



Change and churn in Bengal, T.N., Kerala

Trinamool ousted as BJP sweeps Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Riding high on an anti-incumbency wave against the 15-year-long Trinamool Congress rule, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept the West Bengal Assembly election by more than two-thirds majority on Monday and is set to form the government in the State for the first time. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lost the Bhabanipur seat to BJP's Suwendu Adhikari by 15,105 votes as the saffron party secured a significant ideological triumph in the State.

Data late on Monday showed that the BJP had won 206 seats in the 294-member Assembly, while the Trinamool bagged only 80 seats and was leading in



West Bengal BJP supporters celebrate the party's victory in Kolkata on Monday. ANI

another one. The BJP, which registered an all-time high vote percentage of over 45.85%, saw its vote share increase by more than 7% from 38.4% in the 2021 polls. The Trinamool's vote share dropped by almost 8% from 48.5% in 2021 to 40.8% in this election.

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Vijay rocks, disrupts T.N.'s bipolar politics

D. Suresh Kumar
CHENNAI

Tamil cinema's top actor C. Joseph Vijay's fledgling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) on Monday made a stunning electoral debut, emerging as the single largest party with 107 seats in the 17th Tamil Nadu Assembly election. In doing so, it disrupted a nearly half-century-old bipolar landscape dominated by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

Taking on multi-party fronts led by the two Dravidian majors, the TVK, powered almost entirely by Mr. Vijay's charisma, fell just 11 seats short of the halfway mark in the 234-member House. While Mr. Vijay won from both Pe-



TVK chief Vijay receives victory certificate for the Perambur seat on Monday. R. RAGU

rambur and Tiruchi East, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, 14 of his Cabinet colleagues, Speaker M. Appavu and Deputy Speaker Pitchandy were defeated and the DMK was reduced to the principal Opposition with 59 seats in what became a three-cornered contest.

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Cong.-led UDF makes a comeback in Kerala

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Voters in Kerala delivered a decisive victory to the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 2026 Assembly election, ending 10 years of Left Democratic Front (LDF) rule.

Riding an anti-incumbent wave, the UDF won 102 seats after counting of votes on Monday, relegating the LDF to 35 seats and rebounding from its electoral wipeout in the Assembly elections in 2016 and 2021.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) bagged three seats – Nemom and Kazhakoottam in Thiruvananthapuram and Chathanoor in Kollam – fundamentally realigning the State's LDF-UDF "revolving door" politics. The



Congress's K.C. Venugopal and V. D. Satheesan share a cake after the win. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

BJP's political impact seemed to far outweigh its electoral impact, with the party becoming a third bloc in the Assembly, and an emerging player in provincial politics. The BJP also significantly increased its vote share across the State, emerging as a close second in six seats.

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NDA led by AINRC retains Puducherry

Rajesh B. Nair
PUDUCHERRY

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the All India N. R. Congress (AINRC) headed by Chief Minister N. Ranganasamy, is set to retain power in Puducherry, winning 18 out of the total 30 seats in the Assembly.

Mr. Ranganasamy's AINRC leads the tally with 12 seats, improving its numbers by two seats. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won four seats, its numbers came down by two from the previous Assembly. One seat each were won by the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Latchiya Jananayaga Katchi, the latter headed by businessman Jose Charles Martin, son of lottery baron Santiago Martin. The



Puducherry CM N. Ranganasamy, receives certificate from officials on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which contested as a junior partner of the Congress in the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc, won five seats, with the Congress's tally coming down to one from the two seats it had won in the 2021 Assembly election.

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NDA secures record third term in Assam

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance on Monday scripted a record victory in Assam, bagging 102 of the 126 Assembly seats to retain power for a third straight term.

The BJP won 82 seats, which is 18 more than the majority mark of 64, while its regional allies, Asom Gana Parishad and Bodo-land People's Front, won 10 seats each. The Congress, which counted on its alliance with five other parties, managed 19 seats, the least since the BJP ended its 15-year rule in 2016. Only one of its allies, Rajiv Dal, tasted victory, securing two seats.

"Barring one, we won all the seats where Hindus are in a position to elect



BJP supporters in Guwahati celebrating the resounding win on Monday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

their candidates. I thank the people of Assam on behalf of the BJP and our allies, and assure them that we will fulfil the promises we made during the election," incumbent Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who won his Jalukbari constituency for the sixth straight time, said.

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BJP, Cong., and NCP hold on to seats in Assembly bypolls

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Monday retained their seven sitting seats in five States after counting of votes for Assembly bypolls.

While the BJP won four seats in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tripura, and Nagaland, the Congress won two in Karnataka and the NCP emerged victorious in Maharashtra.

In Maharashtra's Baramati constituency, which fell vacant after the death of former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, his wife and current Deputy Chief



Congress members celebrate bypoll victory in Bengaluru on Monday. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Minister Sunetra Pawar won by 2,18,034 votes. Also in Maharashtra, the BJP's Akshay S. Kardile won the Rahuri seat, by a margin of 1.12 lakh votes against NCP(SP)'s Mokate G Khandu. In Gujarat's Umreth, the BJP's Harshadbhai G. Parmar won defeating the Congress's

Bhrugurajsinh Chouhan by 30,743 votes. The third win by the BJP was of Jahar Chakraborti, who defeated his nearest rival, the CPI (M)'s Amitabha Dutta, by 18,920 votes in Tripura's Dharmanagar.

In Nagaland, the BJP's Daochier I. Imchen won Koridong by 3,123 votes. In Karnataka, the ruling Congress's Umesh Hullappa Meti won the Bagalkot bypoll by a margin of 22,332 votes, while Samarth Shamanur Mallikarjuna, also from the Congress, won the Davanagere South seat by 5,708 votes.

'HISTORIC MANDATE'

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Bihar bridge collapse: Govt seeks Army & BRO help, orders probe

Santosh Singh
Patna, May 4

HOURS AFTER the collapse of the Vikramshila bridge, Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary Monday sought assistance from the BRO and the Army to rebuild it.

Span of the Ganga bridge — which connects South Bihar to the Kosi and Seemanchal regions — collapsed, forcing traffic to be diverted to the Munger-Khagaria bridge over the Ganga.

Nawal Kishore Choudhary, District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, said the collapse occurred in two stages — initial structural failures at bridge number 133 around 11.55 pm, followed by a total span collapse at 1.07 am that split the 4.7-km bridge into two.

“No untoward incident was reported as an alert had been sounded. We have diverted Bhagalpur traffic towards Munger while traffic on the other side has been diverted towards Khagaria,” he said. Two engineers from the Road Construction Department have been suspended for “ignoring red flags”, and a probe has been ordered.

Opened under the Rabri Devi government in 2001, the 4.7-km bridge falls under the National Highways wing of the Bihar



The partially damaged Vikramshila Setu in Bhagalpur on Monday. PTI

Road Construction Department and the Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Limited. With repairs likely to take a few months, and a parallel four-lane bridge under construction expected to be operational only later this year, buses and freight trucks will have to take a longer route to Jharkhand via North Bihar, Kosi and Seemanchal.

Choudhary spoke to Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, seeking permission for the BRO and the Army to take up reconstruction. Meanwhile, Chandrashekhar Singh, chairman of the Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd, said the damaged portion would be repaired within three months.

“It could have been a major

incident as there is a huge traffic rush on the bridge but for alertness of Bhagalpur district administration. A span of the bridge has been damaged and caved in the river but the pillar is completely safe,” he said.

He admitted that concerns about the bridge’s safety had been flagged earlier.

“We had received information around a month ago about some minor problem (cropping up in the bridge). A team from RCD and Pul Nirman Nigam was sent to study and give its recommendations. We also sought advice from IIT Patna, and it was found that both the pillars and the bridge are intact, although a false wall had been damaged,” Singh said.

'Logistical nightmare': CUET aspirants complain of faraway centres

Shubhangi Kshitiza
Saurav Mahima Rao
NEW DELHI

Allotted exam centres hundreds of kilometres away from their home towns, and some even in different States, students appearing for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET-UG) are grappling with logistical issues apart from travelling expenses. For some, the uncertainty has led them to re-evaluate higher education plans.

CUET, conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admission to undergraduate courses at Central, State, deemed, and private universities across India, has turned into a logistical nightmare for thousands of aspirants over the years. Over 11-13 lakh students appear for the exam annually, with registrations exceeding 14 lakh in 2026. The tests are



Over 11-13 lakh students take the CUET annually. FILE PHOTO

scheduled to be held between May 11 and May 31 this year. Since the release of the advanced city intimation slips on April 29 by NTA, several students are now reconsidering their decision to take the test.

Varsha Bhardwaj, 18, a student of Global Public School in Sector 67, Gurugram, has been allotted a centre in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, 190 km away.

With no one available to

accompany her and the journey requiring an overnight stay on top of the ₹1,800 registration fee she has already paid, she said she will most likely not be able to appear for the examination at all.

"I'm not sure how I would manage going to another State on my own because my parents won't allow me to travel alone and unaccompanied by any male family member,"

the student said.

She is not alone in her anxiety.

Satyam, an aspirant from Bihar, has been allotted a centre in West Bengal, nearly 300 km away from his home. With his examinations scheduled across three different dates, arranging accommodation, managing travel expenses, and coping with the physical toll has turned an entrance exam into an endurance test. He said, "I have mailed NTA multiple times. It will be very tough for me to go and come back for my exam on May 15, 18, 20 respectively."

In response to the growing unrest, the testing agency acknowledged the issue on social media saying, "We understand that some of you have been allotted exam centres far from your preferred cities and we have received a number of concerns re-

garding this. This situation is largely due to the high concentration of candidates in a few cities and limited CBT (computer-based test) centre availability."

While it said it is actively reviewing the concerns and exploring best possible solutions to "minimise inconveniences" for students, many are reconsidering their decision to appear for the test, which since 2022 has been made mandatory for admission to Central universities.

Mridul Mayank from Chhattisgarh's Jashpur has been assigned a centre in Raipur rather than his preferred location of Ambikapur. The allocation demands an additional seven hours of travel on two different days, May 14 and 19, in the scorching heat, a daunting prospect for any student but more concerning for Mayank, who has

diabetes. "I am not sure that I'll let him travel and opt for back-to-back exams given his health condition, I cannot overlook his diet and the risk," his mother Vibha said.

The distress reverberates across the country. Siva, a student from Kakinda, Andhra Pradesh, is facing a similar predicament after being assigned a centre in Atchutapuram, far from her home.

Back-to-back papers

Adding to the travelling burden is the scheduling concern. Lakshita Yadav, 18, from Tikli village in Gurugram, has been allotted a centre in Ghaziabad, two hours from home. On May 23, three of her papers - History, Hindi, and Physical Education - are scheduled in the same shift, leaving her with little time between exams on an already strenuous exam day.



India resumes wheat exports after a gap of four years

Indian traders have begun exporting wheat for the first time in four years, as ample stocks, higher global prices and firmer freight rates have opened a window for them to make small shipments to buyers in Asia and the Middle East, trade sources said. Consumer goods conglomerate ITC started loading 22,000 metric tons of wheat at the western port of Kandla for shipment to the United Arab Emirates, sources said, declining to be identified. REUTERS

UAE says Iran has resumed attacks as the U.S. moves to reopen Hormuz

U.S. military says it intercepted Iranian missiles, sunk six of Tehran's boats as American-flagged ships pass through the strait; UAE says Iran targeted oil facility; Tehran denies both claims, says any safe passage through Hormuz must be coordinated

Associated Press

DUBAI

The U.S. military said it battled Iranian forces and sank six small boats as it moved to reopen the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. The UAE, a key American ally, said it had come under attack from Iran for the first time since a ceasefire took hold in early April.

The attacks appeared to be in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's latest efforts to reopen the strait, a critical waterway for global energy. The U.S. military said two American-flagged merchant ships had transited the strait on Monday. Iran's Revolutionary Guards denied that any commercial ships had crossed the strait. Iranian state media also denied reports that the U.S. had sunk Iranian vessels.

The UAE Defence Minis-



A container ship sits at anchor as a small motorboat passes in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, Iran on Monday. REUTERS

try said Iran had launched four cruise missiles, with three shot down and one falling into the sea.

Indian nationals hurt

Authorities in Fujairah said an Iranian drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility, wounding three Indian nationals. The British military reported two cargo vessels ablaze off the UAE.

The UAE condemned

what it called "renewed treacherous Iranian aggression" and called for an immediate halt to the attacks.

In Oman, authorities said a residential building near the strait "was targeted," resulting in two foreign workers wounded.

Responding to the accusations, Iranian state media, quoting a senior military official, said it had "no

plans" to target the UAE. Breaking Iran's chokehold on the strait would ease global economic concerns and deny Tehran a major source of leverage.

But reports of new attacks raised doubts as to whether shipping companies would take risks to use the waterway. Iran has said the new U.S. effort is a violation of the fragile truce that has held for more than three weeks.

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

Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, said American forces have successfully opened a passage through the strait that is free of Iranian mines.

He said Iran launched multiple cruise missiles,

drones and small boats at civilian ships, and that U.S. military helicopters sank six of the small boats.

Mr. Trump had warned on Sunday that Iranian efforts to halt passage through the strait "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully." He described "Project Freedom" in humanitarian terms, designed to aid stranded seafarers on hundreds of ships that have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency called the effort part of Mr. Trump's "delirium."

Iran's military command has warned that ships passing through the strait must coordinate with them. "We warn that any foreign military force that intends to approach or enter the strait will be targeted," Major General Ali Abdollahi said.

Carney looks to Europe to build new world order

Agence France-Presse

YEREVAN

European leaders talked up independence on defence and closer ties with Canada on Monday, as they gathered in Armenia for a summit clouded by U.S. threats to cut military support.

U.S. President Donald Trump loomed large over the meeting of the European Political Community (EPC) in Yerevan, which was for the first time attended by a non-European leader: Canada's Mark Carney.

"We don't think that

we're destined to submit to a more transactional insular and brutal world and gatherings such as these point to a better way forward," the Canadian Prime Minister told fellow leaders.

Mr. Trump's go-it-alone policies on trade and defence have pushed Canada and Europe closer together, with both now confronting the economic fallout from the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran which has further strained transatlantic ties.

The gathering comes days after Washington announced it would pull



Mark Carney

5,000 U.S. troops from Germany, whose leader, Chancellor Friedrich Merz, has sparred with Mr. Trump over the conflict in West Asia.

"We have to step up our

military capabilities to be able to defend and protect ourselves," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said. The bloc needed "more independence" in security matters, she added.

Like Europe, Canada's economy has been hurt by Mr. Trump's tariffs but Mr. Carney has remained defiant.

Moving to diversify away from its southern neighbour, Ottawa has become the first non-European country to join the EU's defence financing scheme, while seeking to increase cooperation on trade.

"We're the most European of non-European countries, so there's many ways that we can work together," Mr. Carney said.

A biannual political forum, the EPC was established on the initiative of French President Emmanuel Macron in 2022 in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

It was "initially perceived as an anti-[Vladimir] Putin club" but Canada's participation has given it a new "anti-Trump slant", said Sebastien Maillet, a special adviser at the Jacques Delors Institute, a think tank.

Pakistan to return Iranian crew of U.S.-seized ship amid tensions

Agence France-Presse

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan said on Monday it had facilitated the transfer of 22 Iranian crew members from a U.S.-seized vessel, describing the move as a “confidence-building measure” amid fragile diplomatic contacts between Washington and Tehran.

The sailors, who had been held aboard the container ship *Touska*, were flown into Islamabad late on Sunday and were due to be handed over to Iranian

authorities, according to a statement from Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry.

The handover follows a tense maritime standoff in the Gulf of Oman, where U.S. forces intercepted the Iranian-flagged vessel.

President Donald Trump had said the ship carried “a gift from China”, an allegation Beijing rejected. Iran has condemned the seizure as “piracy” and a violation of an April ceasefire, urging the UN to intervene.

Pakistan has positioned

itself as a mediator for the war in West Asia, hosting talks aimed at reducing friction between the United States and Iran.

‘Rare instance’

The transfer of the crew was coordinated with both sides, Pakistan said, reflecting a rare instance of practical cooperation despite wider tensions over sanctions, shipping routes and regional security.

The vessel itself is expected to be returned after repairs.