

NEW DELHI, May 4: Royal Challengers Bengaluru opener Phil Salt has returned to England for scans on a finger injury sustained last month.

The injury has kept Salt out of RCB's last three matches, with compatriot Jacob Bethell stepping in at the top of the order.

The 29-year-old is reported to have "damaged a finger on his left hand" while diving to save a boundary at deep backward square leg during RCB's defeat to Delhi Capitals at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on April 18.

"Salt, who is centrally contracted by the ECB, has since returned home at the request of England's management and has undergone scans on his finger," ESPNcricinfo reported.

According to the report, both RCB and Salt are hopeful of a speedy recovery and the opener can return to India later this month. (PTI)