



IN BRIEF

Excise case: SC junks Sisodia's bail pleas

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain the bail pleas of AAP leader Manish Sisodia in the corruption and money laundering cases lodged by the CBI and the ED respectively in connection with the Delhi liquor policy "scam". The apex court, however, said Mr Sisodia can revive his petitions for bail after the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation file their final prosecution complaint and chargesheet, respectively. A prosecution complaint is the ED's equivalent of a chargesheet. On October 30 last year, the apex court had dismissed Mr Sisodia's regular bail pleas in the cases but gave him liberty to approach courts for relief if there was a change in the circumstances or trial got protracted. A vacation bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta noted the

19-yr-old injured in shootout with cops

New Delhi: A 19-year-old man was injured in a shootout with the police in Ghazi-pur area, officials said on Tuesday. Ayaan, who is facing several cases of murder and attempt to murder in Delhi, received a bullet injury on both of his legs and was admitted to LBS Hospital, they said. According to a senior police officer, acting on a tip-off, a team of special cell led by inspector Shiv Kumar laid a trap near the DDA Park in Ghazi-pur on Tuesday at 12.30 am. "On seeing the police party, Aya-an, who was travelling on a scooter, opened a spree of fire at them. The police officers, in retaliation, shot thr-ee gunshots, hitting Ayaan in his legs," the officer said. On April 20, he had allegedly attempted to kill a man in Harsh Vihar, the police said.

Drizzle in parts of city, temp at 43.8°C

New Delhi: Light rains hit parts of the national capital on Tuesday evening, providing some relief from the scorching heat. The maximum temperature in the national capital was recorded at 43.8, 3.8 notch above the season's average. The minimum temperature in Delhi settled at 30.4°C, three notches above the season's average. The weather office predicted a generally cloudy sky with the possibility of rain, thunderstorms or dust storms and heatwave conditions on Wednesday. The maximum and minimum temperature in the city will likely settle at around 43 and 31°C, the weather department said. The relative humidity oscillated between 43 per cent and 33 per cent, the meteorological department said.

Gurgaon: Fire breaks out in banquet hall

Gurgaon: A fire broke out in a banquet hall located behind the Ambience Mall in the wee hours on Tuesday, an official said. More than 20 fire engines were pressed into service and the blaze was brought under control after about five hours, he said. While no casualties were reported in the incident, goods worth lakhs gutted in the fire, he said. According to the police, the fire broke out at A-Dot banquet hall near the city's posh society Ambience Island at around 4:30 am on Tuesday.

Cong, AAP may ally for 2025 polls

■ Victory margin of BJP has come down in current polls

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

If the drop in the victory margin of the BJP candidates against their nearest rivals in each of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi is any indication, there is a possibility that the AAP and the Congress could again join hands to take on the saffron party in the 2025 Assembly elections in the national capital.

In the past two Lok Sabha polls, both the AAP and the Congress had fielded their respective candidates in each of the seven seats in Delhi. But the two parties had lost all the seats by heavy margin to the BJP in 2014 and 2019 polls.

If the votes polled by the Congress and the AAP in each seat in the just concluded Lok Sabha polls are put together, then the victory margin of the BJP is almost the same as it was in the past two polls.

The victory margin of the BJP has come down in the current parliamentary polls in the face of the AAP and the Congress joining hands in Delhi.

While the AAP had fielded its candidates in South Delhi, East Delhi, West Delhi, and New Delhi seats, the Congress contested on the remaining three constituencies—Chandni Chowk, Northeast Delhi, and Northwest Delhi.

In Northeast Delhi, two-time BJP MP Manoj Tiwari won the seat by a margin of about 1.37 lakh votes against his Congress rival Kanhaiya Kumar.

Mr Tiwari, who was the only sitting parliamentarian contesting in Delhi, had won the seat against Congress heavyweight and former CM Sheila Dikshit by about 3.64 lakh votes in the 2019 polls.

In Northwest Delhi, BJP's Yogendra Chandoliya won the seat against former Congress MP Udit Raj by a margin of about 2.90 lakh votes.

In the last elections, the same seat was won by the BJP by a margin of about 5.53 lakh votes with a vote share difference of about 40 per cent.

The BJP, which had managed to win the West Delhi constituency by 5.75 lakh votes in 2019, secured the seat in these polls against former MP Mahabal Mishra by a margin of about 1.93 lakh votes.

IF THE votes polled by the Congress and the AAP in each seat in the just concluded Lok Sabha polls are put together, then the victory margin of the BJP is almost same as it was in past two polls

Mr Mishra, who had earlier won the seat on the Congress ticket, contested the 2024 polls as the AAP candidate. The only other seat where the BJP secured victory by a margin of about 1.25 lakh is South Delhi.

The same seat was won by the saffron party in the previous polls by a margin of 3.66 lakh votes.

The other three seats—Chandni Chowk, New Delhi, and East Delhi—were secured by the BJP by a margin of less than one lakh votes.

In the previous elections, the BJP had secured Chandni Chowk by a margin of about 2.27 lakh votes, New Delhi by 2.56 lakh, and East Delhi by 3.90 lakh votes.

This time, the BJP has won Chandni Chowk by a margin of about 89,000 votes, New Delhi by about 78,000 votes, and East Delhi by about 86,000 votes.

The AAP-Congress alliance in the parliamentary polls is also expected to shape the future of these two alliance partners in Delhi's political landscape, especially with the Assembly elections only eight months away.

This is not the first time the two parties have collaborated against the BJP. In 2013, the Congress, with its eight MLAs, supported the AAP in forming its first government in the capital.

In that closely contested election, the BJP improved its 2008 performance by winning 32 seats with a 33.1 per cent vote share, while newcomer AAP secured 29.5 per cent of the votes and won 28 seats. The Congress saw a significant decline, dropping to eight seats from 43, and its vote share decreased from 40.3 per cent to 24.6 per cent.

"But if the AAP and the Congress contest the state polls together, the two can easily sweep the next Assembly polls," a senior AAP functionary told this newspaper, adding, "It is too early to comment on this matter. First, let's see how politics shapes in the near future."



Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Supriya Shrinate, Pawan Khera and others at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

BJP wins all 7 seats Delhi, its vote share down from 2019

Manoj Tiwari defeats Congress Kanhaiya Kumar by 1,38,778 votes

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

Riding high on the Modi wave, the BJP swept all the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi for the record third consecutive term with voters showing their trust in the six newcomers.

After a targeted campaign against the Aam Aadmi Party over corruption allegations, the BJP emerged victorious on all the seven seats in Delhi as it thwarted the challenge mounted by the INDIA bloc.

The only candidate who was given ticket by the BJP for the third consecutive, Manoj Tiwari, pitted against Congress Kanhaiya Kumar, won by a huge margin of 1,38,778 votes. This seat saw one of the hottest poll contests in Delhi.

BJP's Ramvir Singh Bidhuri won the South Delhi seat, defeating AAP's Sahi Ram Pahalwan by a margin of 1,24,333 votes. The first time candidate Mr Bidhuri is the leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly and was fielded by the BJP in place of outgoing MP Ramesh Bidhuri.

From New Delhi constituency BJP's Bansuri Swaraj, daughter of late veteran leader Sushma Swaraj, defeated AAP's Somnath Bharti by a margin of 78,370 votes. Ms Swaraj, a first-timer,

DELHI	7
PARTY	SEATS
BJP	7
CONGRESS	0
AAP	0

was fielded by the BJP in place of outgoing MP and Union minister Meenakshi Lekhi.

While in Chandni Chowk, Praveen Khandelwal of BJP defeated Congress veteran J.P. Agarwal by a margin of 89,325 votes.

Mr Khandelwal, also a first-timer, was trailing Mr Agarwal in the initial rounds. He secured a lead later and went on to win the seat.

He was fielded by the BJP in place of outgoing MP Harsh Vardhan.

Another debutant was BJP's Northwest Delhi candidate Yogender Chandoliya who won by a margin of 2,90,849 votes against former MP and Congress candidate Udit Raj.

BJP West Delhi candidate Kamaljeet Sehrawat, who is up against AAP's Mahabal Mishra, won by a margin of 1,99,013 votes. While from East Delhi BJP's Harsh Malhotra defeated

AAP's Kuldeep Kumar by margin of 93663 votes. of 70,614 votes against the

The INDIA bloc partners have reached a pre-poll understanding for the elections in Delhi. While the AAP is contesting on four seats, the Congress has fielded candidates on the remaining three seats. This is the first Lok Sabha election in which they both have fielded joint candidates against the BJP, posing a challenge to the party ruling the Centre. Of the seven candidates announced by the BJP, six are new faces.

The BJP's vote share declined from 56.7 per cent in 2019 to around 54 per cent this time. However, it is higher than the party's 2014 vote share of 46.6 per cent.

However, the victory margin of winners as compared to the 2019 polls reduced drastically in all seven parliamentary constituencies, with candidates of INDIA bloc partners — Congress and AAP — giving a tough fight in Chandni Chowk and New Delhi constituencies.

While the BJP suffered surprising reverses in its strongholds in Hindi heartland states like neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, the party scored a hat-trick of wins in the national capital.

BJP decimates BJD in Odisha; wins LS, state polls

CM Naveen Patnaik wins from Hinjili seat, defeats nearest BJP rival Sisir Kumar by 4,636 votes

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 4

The BJP on Tuesday stormed to power in Odisha by replacing the 24-year-old Naveen Patnaik government that has been in power since 2000.

The BJP won 78 seats in the 147-member Odisha Assembly and was leading in four more seats, according to the Election Commission.

The BJD has won 51 seats and was leading in one seat. Chief Minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik won from the Hinjili seat by defeating his nearest BJP rival Sisir Kumar Mishra by 4,636 votes.

The Congress has won 14 seats while the CPI(M) has won one seat.

Independent candidates won in three assembly seats. Leader of Opposition and BJP candidate Jayanarayan Mishra won Sambalpur MLA seat with a margin of 4,105 votes. BJP chief whip in Odisha Assembly Mohan Charan Majhi won the Keonjhar seat defeating his nearest rival Mina Majhi of BJD by 11,577 votes.

This is the first time that the BJP is going to form a government of its own in the eastern Indian state.

A high-voltage campaign was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The PM held eight mas-



Congress party supporters celebrate at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

sive public rallies and two roadshows under sweltering heat conditions. Besides, Union home

minister Amit Shah, party president J.P. Nadda, and chief ministers of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh,

ODISHA	147
PARTY	SEATS
BJP	78
BJD	51
INC	14
IND	3
CPI(M)	1

and Rajasthan also undertook massive campaign activities in the state.

BJD's No. 3 leader Pranab Prakash Das who contested from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat and his mother Sandhyarani Das (Korei Assembly seat) lost the elections.

Sources said CM Naveen Patnaik is likely to resign after the results are declared.

BJP's Bhubaneswar candidate Aparajita Sarangi credited the victory of BJD to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and the hard work of Union home minister Amit Shah, party president J.P. Nadda, and many other Central leaders.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi led us from the front. Once he declared that Odisha will on June 10 have BJP chief minister, people believed his words and worked hard to see that the Naveen Patnaik government was voted out of power," said Ms Sarangi.

Big decisions in 3rd term: Modi

■ Continued From Page 1

In his address, the Prime Minister asserted that for Viksit Bharat, the Central government will work together with every state government, irrespective of whichever party is running the state.

Starting his victory speech with "Jai Jagannath", Mr Modi also thanked the people of Odisha for giving a clear mandate to the BJP to form its government for the first time in the state. He asserted that people have shown full confidence in the BJP and the NDA.

The Prime Minister also referred to the victory of the BJP candidate in Kerala, saying many party workers have sacrificed their lives in the state.

Mr Modi said that the NDA has performed well in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu and in Bihar under the leadership of chief minister Nitish Kumar. He made a special mention of the people of Jammu and Kashmir

and their record turnout for voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

The Prime Minister also thanked the Election Commission for "carrying out the world's largest elections" with great efficacy. He said India's electoral process has "reached new heights of credibility and efficiency."

Hailing the hard work of the BJP cadre, PM Modi said, "With the efforts of our karyakartas, the BJP has won more seats than the Opposition combined...if you work for 10 hours then Modi will work for 18 hours... The NDA's third term will see a new golden chapter in India's development and this is Modi's guarantee."

On the corruption issue, Mr Modi said, "Our fight against corruption must continue and digital India and technology are critical for this." He further said that dealing with the "menace of corruption is a complex task" due to increasing political greed and to end it, "we must together weed

out corruption from India."

Before concluding his speech, Mr Modi said, "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been the guiding light for us" and also said India will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Indian Constitution this year. Thanking 140-crore Indians once again, he said, "It is a historic mandate that people have given after six decades by bestowing a third term for the NDA."

While several BJP leaders and supporters were present at the party headquarters, BJP president J.P. Nadda, defence minister Rajnath Singh and Union home minister Amit Shah were present on the dais with the Prime Minister.

After his address, the Prime Minister attended a meeting at the party headquarters along with the other top brass. Speculation is rife that the BJP could call a meeting of its NDA allies on Wednesday before it stakes claim for the government formation.

India doesn't want Modi, Shah: Rahul

■ Continued From Page 1

been the prime target of the BJP's ridicule for years.

Jabs at the Gandhi family have been the BJP leader's go to line of attack at the main Opposition Congress in every election over the past decade. Visuals of Mr Gandhi petting puppies, hugging people and chatting with people from every section of society, from students to truck drivers to mechanics, showed a side of him the country had not seen before.

While Mr Gandhi ensured that he kept the campaign on defending the Constitution, Ms Vadra was responding to the charges and claims being hurled at the Congress by the BJP. She also took up the task of leading the Congress's campaign in family strongholds Amethi and

Raebareli.

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections also saw Ms Vadra's emergence as an orator who charms the audience and also connects with them. Her counterstrike to Mr Modi's charge that the Congress plans to bring a wealth distribution plan and will take away "mangalsutra" had made national headlines.

At the press conference, Mr Gandhi leader also thanked the voters for standing up and defending the Constitution.

The Congress leader said, "In Uttar Pradesh, Ms Vadra had a big role. The people of UP understood the politics of the country and the dangers to the Constitution and they safeguarded it. I thank them for supporting the Congress party and the INDIA bloc."



TWEETS

@mkstalin

Congratulations @ncbn garu and @JaiTDP for the resounding victory in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections! May your leadership bring prosperity and progress to Andhra Pradesh, fulfilling the hopes and dreams of its people — M.K. Stalin, Tamil Nadu CM and DMK president

@KanganaTeam

Heartfelt gratitude to all thepeople of Mandi for this love and trust... This victory belongs to all of you,this is the victory of your trust in Prime Minister Modi and BJP, this is thevictory of Sanatan and in the honour of Mandi

@kishanreddybjp

Thank you Secunderabad for givingme yet another term to serve the constituency. I bow to the people for theirunwavering faith in me to serve them once again. With renewed commitment, Ipledge to prioritise the welfare of the people and the development of our city

AAP says results show frustration over price rise, authoritarianism

AVINASH PRABHAKAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

Asserting that the Lok Sabha election results reflect a clear mandate against the BJP's politics and a pushback against the saffron party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday said that the public across the country is "frustrated with inflation, unemployment, and authoritarianism."

The party said that despite challenging conditions, its representation is growing in Punjab and has strongly contested the BJP in the national capital.

In a press briefing held at party headquarters, AAP senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "The biggest message that the public has given in this election is that people are unhappy and distressed with the 10 years of the BJP rule and want to remove this government. People are unhappy with inflation, unemployment, and dictatorship."

He said the results are a big lesson for the BJP and its politics of "hatred and dictatorship."

"If the Prime Minister has the least bit of morality, he should step down for giving the slogan of 400 paar," said Mr Singh, adding that the INDIA bloc will meet soon to decide on the future strategy.

However, of the seven Lok Sabha constituencies in the capital city, the BJP won five seats while it was leading in the remaining two seats by a margin of nearly 2 lakh votes.

In a consolation to the ruling AAP that failed to win even a single Lok Sabha seat in Delhi, its vote share registered an impressive increase of nearly 6 per cent as compared to the 2019 polls while the winner BJP lost its polled votes by nearly 2 per cent as compared to the 2019 polls, according to results announced on Tuesday.

The AAP contested East Delhi, West Delhi, New Delhi, and South Delhi seats but could not win any seats. Its vote share, however, was 24.14 per cent as compared to 18.2 per cent in 2019 polls.



BJP supporters celebrate the party's lead in the Lok Sabha elections at party headquarters as counting of votes underway in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI



REACTIONS

RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leaders

It was on my mind that the people of this country would rally together to save the Constitution. The first and biggest step towards saving the Constitution has been taken.

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
Congress president

This is public's result and the public's and democracy's victory. We had been saying that this battle is between public and Modi. This is their (BJP's) political and moral defeat. We humbly accept the people's mandate.

K.C. Tyagi
JD (U) leader

It is our final decision. We are in NDA, we will remain in NDA.

MANOJ TIWARI
BJP leader

Nitish Kumar is an important ally of the NDA, and people of the country want to see Modi and Kumar together. The NDA will form the government under the leadership of Modi, and Kumar has a big role in it.

SHARAD PAWAR
NCP (SP) chief

I am not sure if the INDIA bloc can form government. We will meet tomorrow and take a decision unanimously on the future course of action.

VISHNU DEO SAI
Chhattisgarh CM

INDI Alliance resorted to lies about ending reservation and change in the Constitution. I think their lies have slightly worked (in their favour).

DIGVIJAYA SINGH
Congress leader

Now it is clear that Narendra Modi has failed to ensure a clear majority for the BJP. This will raise questions about his leadership. There will be murmur within the BJP regarding his leadership.

EKNATH SHINDE
Maharashtra CM

The Opposition parties ran relentless propaganda that we will change the Constitution. We failed to clear the doubts among voters. Our losses are also due to vote bank politics. The people do not like vote bank politics.

■ Party's central-state leadership rift comes to fore ■ Fails to counter Opp's 'Constitution' narrative

BJP screams internal sabotage in UP

YOJNA GUSAI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led crescendo on Ram Mandir and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA's "Modi ki guarantee" failed to impress voters in Uttar Pradesh, where the saffron party's tally came crashing down.

In a stark contrast to the exit polls predictions, the Opposition INDIA camp's tally increased significantly in the state where it had been struggling since 2014. Outsmarting BJP's strategies, Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party (SP) gained the maximum seats, even better than the BJP — the ruling party of the state since 2017.

The Congress also increased its tally in the state where it was, otherwise, fighting for survival since 2014. From winning five seats in the last election in partnership with the BSP, the SP dealt a body blow to the BJP, which had in 2019 won 62 seats on its own. Till late evening, the Yadav-dominated party's tally

was higher than the BJP. Against the BJP's development plank, the acronym PDA — *Pichhde* (backward classes), *Dalits* and *Alpsankhyak* (minorities) — coined by the SP chief, appeared to have worked for the party.

The UP results are being seen as a strong message by the state's voters to the BJP leadership. Several prominent leaders of the party lost this time in UP, including Lalu Singh from Ayodhya (Faizabad).

Murmurs of "sabotage" at the state level started doing the round, as soon as the trends started suggesting that the BJP's tally will be coming down drastically in the state that is also represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament.

Many claimed that the "rift" between the state and central leadership played a crucial role in the party's depleted numbers in the state. Counting of votes continued till late night.

Also, the BJP leadership and its election strategy failed to counter the Opposition's main



Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed and greeted by the supporters upon his arrival at the party headquarters after Lok Sabha poll results in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

narrative of "Samvidhaan khatre mein" (Constitution under threat) under the BJP, which many saffron party insiders feel was one of the main reasons of

OBC and Dalit voters, who have been supporting the party since 2014, ditching it.

Trends in UP indicated that the BJP not just lost its ideologi-

UTTAR PRADESH 80	
PARTY	SEATS
SP	37
BJP	33
INC	6
RLD	2
ASPKR	1
ADAL	1

cal fight in the state, it lost Ayodhya (Faizabad), which had been in news since the Supreme Court's verdict on Ram Mandir.

Less voting of the BJP's core vote-bank was the issue since first phase of polling. The central leadership of the party had raised the issue several times with the state cadre, but it seemingly made no effect.

In the communally polarized state, the minorities, according to the BJP insiders, made sure to vote. Some even feel that "400 paar" slogan made many BJP core voters and cadre "complacent."

The dismal presence of Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in UP the BJP insiders claim, was also one of the reasons of non-Jatav Dalits reverting to the Congress, which also increased its tally.

Akhilesh Yadav-led SP also gained handsomely due to its strategy of ticket distribution focusing on PDA. Speculation had been rife within the Bharatiya Janata Party that there were rift between the central and state over ticket distribution.

The saffron party leadership also failed to successfully counter the "anti-incumbency" allegations against many of its sitting MPs.

Then there were complaints of Rajputs and Tyagis being unhappy with the BJP leadership over ticket distribution in the western UP.

Even in Purvanchal, Bundelkhand and the eastern UP, the BJP's performance decreased significantly, thus putting a question mark on the party's strategy and its campaign.

Setback for BJP in J&K, yet happy over Omar, Mufti loss

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 4

The BJP has retained the Jammu and Udhampur Lok Sabha seats but lost the lone Ladakh seat, which it had won in 2014 and 2019 to an Independent. This with the crushing defeat to its allies on all three seats of the predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley and the Pir Panjal tribal belt in the Jammu region is seen by the local watchers as a setback to the saffron party.

However, the news of the defeat of its key bete noires Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti was received by the leaders of the BJP and their allies and also in Jammu as a promise of happiness and satisfaction. The BJP leaders and workers at the party headquarters got into celebration mode with the pouring in of reports of Mr Abdullah and Ms Mufti trailing in the Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri constituencies, respectively.

During the poll campaigning, the BJP leadership, be it Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Union home minister Amit Shah or party's J&K unit chief Ravinder Raina — all had identified Mr Abdullah and Ms Mufti as "symbols of dynastic politics" and urged the voters to defeat them in the elections to put an end to their "political fiefdom", which they insisted had only "brought only misery to the people of J&K" in the past.

However, amid the gloom over the defeat of their leaders, the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and also the Opposition parties in Ladakh welcomed the overall results as "people's referendum" against the Centre's "undemocratic, unconstitutional and illegal" decisions taken on August 5, 2019, and the BJP government's "anti-people" policies vis-a-vis the twin UTs.

Both the NC and the PDP and also the Kargil Democratic Alliance had during the electioneering insisted that these polls were being fought not for "bijli, pani aur sadak" but against the Centre's stripping J&K of its special status envisaged in Articles 370 and 35A and splitting up it into two UTs.

The Srinagar, Anantnag-Rajouri and Ladakh seats are likely to go into the INDIA bloc kitty. It is, however, not clear if the J&K AIP's incarcerated leader Abdur Rashid Sheikh, who won from Baramulla, will go with the NDA or the INDIA bloc or prefer to remain non-aligned.



Congress candidate from Amethi constituency Kishori Lal Sharma celebrates in Amethi on Tuesday. — PTI

Cong's Sharma emerges giant killer, defeats Irani

Amethi (Uttar Pradesh), June 4: Congress candidate Kishori Lal Sharma emerged as a "giant killer" by defeating Union minister and the BJP candidate Smriti Irani by a margin of over 1.67 votes from Amethi, the bastion of the Nehru-Gandhi family in Uttar Pradesh, on Tuesday. According to the Election Commission, Ms Irani bagged 3,72,032 votes, while Mr Sharma was polled 5,39,228 votes. The BSP candidate got 34,534 votes.

Reacting to his win, Mr Sharma expressed his gratitude to the people of Amethi

and the Congress party, saying the 18th LS polls in Amethi will exemplify a strong and empowered democratic country.

Speaking to reporters, Mr Sharma said the political harmony of Amethi on the national stage and the beloved people of Amethi was very amazing, exemplary and at the peak.

"This victory is not of Kishori Lal Sharma, but of Amethi. I thank the people, the Congress, Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, and assure you all that I will be at beck and call of the people," he said. — PTI

TDP bags 135 seats in Assembly & 16 in LS elections Naidu makes incredible comeback

SAMRITAN
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 4

The TD-JS-BJP alliance has won the AP elections with a landslide majority, grabbing 164 Assembly and 21 Lok Sabha seats while the YSRC secured just 11 Assembly and four LS seats.

Accordingly, out of a total number of 175 Assembly seats, the TDP bagged 135, the Jana Sena 21 and the BJP secured 8 seats. Similarly, for a total of 25 Lok Sabha seats, the TDP won 16 seats followed by Jana Sena with 2 seats and BJP with 3.

As the counting began at 8 am, trends started beaming on TV screens. With the completion of a few rounds, the alliance reached a formidable position. However, the counting of votes was slow in some constituencies, and this was continuing till late at night.

With an exception for a few stray cases of violence, the counting of votes was peaceful. Political analysts say the alliance gained from some mistakes committed



TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, along with his family members, celebrates the party's victory in the polls at his residence in Undavalli, Amaravati. — PTI

by the YSRC. The misinformation campaign taken up by the Opposition in the run-up to the polls, they say, might have had its impact vis-a-vis the safety of their properties, and this even after chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy tried to dispel such fears.

The EC ensured full security to avert untoward incidents during the counting, in view of the violence that marred the polls on May 13.

The analysts also note that the multitudes might have been carried away

ANDHRA 175	
PARTY	SEATS
TDP	135
JnP	21
BJP	8
YSRCP	11

instead, put its faith in the large mass of ordinary people. The large turnout of people to public meetings and the "bus yatra" held by the chief minister in the run-up to the polls gave the impression of a massive support to the CM from the grassroots level.

This made the YSRC complacent and it took things for granted.

The BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah and party chief J.P. Nadda toured parts of the state and addressed public meetings, targeting the chief minister.

In 2019, the YSRC had won the polls by securing 151 Assembly and 22 LS seats with the vote share of 49.95 per cent.

LS results setback to brand Modi globally?

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

The narrow electoral victory for the BJP-led NDA is likely to be viewed globally as a major setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had comfortably won majority in the 2014 and 2019 LS polls.

As the results poured in on Tuesday, the leading American newspaper the *Washington Times* reported, "The results appear to mark a rare setback for a politician who has never failed to secure a majority in state or national elections over a 23-year political career."

Another American newspaper the *New York Times* reported, "Modi claims a third term but his party suffers losses."

"Shock for India's Modi as Opposition set to slash majority," the *BBC* reported, adding, "It's not what Mr Modi was expecting."

The comment was an obvious reference to Mr Modi's pre-election pitch when he claimed the BJP-led NDA was poised to cross a mammoth 400-seat tally. In the end, the NDA

SHORT TAKES

BJP SWEEPS UKHAND FOR THIRD TIME IN A ROW
Dehradun: As expected, the BJP made clean sweep for the third consecutive term in all five parliamentary constituencies of Uttarakhand, securing 56.8 per cent votes, as the counting for 2024 Lok Sabha polls ended. Results of only Haridwar and Nainital seats were announced at the time of filing of the report, while it was in process in rest of the seats and was yet to be declared.

DMK MAKES '40 OUT OF 40 SEATS' VOW REALITY
Chennai: Draavida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and its allies secured a spectacular win in all of Tamil Nadu's 39 segments and in the lone Puducherry seat. Candidates belonging to the DMK and its allies including star nominee Kanimozhi won by huge margins in constituencies, where results have been declared and going by the unassailable margins, all other candidates of the DMK and allies made sure to emerge victorious.

BIG WINNERS



SUPRIYA beats Sunetra Pawar by 158,333 votes



S. THAROOR beats R. Chandrasekhar by 16,077 votes



A. OWAISI beats Madhavi Latha by 3,38,087 votes



J. SCINDIA beats Y.R.D. Singh by 5,40,929 votes



AMIT SHAH beats Sonal Patel by a margin of 7,44,716 votes

BIG LOSERS



OMAR ABDULLAH loses by 2,04,142 votes



MEHBOOBA MUFTI loses by 2,36,730 votes



ADHIR RANJAN loses by 85,022 votes



PRAJWAL REVANNA loses by 43,588 votes



MANEKA GANDHI loses poll from Sultanpur seat by 43,174 votes



■ TMC wins 29 LS seats, sweeps Assembly bypoll ■ BJP reduced to 12 ■ Congress loses Berhampore

Mamata magic prevails in Bengal again

RAJIB CHOWDHURI and PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI
Kolkata/Berhampore,
June 4

West Bengal's ruling Trinamul Congress recorded a landslide victory in the state's Lok Sabha Election on Tuesday, securing 29 parliamentary constituencies out of 42 in a decisive sweep that left BJP and Congress in disarray.

TMC also dominated the Assembly bypolls, comfortably retaining two seats — Baranagar in the northern parts of Kolkata and Bhagwangola in Murshidabad.

In the Lok Sabha polls, the 29 seats captured by chief minister Mamata Banerjee's party include Jangipur, Berhampore, Murshidabad, Krishnanagar, Barrackpore, Barasat, Basirhat, Dum Dum, Kolkata North, Kolkata South, Joynagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Howrah, Uluberia, Jhargram, Midnapore, Ghatatal, Bankura, Bardhaman-Purba,



TMC supporters flash victory signs during the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal's Murshidabad on Tuesday.

— PTI

Bardhaman-Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur, Birbhum, Arambagh, Sreerampur, Hooghly, and Coochbehar.

The TMC had secured 22 parliamentary seats in 2019 and later acquired Asansol from BJP in a bypoll. This time, it clinched six more seats—Coochbehar, Bankura, Jhargram, Midnapore, Bardhaman-Durgapur, and Hooghly— from BJP, and one, Berhampore, from Congress. At Coochbehar, BJP MP and Union minister of state for home affairs Nishit

Pramanik lost to Jagadish Chandra Basunia of TMC by over 39,000 votes.

Another significant setback for BJP was the defeat of Subhas Sarkar, also a Union Minister, to Arup Chakraborty of TMC by over 6.41 lakh votes in Bankura. In Hooghly, Bengali reality TV show host Rachna Banerjee defeated BJP's Locket Chatterjee. Former cricketer Kirti Azad, a TMC candidate, won against BJP's Dilip Ghosh, who was fielded at Bardhaman-Durgapur. Two-time BJP MP S.S.

Ahluwalia also faced defeat, losing to TMC's Shatrughan Sinha at Asansol. Abhishek Banerjee, Ms Banerjee's MP nephew, secured a second victory at Diamond Harbour with a record margin of over 7.10 lakh votes, the highest in the country.

Despite expectations, Basirhat favored Haji Nurul Islam of TMC over Rekha Patra of BJP.

Meanwhile, BJP, which had won 18 seats in 2019, retained 10 of them—Darjeeling, Alipurdwar, Jalpaiguri, Raiganj, Balurghat, Malda North, Ranaghat, Bongaon, Purulia, and Bishnupur—and gained two more, Kanthi and Tamuk, from TMC. Soumendu Adhikari won at Kanthi, and former Calcutta HC Judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay secured victory at Tamuk.

In a surprise upset, Congress lost Berhampore, where its five-time MP and state party chief Adhir Ranjan Choudhury was defeated by former cricketer Yusuf Pathan of TMC by over 85,000 votes.

Modi has lost 'credibility, magic', should quit: Didi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, JUNE 4

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, emboldened by the performance of the INDIA bloc, including her party, in the Lok Sabha polls claimed on Tuesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost his "credibility and magic" and hence should resign "accepting a moral defeat" along with Union home minister Amit Shah.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also informed that she has already congratulated UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi personally over the poll results. She added that her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee would attend the INDIA

BENGAL 42	
PARTY	SEATS
BJP+	29
BJP	12
INC	1

bloc meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

"The credit behind the success of the INDIA bloc goes to the people of the country for not giving importance at all to Modi's party as the single largest one. India has won. Modi has lost. He earlier broke many parties. But now people have broken his morale. He is now falling at the feet of TDP and Nitish Kumar to form the government," Ms Banerjee said at her Kalighat residence.

"Mr Modi has lost his credibility and magic. He must resign. So should the home minister. Atrocities and Central agencies' misuse have been defeated," she claimed.

Sending a stern warning to the BJP, the chief minister observed, "We will not spare them for intimidation by Central agencies and the two-thirds majority in Parliament. Neither we nor any other INDIA bloc partner will forgive them."

On the participation in the anti-BJP bloc meeting, she added, "We don't know as we are yet to be informed about it. Anyway, Abhishek can represent us there since he won from his seat by the biggest margin in the country."

■ BJP sweeps MP, Cong fails to open account

Nota is runner-up in Indore with 2L votes

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 4

The BJP is set to win all the 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh.

The party has won 16 LS constituencies and has maintained an unassailable lead over its nearest rivals in the remaining 13 seats till the last reports came in.

This is the first time the BJP has made a clean sweep of the LS polls in Madhya Pradesh and a first for the Congress, which has drawn a blank.

Congress stalwarts who lost included party veteran and former chief minister Digvijay Singh, who lost to BJP candidate Rodmal Nagar in the Rajgarh seat by margin of over 1.41 lakh votes.

Similarly, Nakul Nath, son of Congress veteran Kamal Nath, has failed to retain his Chhindwara seat in the poll.

Notable among the winners are former chief minister Shivraj

4-time CM Shivraj wins Vidisha LS seat, begins his new innings

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, JUNE 4

BJP veteran and four-time chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan began his new political innings at the Centre in style by winning polls in the Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh by a massive margin of 8,21,408 votes over his nearest Congress rival.

While Mr Chouhan secured 11,16,460 votes, his nearest Congress rival Pratap Bhanu Sharma

Singh Chouhan, Union ministers Jyotiraditya Scindia and Fagga Singh Kulaste and state BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma.

In an unprecedented development, the BJP has retained the Indore Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh by "defeating" its "nearest rival" Nota (none of the above) by a record



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

the second highest in the state after that of Shankar Lalwani, who retained the Indore LS seat for the BJP with a record victory margin of 10,08,077 votes.

Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Shankar Lalwani, who is seeking re-election in the constituency, won a record 12,26,751 votes while Nota has emerged as the runner-up by getting a record 2,18,674 votes, according to the Election Commission (EC) data.

margin of 10,08,077 votes.

'Lioness' Kalpana ready for her new innings in J'khand

Ranchi, June 4: Not long after Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi compared Kalpana Soren, wife of jailed former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, to a "lioness" ready to defend her territory, Ms Kalpana, credited with revitalising the JMM, is gearing up for her new role.

Politics was never her choice, but circumstances forced her into it after her husband Hemant was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on January 31 in connection with a money

laundering case linked to an alleged land fraud.

Ms Kalpana led the JMM through the Lok Sabha elections, rallying support by accusing the BJP of being a "tyrannical force" intent on oppressing the Opposition INDIA bloc.

Since her husband's arrest, she has been emphasising that it is not in the DNA of tribals to bow. She currently leads her nearest BJP rival, Dilip Kumar Verma, by about 26,000 votes in Gandey Assembly bypoll. — PTI

Amid MP loss, Nath & Diggy's legacy fades

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, JUNE 4

In the twilight years of their political career, two Congress veterans have suffered major setbacks as the grand old party drew a blank in the Lok Sabha polls in Madhya Pradesh, the results of which were declared on Tuesday.

Senior party leader Digvijay Singh, a two-time chief minister, lost the polls in the Rajgarh LS constituency, his home turf, to sitting MP and BJP candidate

Rodmal Nagar by a margin of over 1.41 lakh votes.

Mr Singh, who last won a direct election in 2003 when he defeated senior BJP leader and former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in the Raghogarh Assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh, had campaigned in Rajgarh pleading the voters to ensure his victory in the poll since it was his "last election".

"This is my last election," the 78-year-old stalwart of the

MP 29	
PARTY	SEATS
BJP	29
INC	00
BSP	00

Congress said while campaigning in Rajgarh.

Mr Singh had contested from Bhopal in the 2019 LS polls and lost to BJP MP Pragya Singh, a greenhorn in politics then, by a margin of

over 3.60 lakh votes. He, however, is a Congress member in the Rajya Sabha currently.

Mr Singh initially was not willing to contest in the 2024 LS polls contending that he still has two years in his tenure as an RS member.

However, the Congress leadership had asked him to contest from the Rajgarh LS seat.

It was a major setback for Congress veteran Kamal Nath as the Congress lost the Chhindwara seat, which his family held for the

last 44 years, in this poll. His son Nakul Nath, who was seeking re-election from the seat, lost to BJP candidate

Bunty Sahu by a margin of over one lakh votes.

The BJP had focused particularly on Chhindwara in this poll to wrest the seat from the Congress.

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and state minister Kailash Vijayvargiya was the election in-charge of the cluster of four LS seats, including Chhindwara, in this election.



LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan celebrates with his mother as he leads amid counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections in Patna on Tuesday. The party won all the five seats it contested.

— PTI

All transgenders lose their deposits

New Delhi, June 4: All three transgender candidates who contested the Lok Sabha elections have lost their security deposits, highlighting the challenges faced by the community in gaining political representation in the country. India is yet to see a transgender person elected to the LS. All the three transgender candidates contested as independents. Sunaina Kinnar, who contested from Dhanbad, received 3,462 votes. Rajan Singh, an candidate from South Delhi, garnered 325 votes. Durga Mausi secured 1,124 votes. — PTI

NEW FACES



ARUN GOVIL (BJP)

● Meerut, defeated Sunita Verma (SP)

WON BY 10,585



YUSUF PATHAN (TMC)

● Baharampur, defeated Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (Congress)

WON BY 85,022



KANGANA RANAUT (BJP)

● Mandi, beats Vikramaditya Singh (Congress)

WON BY 74,755



AMRITPAL SINGH (Independent)

● Khadoor Sahib, defeated Kulbir Singh Zira (Cong)

WON BY 1.97 lakh



KARAN BHUSHAN SINGH (BJP)

● Kaiserganj, defeated Bhagat Ram (SP)

WON BY 1.48 lakh



SARABJEET SINGH KHALSA

● Faridkot, defeated Karamjit Singh Anmol (AAP)

WON BY 70,053



BANSURI SWARAJ (BJP)

● New Delhi, defeats Somnath Bharti (AAP)

WON BY 78,370



CHANDRASHEKHAR (ASP-KANSHI RAM)

● Nagina, defeats OM Kumar (BJP)

WON BY 1.51 lakh



ABHIJIT GANGOPADHYAY (BJP)

● Tamuk, defeats Debangshu Bhattacharya (TMC)

WON BY 77,733



RAJEEV BHARDWAJ (BJP)

● Kangra, defeats Anand Sharma (Cong)

WON BY 2.5 lakh

TWEETS

Champai Soren, J'khand CM

We are grateful to you for the trust you have shown in us by electing 5 MPs and 1 MLA from the INDIA bloc.

The way you all have blessed the alliance candidates by ignoring the false allegations, rumour-mongering propaganda machinery and all the conspiracies, is important for us.

Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

History created in Odisha! A heartfelt thanks to the people of Odisha for this historic mandate and for placing their absolute faith in the BJP to serve them both in the state and in Parliament... I will always cherish the beautiful time I spent with the people of Odisha and our Karyakartas during my campaign trail in the state.

BJP fails to impress Haryana, Raj; Cong steals show

SHASHI BHUSHAN and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

Months after winning the Assembly polls and dislodging the ruling Congress government, the BJP lost almost half of the parliamentary seats to the rival party in Rajasthan notwithstanding its clean sweep in the state in the 2019 and 2014 Lok Sabha polls. The setback to the BJP in the just-concluded general elections came in the backdrop of the party replacing its two-term chief minister Vasundhara

Raje, considered a stalwart in the state politics as she boasts of royal lineage and deep connect in the communities of Rajputs, Jats and Gujjars. A similar trend was discernible in neighbouring Haryana which also lost half of the Parliamentary seats it had bagged in 2019 polls despite the party changing the chief minister in the run-up to the recent polls.

In Rajasthan, the BJP, which along with its alliance won all the 25 Lok Sabha in 2019 and 2014, won 14, while the Opposition Congress won eight. Former NDA partner RLP, CPI (M) and Bharat Adivasi Party won one seat each. In Haryana, BJP and Congress are set to win five seats each.

Party leaders said sidelining local leaders and failure to address social issues are the most prominent reasons for the party's poor show in Rajasthan and Haryana.

Talking about Rajasthan, a BJP leader

said that for party poor performance can be attributed to several factors including the sidelining of former chief minister and tallest party leader in desert state



BJP candidate from Faridabad constituency Krishan Pal Gujjar celebrates with his supporters on Tuesday.

— PTI

Vasundhara Raje, the below-par performance of chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, and rebellion by those denied tickets and internal factionalism or discord among state lead-

ers. Sources claimed that despite being a star campaigner and after being sidelined by the party Ms Raje focused only on Jhalawar, her son

Dushyant Singh's constituency who won it with a margin of 3,70,989. In Haryana, the BJP won all the 10 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, however, the party appears to be losing at least half of these seats. Till now, the Congress and BJP have won three seats each and are leading in two seats each.

Saffron party sources said that multiple reasons including anti-incumbency, hurting Jat sentiments, Agniveer and farmer disenchantment were some of the prominent reasons for the party's poor performance.

"Jat community has strong presence in 40 of the 90 assembly seats in Haryana and our central leadership has challenged their dominance by appointing Manohar Lal

Khattar as chief minister in 2014 and replacing Nayab Singh Saini, also non jat, earlier this year," Haryana BJP leader said. The BJP sources claimed the farmer discontent was also visible, particularly the seats close to the border of Punjab. "In spite of the welfare measures by the Modi government and taking back the three farm laws, the scars of a year-long farmers protest was still visible. Moreover, government failure to act on their demand for a law on Minimum Support Price (MSP) also helped the Congress," they said.

It has been learnt that the Agniveer scheme didn't go down well within the youths of the state and the wrestler's protest worsened the BJP chances.



SHORT TAKES

67 candidates share top rank in NEET-UG

New Delhi: Sixty-seven candidates have bagged the top rank in medical entrance exam Neet-UG, a majority of them from Rajasthan, the National Testing Agency announced on Tuesday. The top rankers in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Neet) also include 14 girls, the agency said. It said the 56.4 per cent of the candidates have qualified the exam, which was conducted on May 5 at centres across the country and also abroad. "Sixty-seven candidates scored the same 99.997129 percentile score, therefore, they shared the all India rank one. The merit list will be prepared using a tie-breaking formula with those getting higher marks or percentile score in Biology will be given preference followed by Chemistry and Physics," a senior NTA official said. "Subsequently, candidates with less proportion of the number of attempted incorrect answers and correct answers in all the subjects in the test, or Biology, followed by Chemistry and Physics, will be given preference," the official added. Of these 67 candidates, maximum 11 are from Rajasthan, followed by eight from Tamil Nadu and seven from Maharashtra. A record 24.06 lakh candidates had registered for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test this year. The passing percentage is almost the same as last year at 56.2 per cent. Among those who qualified, 5,47,036 are male, 7,69,222 are female and 10 are transgender, NTA said. — PTI

1 of 6 cubs born to cheetah dies in MP

Sheopor, MP: One of the six cubs born to South African cheetah "Gamani" earlier this year was found dead on Tuesday at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Sheopor district of Madhya Pradesh, an official said. The cub was found dead close to its mother, an official release said. Around 4 pm, a team of veterinarians saw one of the cubs lying still close to its mother while the remaining five cubs were playing around. Following this, cub was approached for further probe, but was found dead, it said. The cause of the cub's death will be known once the post-mortem of the carcass is conducted, it said. Gamani had given birth to six cubs on March 10 this year. After the death of this cub, there are now 26 cheetahs at the KNP, including 13 cubs born in India. All the remaining 13 cubs that were born on Indian soil and 13 adults are fine, the official said. Under the ambitious Cheetah Reintroduction project, eight Namibian cheetahs, comprising 5 females and 3 males, were released into enclosures at the KNP on September 17 in 2022. In February 2023, another batch of 12 cheetahs were brought to the park from South Africa. — PTI

Blow for ruling Left; Opposition UDF wins 18 seats Lotus blooms in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 4

The BJP on Tuesday created history in Kerala by opening its account, with its candidate and Malayalam film actor Suresh Gopi registering a stupendous victory in Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency. Kerala voters, finally, removed the "no entry" board for the BJP, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's overdrive helping the party increase its vote share by more than two per cent. The BJP victory by a margin of 74686 votes in Thrissur, which was the sitting seat of UDF, is quite significant considering the fact that all the seven Assembly segments in the constituency are with the ruling LDF. The saffron party had drawn a meticulous plan to wrest the Thrissur seat from the Congress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Thrissur at least thrice, held public meet-



BJP candidate from Thrissur constituency Suresh Gopi celebrates as he leads in the Lok Sabha elections on the day of counting of votes in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.

ings, roadshows and also extended a personal touch by attending Mr Gopi's daughter's marriage at the famous Guruvayur temple and blessing the couple in January this year. Besides, the BJP also got a shot in the arm on the eve of the polls when K. Padmaja — the daughter of former chief minister

and Congress stalwart late K. Karunakaran — joined the saffron party. The Congress tried to do damage control by replacing the sitting MP of Thrissur T.N. Prathapan with Karunakaran's son K. Muralaeddharan, who represented Vadakara in Lok Sabha. But the move could not bring the desired result

KERALA 20	
PARTY	SEATS
CONGRESS	14
BJP	1
IUML	2
OTHERS	3

for the Congress, with Mr Muralaeddharan ending up third. Political observers say the BJP's outreach to Christian might have succeeded in gaining traction among a section of the community. The police highhandedness during Thrissur Pooram — the biggest festival there — also adversely affected the prospects of both LDF and UDF. The BJP candidate Suresh Gopi increased his vote share from 2.90 lakh in 2019 to over 4 lakh this time around. While CPI's V.S. Sunil Kumar bagged 3.34 lakh votes, the Congress vote share came down from 4.15 lakh to 3.24 lakh.

Modi roadshow fails to impress Mumbaiakars

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JUNE 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow did little to help the BJP retain its seats in Mumbai, the financial capital of the country, with the INDIA bloc winning four seats. Of the six seats in Mumbai, the BJP only managed to retain the North Mumbai seat, represented by Union minister Piyush Gopal. Four seats were won by the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Congress. Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena candidate Ravindra Waikar won the Mumbai North West constituency. On May 15, PM Narendra Modi held a grand road-



Shiv Sena supporters at Sena Bhavan in Mumbai.

show in Ghatkopar, which falls under the Mumbai North East Lok Sabha seat. Mr Modi was accompanied by Mumbai North East candidate Mihir Kotecha and Mumbai North Central

constituency candidate Ujjwal Nikam. Both candidates lost in a close contest. Despite BJP's star campaigner and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath campaigning

MAHA 48	
PARTY	SEATS
NDA	18
INDIA	29
OTHERS	1

for Mr Nikam in the Mumbai North Central constituency, the party candidate could not secure a win. Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Sanjay Dina Patil defeated Mr Kotecha in the Mumbai North East constituency by 29,861 votes. In Mumbai North Central, Congress candidate Varsha Gaikwad defeated Mr

In Maha, OGS Uddhav & Sharad Pawar stand tall

Credit to unity among all three MVA partners: Pawar

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JUNE 4

While the Congress has emerged as the most successful party among the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituents, it is NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray who have proved to be real heroes for the Opposition alliance's impressive show in Maharashtra.

With their backs to the wall following splits in their respective parties, both leaders refused to throw in the towel. In the scorching heat, they campaigned extensively across the state despite their health issues and contributed handsomely to the MVA's win in the Lok Sabha polls.

With their stellar performance, Sharad Pawar and Mr Thackeray have also proved that they enjoy more confidence among their party supporters than Ajit Pawar and



NCP chief Sharad Pawar with Supriya Sule in Mumbai on Tuesday. - PTI

Eknath Shinde, who had effected splits in the NCP and Shiv Sena. Though Sharad Pawar and Mr Thackeray saw their parties split, symbols snatched away and names changed, they fought on gamely and demonstrated that they lead "the real NCP and the real Shiv Sena". Both, Sharad Pawar and Mr Thackeray would be

mightily pleased by keeping their stranghold intact on their bastions — Baramati and Mumbai. As his daughter Supriya Sule registered a comprehensive win in Baramati, the senior Pawar dealt a huge blow to the aspirations of his cousin Ajit Pawar, who had fielded his wife Sunetra in the constituency, which is known as a Pawar fiefdom. In Mumbai, Mr Thackeray's Shiv Sena won four out of six seats, which could prove to be a decisive factor in the polls of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which are likely to be held next year. Sharad Pawar gave credit to the unity among all three MVA partners. He said that the INDIA bloc has posed a major challenge to the BJP at the national level and now he will work towards bringing change in Maharashtra.

Akhilesh scripts turnaound story for INDIA bloc

Lucknow, June 4: Akhilesh Yadav's stock rose dramatically on Tuesday with his Samajwadi Party cutting the ruling BJP down to size in Uttar Pradesh.

As the trends came in, the SP was leading on 33 seats as against the BJP's 36 seats. The tally is a spoiler for the BJP which had claimed it will sweep the state from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an MP. From winning five seats in the last election in partnership with the BSP, Akhilesh's party in UP has dealt a bodyblow to the BJP, which had in 2019 won 62 seats on its own. Born on July 1, 1973, Akhilesh led the opposition's campaign from the front in the key political state, pairing well with Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and Arvind Kejriwal's outfit. This was the first general election after the death of SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav, and Akhilesh did not disappoint, to the extent, it now leads on more seats than won in the 2004 election. The turnaround for the opposition came even as Akhilesh, along with Rahul Gandhi, was disparaged as "Do ladko ki jodi" often by Modi. The acronym PDA - Pichchde (backward classes), Dalits and Alpsankhyak (minorities) — coined by Akhilesh appears to have worked



Akhilesh Yadav

SP chief wins Kannauj LS seat

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav won the Kannauj Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday by a margin of 1,70,000 votes over his nearest rival and BJP MP Subrata Pathak. — PTI

Registration counters for new MPs activated

AGE CORRESPONDENT,
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

Registration counters for the newly-elected MPs became operational at the Parliament House complex on Tuesday and these counters will remain operational from 10 am to 8 pm from June 5 to June 14. To reduce paperwork and make formalities for members seamless, the registration process will be done through an online integrated software application, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said, adding that members would not be required to sign multiple physical forms with various branches, a move that would help save a substantial amount of time. Earlier, the registration

of the newly-elected members used to take place in the old Parliament House building (now Samvidhan Sadan). A team has been assigned the task of keeping a close tab on the Election Commission website on Tuesday and entering the contact details of successful candidates in near real-time. The team using a software application would be able to check whether the successful candidate is a new MP or re-elected. The same information would be shared with liaison officers. An endeavour has been made to deploy liaisons from the same region and similar language skills to facilitate members and ensure faster communication.

Sukhoi crashes in Nashik; pilot, co-pilot eject safely

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 4

The Indian Air Force's Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter aircraft, which was with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for overhaul, crashed on Tuesday while on test sortie in Nashik, Maharashtra, said official. "A Sukhoi-30 MKI crashed while on test sortie from HAL Nashik at Sirsa gaon. Both the pilots have ejected safely. A technical snag was reported by the pilots. The exact reason will only be known after detailed investigation," said HAL official. They have been taken to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) hos-

pital for further treatment, special inspector general of Nashik range D.R. Karale said. The fighter jet was being flown by Wing Commander Bokil and his second in command Biswas when it crashed at 1.20 pm. After it crashed, the aircraft caught fire which was doused. Upon impact, some parts of the plane were scattered over a 500 metre radius, the police said. Teams of Indian Air Force and HAL's security and technical wings visited the spot. Another police official said while the exact cause of the crash is yet to be ascertained, preliminary information points to technical factors.



Remains of a Sukhoi-30 fighter plane of the IAF after it crashed in Nashik on Tuesday. — PTI

NDA gets a majority as Cong, INDIA bloc gain

Continued from Page 1

a "mandate against Modi". West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee demanded Mr Modi's resignation "accepting moral defeat". Speaking in Kolkata, Ms Banerjee said: "Prime Minister Modi has lost all credibility, he should immediately resign. Modi is now falling at the feet of the TDP and Nitish (Kumar) to form the government." A visibly upset BJP leader virtually echoed Ms Banerjee's line, saying: "For the last 10 years, we were dictating terms, but now the party will have to be at the mercy of the allies." A former Bharatiya Janata Party Rajya Sabha member, speaking at a TV channel, felt that even if the NDA formed government, it "could fall in a few months for lack of clarity". While the BJP suffered a setback in the Hindi heartland, it finally managed to make inroads into Kerala by opening its account and routed the Congress in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party's bid to consolidate the Hindu votebank with the construction of the Ram temple failed to resonate with the electorate in some parts of the hinterland, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, the epicentre of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. In UP, where the BJP was expecting to win at least 60 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats, the Samajwadi Party led by Akhilesh Yadav virtually rattled the saffron Goliath down by leading in at least 36 seats. The BJP suffered major setbacks in UP

with party stalwarts Smriti Irani from Amethi, Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur and Sanjeev Baliyan from Muzaffarnagar biting the dust. Ms Irani, the Bharatiya Janata Party's star candidate, lost by over 15 lakh votes to Congress candidate K.L. Sharma. The Bharatiya Janata Party was also found trailing in Faizabad (Ayodhya) constituency. It was eastern Uttar Pradesh which delivered a huge blow to the Bharatiya Janata Party. While Rahul Gandhi was leading in Rae Bareilly with a margin of nearly 3,80,000 votes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was leading by a margin of over one lakh votes from Varanasi. A desert storm hit the Bharatiya Janata Party hard in Rajasthan, which was trailing in at least nine of the 25 Lok Sabha seats. In 2019, the BJP had swept Rajasthan by winning all 25 Lok Sabha seats. Sources said that factional fights between the BJP state and the national leaders in both UP and Rajasthan resulted in the party's "dismal" performance in these two states. It was Maharashtra where the Bharatiya Janata Party-led "Mahayuti" faced a major reversal. The move to engineer splits within the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) failed to yield the intended results in the state. While the Maha Vikas Aghadi (INDIA) coalition, consisting of the Congress, Shiv Sena (Thackeray) and NCP (Sharad

Pawar) was leading in 29 seats, the BJP-led Maha Yuti (NDA), which included chief minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP, was leading in 18 seats. The BJP, which was confident of trouncing the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal, was in for a rude shock. The saffron brigade faced a body blow as the party struggled to retain its 2019 tally of 18 Lok Sabha seats. So far, the TMC was leading in 30 seats, the BJP in 12 and Left and Congress alliance in one. The BJP, which swept all 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana in 2019, hit a hurdle with the Congress leading in five seats. The lotus brigade, which had won 12 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Jharkhand in 2019, was also in for a jolt in this tribal state. While the BJP was leading in nine seats (loss of three seats), the Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was leading in five seats (gain of three seats). In Congress-ruled Karnataka, the Bharatiya Janata Party and its ally Janata Dal (Secular) was leading in 19 seats, while the Congress was ahead in nine seats. The BJP's hopes were also dashed in Tamil Nadu as the DMK and Congress alliance won all 29 Lok Sabha seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party star attraction, state unit chief Annamalai, failed to fire and win from the Coimbatore Lok Sabha constituency. The Bharatiya Janata Party, however, swept through Madhya Pradesh, scoring 29-0. While it won 25 of the 26 Lok Sabha seats

in Gujarat, it once again retained its stranglehold in Delhi, by winning all the seven seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA also trounced the INDIA alliance in Assam by recording a comfortable lead in 10 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats. In Odisha, Bharatiya Janata Party not only snatched the state away from Biju Janata Dal by winning the Assembly elections but decimated the BJD in the Lok Sabha polls by winning 19 of the 21 seats in the state. It was, however, the stellar performance by the BJP allies, the TDP and JD(U), which kept the NDA afloat and made it possible to cross the simple majority of 272 seats. While the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) in Bihar won 12 seats, the TDP led by N. Chandrababu Naidu bagged 16 Lok Sabha berths in Andhra Pradesh. In the Kashmir Valley, the victory of separatist leader and Independent candidate from Baramulla Abul Rashid Sheikh, popularly known as "Engineer", was being viewed as a "statement" against the abrogation of Article 370. Abdul Rashid of Awami Ittehad Party won against National Conference leader Omar Abdullah by a margin of over one lakh votes. In Punjab, radical preacher and Independent candidate Amrithpal Singh was leading by over 50,000 votes against his nearest rival, Congress candidate Kulbir Singh Zira. Amrithpal Singh, arrested under the NSA, is lodged in an Assam jail. Khadoor Sahib is known as a "panthic seat".

Exit pollsters face loss of credibility

Continued from Page 1

behind in our lower range by 66. What went wrong were the predictions in the three big states Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In UP, we predicted 67 for the NDA, but it won 37 seats. In West Bengal, it was the reverse. In Maharashtra, we predicted 28 for the NDA and 20 for the INDIA bloc, but the seat tally was the opposite. There is a loss of 60 seats in these three states where we went totally wrong. In Haryana, we said the INDIA bloc will get 4; it is 6-4 now. Karnataka, out of 28, we gave the NDA 20-25 it is 18," Mr Gupta said on air while the counting was still going on. "We are not spot on, but we said the NDA will form a government. In three states, Dalits, Muslims and Yadavs played important roles. In Uttar Pradesh, the major narrative was Ram Mandir, the change of Constitution and the reservation due to which the Dalit and underprivileged shifted first," Mr Gupta tried to explain. But his team itself failed to see this on the ground during exit poll surveys or did they choose to ignore it? For several people on the ground and the journalists who were interacting with the voters, such predictions from exit polls were surprising because they found the pictures on the ground to be

different. Psephologist Yogendra Yadav, whose predictions were spot on, said he was surprised to see all exit polls on various TV channels were speaking in the same tone as if they were trying to set a narrative. Some of these psephologists, reportedly, also conduct surveys for the BJP. It is alleged that some of the psephologists were taking dictations from a few BJP leaders and their numbers tallied with the off-the-record briefing by the party leaders. One political leader said that everyone knew that the INDIA bloc was going to do well, but the pollsters were told to keep the margins low in exit polls to demoralise the cadres and distract the polling agents who would sit for counting. "The exit polls are a ploy by the BJP. They know that the people of India have voted in favour of the INDIA bloc and they are laying the trap to sabotage the verdict that is set for tomorrow," said the Congress. AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal had also talked about "theories" behind the "high number of seats" predicted in exit polls. "There is also a theory that they have shown so many seats (in favour of the NDA) because their people have invested in the stock market.

And tomorrow, when the stock market opens, there will be such a bumper gain that they will sell their shares and escape," he claimed. The biggest game-changing results came from Uttar Pradesh, which the pollsters ignored for reasons they may not be able to explain openly. In Uttar Pradesh, the exit polls had predicted the BJP to get 65 out of 80 seats. The India Today-Axis My India poll had predicted the numbers for the BJP in the 42 seats in West Bengal could be as high as 26-31 seats, while the Trinamul Congress may get relegated to 11-14 seats. The results were just the opposite. In Maharashtra, out of 48 seats, the exit polls had predicted that the NDA may get 28-32 seats, out of which the Bharatiya Janata Party will bag 20-22 seats. Out of the 14 seats contested, Eknath Shinde Shiv Sena was expected to get around 8-10 and Ajit Pawar's NCP 1-2 seats compared to 3-5 seats for Sharad Pawar's party. The Congress was projected to get 3-4 seats, while Uddhav Thackeray's (UBT) Shiv Sena was predicted to win 9-11 seats out of the 23 seats it contested. The results in Maharashtra are also way off the mark from what was predicted by the exit polls.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	72,079.05	-5.74
Nifty 50	21,884.50	-5.93
S&P 500*	5,272.62	-0.20
Dollar (₹)	83.53	-0.45
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.60	-0.92
Euro (₹)	90.82	-0.81
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	71,770▼40	0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	76.83	-1.95
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.033	0.086
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.386	-0.016

* As of 8:30 PM IST



CBIC invites comments on new Excise Bill

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) is expected to come out with comprehensive excise law as it invited comments on a draft Central Excise Bill, 2024, which seeks to replace Central Excise Act, 1944. “The Bill aims to enact a comprehensive modern central excise law with an emphasis on promoting ease of doing business and repealing old provisions,” a finance ministry statement said.

Counting day turns negative for market

Volatility around poll outcome to reduce gradually

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 4

Election day high market volatility was repeated yet again, however it was a different story this time for investors. In the past three occasions in 2009, 2014 and 2019 it had made investors richer with stocks and benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 rising sharply. But this time, NDA not getting the numbers as projected in the exit polls led to a market slide by over 5 per cent, implying a notional wealth erosion of over ₹31.08 lakh crore. Heavy selling in the market has led to fall in BSE's market capitalisation to over ₹394.83 lakh crore or \$4.73 trillion from over ₹425.91 lakh crore or \$5.13 trillion, a day earlier when market had rallied anticipating exit poll predictions to come true. Earlier, in 2009 when



● IN THE past three occasions in 2009, 2014 and 2019 market had made investors richer with stocks and benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 rising sharply.

Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) had won the Lok Sabha elections, market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 had hit 10 per cent upper circuit twice on Ma 18, forcing stock exchanges to close the market for the day. In 2009, the results were announced on Saturday, May 15, which was a stock market holiday. Pent-up demand had led to market hitting 10 per cent upper circuit expecting Manmohan Singh-led UPA government to continue the

economic policy adopted in the previous regime (2004-2009), when they replaced Atal Bihari Vajpayee led NDA. Again in 2014, Modi-led NDA's comprehensive victory with BJP winning majority seats (282) on its own and NDA winning over 300 seats led the Sensex to gains 6.15 per cent or 1,470 points intra-day and cross 25,000- mark for the first time on May 16, 2014. It settled lower at 24,121.74 and volatility reduced thereafter.

Similarly, after the 2019 NDA victory, the Sensex crossed 40,000-mark intra-day rising to 40,124.96, gaining 2.59 per cent or 1,014.75 points intra-day but settled lower at 38,811.39.

“Markets saw heightened volatility due to the uncertainty surrounding the election outcomes, mainly due to the gap between the exit polls and the results. The pre-election rally seen Monday yesterday, driven by expectations of a BJP victory, had already been factored into market prices,” said Pradeep Gupta, co-founder and vice-chairman, Anand Rath Group. “We have seen a spurt in volatility, which created pressure on market. The volatility around the poll outcome will reduce gradually,” said Ajay Menon, MD and CEO broking and distribution, MOFSL.

Experts warn of volatility, suggest diversified route

New Delhi, June 4: Future trajectory of the stock market hinges on the new government's economic policies, with factors like gross domestic product (GDP) growth, inflation, and global conditions playing a key role, experts said on Tuesday.

Experts cautioned investors of volatility due to currently high valuations and suggested adopting a diversified approach.

The reformistic approach, which was a hallmark of previous two terms of the NDA government, might take a backseat in the third term, Manish Chaudhary, head of Research, StoxBox, said. “The election results are showing a less than halfway mark for the current BJP government, pointing towards a coalition government. This will lead to dependence on allies in making key policy decisions, and sharing certain cabinet seats, which will lead to policy paralysis and uncertainty in the government's functioning”, Yashovardhan Khemka, senior manager, Research & Analytics at Abans Holdings, said.

The markets are pricing the risk associated with this scenario, and the potential impact of a shift toward socialist policies by the government, thus leading to sell-off in the market, Yashovardhan Khemka, senior manager, Research & Analytics at Abans Holdings, said.

“The future trajectory of the market depends on the new government's economic policies, with factors like GDP growth,



● THE MARKETS are pricing the risk associated with this scenario, and the potential impact of a shift toward socialist policies by the government, thus leading to sell-off in the market.

inflation, and global conditions playing a key role,” Suman Bannerjee, CIO, Hedonova, said.

Since May 2014, a combination of political stability with promises of reforms, improving economic conditions, and supportive global factors like quantitative easing by developed markets fuelled a strong rally in Indian stock markets. This surge had led to over ₹300 lakh crore in investor wealth, reflecting growing confidence and participation.

Experts said investors like certainty and continuation of policies, India is a long-term structural growth story.

“A lot of elements are in place. Over anything the economics should prevail. We are already in top in factors like GDP, market cap, demographic dividend etc,” said Manish Jain, director - Institutional Business (Equity & FI) Division at Mirae Asset Capital Markets. —PTI

FMCG EMERGES BRIGHT SPOT IN TURBULENT STOCK MARKETS

Mumbai, June 4: Shares of consumer goods companies emerged as a bright spot in India even as local stocks tumbled following election results that showed a much tighter outcome for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party.

The Nifty FMCG Index climbed as much as 1.3 per cent on Tuesday, making it the only sectoral gauge to rise. In contrast, the benchmark NSE Nifty 50 dropped as much as 8.5 per cent, its biggest intraday dip since March 2020.

A weak government may be forced to appease the electorate and ramp up welfare spending, a move which may spur consumer demand in the economy. That probably boosted stocks from the sector, with Hindustan Unilever Ltd., rising over 6 per cent and liquor-maker United Spirits Ltd. advancing 4.6 per cent.

“There is now a fear that the new government would turn more welfareist and less reformist,” said V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services. That has triggered a flight to these defensive plays, he said. Nestle India Ltd. jumped as much as 3.2 per cent, while Colgate-Palmolive India rose 4.9 per cent.

Retailers Avenue Supermarts Ltd. and V-Mart Retail Ltd. also gained. —Bloomberg

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

BALLOONS TRASH KOREAN ARMY AGREEMENT

Seoul, June 4: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol fully suspended on Tuesday a 2018 tension-reducing military deal with the North in response to a bombardment of trash-carrying balloons sent by Pyongyang last week.

The agreement, signed during a period of warmer ties, was already largely void as Seoul had partially suspended it last year in response to North Korea putting a spy satellite into orbit, prompting Pyongyang to say it would not honour it at all.

RARE FOSSIL OF TEEN REX EXCAVATED

North Dakota, June 4: A rare fossil of an adolescent Tyrannosaurus rex has been excavated in North Dakota's badlands — a find noteworthy for the scientific insight it may offer into the life history of this famous dinosaur and for the tale of the kids who found it.

The discovery of the fossil, nicknamed “Teen Rex,” was announced on Tuesday.

Israel says 4 more hostages in Hamas custody are dead

Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox coalition partners back Gaza hostage deal

Jerusalem, Doha, June 4: Four more hostages kidnapped on October 7 were declared dead by the Israeli military, including three older men seen in a Hamas video begging to be released.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's biggest coalition partner said on Tuesday it would support a prospective deal to free hostages from Hamas captivity even if it entails an overhaul of Israel's Gaza war strategy.

The statement by Shas, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish party that holds 11 of Parliament's 120 seats, followed similar remarks on Monday by Yitzhak Goldknopf, leader of the second such party in the coalition, United Torah Judaism, which has seven seats.

Mediator Qatar said on Tuesday it was waiting for a “clear position” from Israel on a proposed Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal outlined by US President Joe Biden.

“We have yet to see a very clear position from the Israeli government towards the principles laid out by Biden,” foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said, adding there was no “concrete approval” from either side.



Fires burn as a result of rockets launched from Lebanon into northern Israel, next to the city of Kiryat Shmona near the Lebanon border, on Tuesday. —AFP

Monday's announcement heightens pressure on Israel to agree to a US ceasefire proposal that could secure the return of the hostages still held in Gaza and end the eight-month war. About 80 hostages in Gaza are believed to be alive, alongside the remains of 43 others.

In the days since President Joe Biden announced the cease-fire proposal Friday, Israel has seen some of its largest protests calling on the government to bring them home. Although Biden said the proposal was Israeli, the Israeli leadership has appeared to distance itself from the plan, vowing to keep conducting military operations against Hamas until the militant group is destroyed.

All four of the men declared dead on Monday night — Nadav Poppelwell, Amiram Cooper, Yoram Metzger and Haim Peri — were kidnapped and taken into Gaza still alive, according to the Hostages Forum, a grassroots group representing the families of the hostages. “It is time to end this cycle of sacrifice and neglect,” the group said. —Agencies

BIBI PROLONGING GAZA WAR OVER POLITICS: BIDEN

Washington, June 4: US President Joe Biden said Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu may be stalling on ending the war in Gaza for political reasons, according to an interview with Time magazine released on Tuesday.

The comments in the May 28 interview were made a few days before Biden detailed a proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza, and as the Israeli Prime Minister struggles with deep political divisions at home.

Asked whether he thought Netanyahu was prolonging the war for his own political reasons, Biden said: “There is every reason for people to draw that conclusion.”

Biden, who has been pushing for an end to the nearly eight-month war, also said it was “uncertain” whether Israeli forces have committed war crimes in Gaza. —Reuters

Kremlin: Meet on war waste of time sans Russia

Moscow, June 4: The Kremlin said on Tuesday it was understandable that some countries were declining to take part in a Swiss-hosted peace summit on Ukraine this month because the gathering lacked clear goals and it was absurd to hold it without Russia.

A Russian missile attack on Ukraine's Dnipro injured eight people, including two children, and damaged civilian infrastructure in early hours of Tuesday.

Ukraine says more than 100 countries and organisations have agreed to attend the summit on June 15-16, to which Moscow has not been invited.

“This is a completely absurd activity, this is an idle pastime,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. He said it was obvious the meeting was not geared towards results, and “that's why many countries don't want to waste time.”

In a blow to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, China has said it will not take part — something Russian Parliament Speaker Vyacheslav Volod-

in noted with satisfaction in a Telegram post.

He cited press reports saying Saudi Arabia would not go either, although the kingdom has not publicly announced its position on the summit. Peskov said that was a sovereign matter for Saudi Arabia.

The meeting is taking place at a crucial point in the third year of the war in Ukraine, where Russian forces have recorded a series of gradual gains since February.

In recent weeks a number of Nato countries have said they will allow Ukraine to strike targets inside Russia with weapons they have supplied to Kyiv, something that President Vladimir Putin has warned could escalate the war into a global conflict.

Russia says it is open to dialogue on the basis of the “new realities” it has created on the ground, where its forces control about 18 per cent of Ukrainian territory. Kyiv says peace can only be based on a full withdrawal of all Russian forces and the restoration of its territorial integrity. —Reuters

Security tight in China, HK on Tiananmen anniv.

Beijing, Hong Kong, June 4: Security was tight and access restricted to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Tuesday, the 35th anniversary of the June 4 crackdown, while Hong Kong police detained several activists, as cities in Taiwan and elsewhere prepared to mark the date with vigils.

Chinese tanks rolled into the square before dawn on June 4, 1989, to end weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations by students and workers. Television news images of a lone Chinese man in a white shirt standing in front of a column of tanks spread around the world and became the iconic image of the demonstrations. Decades after the military

crackdown, rights activists say the demonstrators' original goals, including a free press and freedom of speech, remain distant, and June 4 is still a taboo topic in China.

The ruling Communist Party has never released a death toll, though rights groups and witnesses say the figure could run into the thousands.

“The memory of June 4th will not disappear in the torrent of history,” Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said in a statement on Tuesday.

Taiwan would “respond to authoritarianism with freedom,” added Lai, inaugurated last month as the leader of the democratic island China claims as its own.

In Beijing, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, told reporters that Beijing “firmly opposes anyone smearing China and using this (June 4) as a pretext to interfere in China's internal affairs”.

Taiwan is the only part of the Chinese-speaking world where June 4 can be remembered openly, with a commemoration event planned in Taipei, the capital. Others are planned in countries such as UK, Canada and US.

In China-ruled Hong Kong, police officers tightened security around downtown Victoria Park, where large June 4 candlelight vigils had been held annually before tougher new national security laws took effect in

recent years.

Police took away several individuals near the park, among them an elderly man holding up a poster commemorating June 4, a Reuters witness said.

Another activist, 68-year-old Alexandra Wong, was surrounded by around a dozen officers when she held up a bouquet of flowers and shouted, “The people will not forget,” before being taken away in a police van.

Over the past week, Hong Kong police have arrested eight people for sedition under a new national security law, including activist Chow Hang-tung, stemming from what media said were online posts linked to June 4. —Reuters



Police officers stand guard near Victoria Park, the city's venue for the annual 1989 Tiananmen massacre vigil, on the 35th anniversary of China's Tiananmen Square crackdown in Hong Kong, on Tuesday. —AP

US cops: Missing Indian student safe

Houston, June 4: A 23-year-old Indian student who went missing in the US state of California last week has been located and “is safe”, police said on Tuesday.

Nitheesha Kandula, a California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) student, went missing on May 28 in Los Angeles. John Gutierrez, Chief of Police, CSUSC, said in a post on X that she was located and was safe.

“#MissingCSUSBUpdate: The missing student identified in this bulletin who was reported missing on May 28, 2024, in Los Angeles, has been located

and is safe!” Gutierrez said, without giving any more information on her whereabouts.

Police had sought the public's help to find Nitheesha, reportedly from Hyderabad, urging people with information on her whereabouts to contact authorities. She was described as 5 feet 6 inches tall and around 160 pounds (72.5 kgs) in weight with black hair and black eyes in the police's written statement.

Recently, the Indian community in the US has grappled with a string of such incidents involving students. —PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

5 JUNE 2024

Regional parties gain as voters send clear signal

The results of the elections to the 18th Lok Sabha demonstrate that the people of this country have faith in its democracy and its institutions, and have no plan whatsoever to sell themselves to ideologies and agendas other than those that have sustained the republic for this long. They would want a stable government but shall not tolerate intolerance to ideas, hate-mongering and social polarisation. No grand narrative that seeks to strike at the roots of the ideals uniting this great nation will have their approval: This seems to be the message that they have sent out.

The nitty-gritty of government formation will take time to play out but the simple fact that stands out is that the BJP, which had won the last two elections on its own, has failed to win an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha this time. This must be disappointing to its leadership which boasted of being all set to win 370 seats. But now even the NDA it leads is unlikely to cross 300 seats in the 543-member House.

It is a paradox that its whimsical and undemocratic agenda of a “Congress-mukt Bharat” (India without Congress) notwithstanding, the principal Opposition party in all likelihood will hit a three-digit figure and the INDIA bloc of which the latter is the key participant will be at striking distance of the BJP’s own numbers in the Lower House.

The BJP will do well to have its ear to the ground to catch the democratic tune, lest it misses the song. Rhetoric and grandstanding alone cannot win the popular vote; an attempt to understand the ground realities can.

It was indeed a national election but the pattern that has emerged is that the regional parties have once again, perhaps after decades, regained their role in the country’s polity. The DMK, the Trinamul Congress, the Telugu Desam Party, the Samajwadi Party, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) will play a decisive role in the formation of the agenda of both the ruling and the Opposition blocs.

The regional parties had shot to prominence in the 1990s when the Congress, which predominantly occupied the Treasury benches till that time, got enfeebled. This time around, it is the drop in the numbers of the BJP that has given up space again for the regional forces to occupy. The parties may have their regional agendas as well but they came together to sustain coalition governments for two decades. So their presence will only lead to the sustenance of the diversity on which our republic is founded. In fact, the BJP slipped only when the Opposition focused on regional narratives.

The election results, which proved most exit polls wrong and rightly reflected the realities of life, must also put to rest the speculation about electronic voting machines, though the functioning of the Election Commission of India leaves much to be desired. The poll panel, on its part, must explore the possibilities of further making the election machinery transparent so that the last-minute rush to the country’s highest court can be avoided the next time.

Shock in Odisha, surprise in AP

If a shocking result was in store for India’s second longest serving chief minister Naveen Patnaik in Odisha, there was a pleasant surprise in an overwhelming show of support for N. Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh.

Just 78 days short of overtaking former Sikkim CM and Sikkim Democratic Front president Pawan Chamling as a CM who served for close to 25 years, Naveen may be taking a bow, his age and perceived fitness issues perhaps working against him. As his regional party B JD makes way for the national BJP, Mr Patnaik will leave with a record of public service that will be hard to match.

It was predicted that the BJP’s gains in Odisha would help compensate for losses elsewhere, but it was in Andhra that its timely alliance with Chandrababu Naidu’s TDP and the Janasena party of filmstar Pawan Kalyan was to fetch equally handsome returns. The former CM who had left the Andhra Assembly three years ago with tears in his eyes as he and his family were insulted did what he had sworn to do, which was to return to the chamber only as CM.

A perceptible lack of sustained governance, preoccupation with settling scores with the TDP chief which may have resulted in swinging sympathy Mr Naidu’s way, and little progress in shaping a capital or three capitals for a state that used to pride itself in being a bellwether in national politics, may have facilitated the remarkable comeback victory scored by him over Jagan Mohan Reddy’s YSRCP.

Promising inclusive growth and stability, Mr Naidu charted his way back after having served as the first CM of the residuary Andhra state from 2014, climbing from the lowest point of his long political career when jailed on a graft charge and needing the court to bail him out. The voters may have found his focus on sustainable development attractive even if the welfare initiatives of YSRCP did put money in the pockets of the poor.

THE ASIAN AGE

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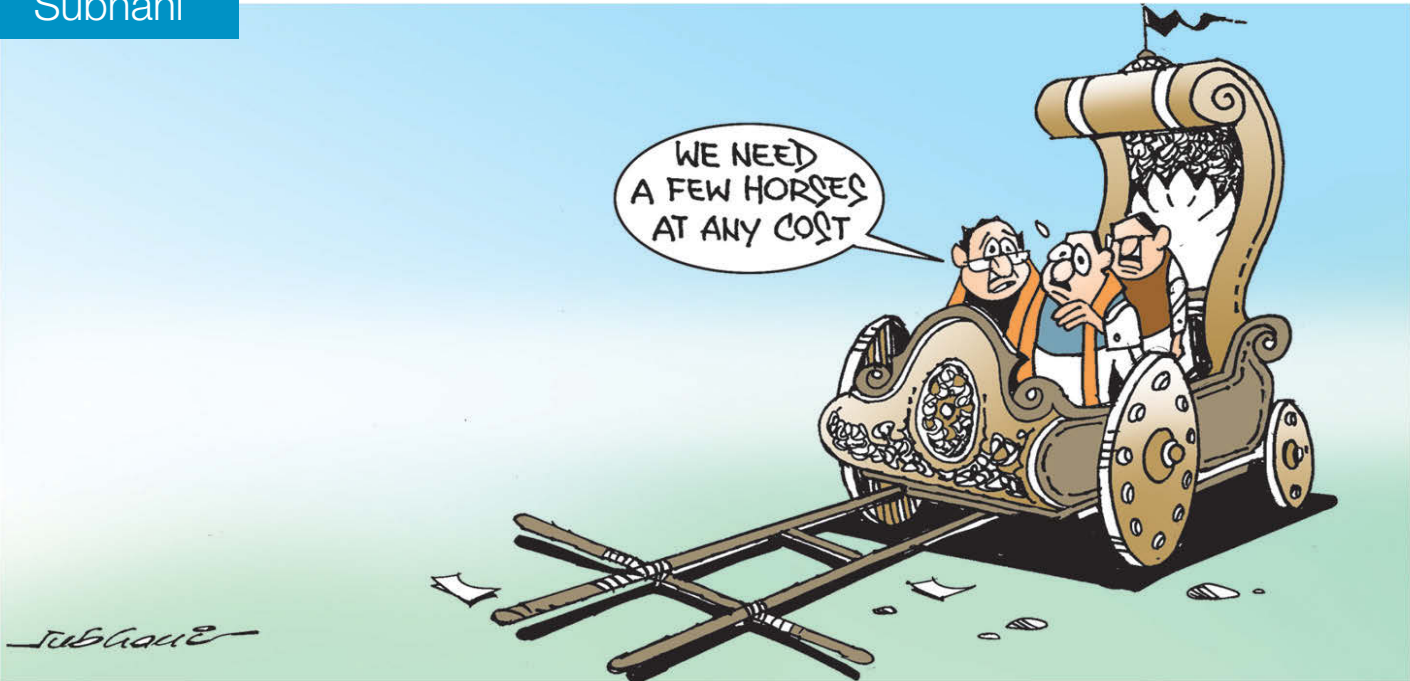
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Subhani



The message of voters is: Enough is enough!



Shikha Mukerjee

The mandate delivered by the popular sovereign leaves no room for denial. The voters have called Narendra Modi’s gigantic bluff, delivered on the floor of the Lok Sabha that the BJP would win 370 out of the total 543 seats in the Lok Sabha. The National Democratic Alliance is far short of the “400 paar” mark that Mr Modi guaranteed he would get.

Voters have said loud and clear that they don’t entirely believe in Mr Modi’s guarantees, whatever these may have been. That they believed even less in his weird “guarantee of guarantees” is quite obvious.

Voters across the country have delivered a verdict that, especially in the heartland state of Uttar Pradesh and in Maharashtra, have given the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance with the Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the DMK, the Trinamul Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party led by Sharad Pawar, the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray on the one hand and the other partners in other states trashes the BJP’s conviction of being the best ever, even better than the Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru.

The mandate destroys the myth of the invincibility of Narendra Modi and the BJP that he leads. The mandate does two things simultaneously. It tells the political class what it does not approve; it also tells the political class what it wants the government to do. So, on the one hand, it is a rejection of the unprincipled politics of engineering defections, splitting parties to seize power in states where the BJP had not succeeded in winning the popular mandate. It is equally an emphatic rejection of its

dangerous divisive politics based on religious identities. It can also be taken as a rejection of the homogenising Hindutva that Mr Modi tried to bully the rest of the country into believing as the only valid way of practising Hinduism.

On the other hand, the verdict signals serious disapproval of the policies pursued by the Modi government and its governance that took people for granted, imposing hardship without apology in the name of “vikas”, that is, development. It challenges the “vision” of the new “Viksit Bharat” that Mr Modi described at length in a newspaper article on June 3 and his entirely unbelievable promise or guarantee that India would be an economic superpower, a land overflowing with milk and honey as it were, by the time India was ready to celebrate 100 years of being Independence.

Equally, the verdict does not deliver a victory for the INDIA bloc, but it does stop the Modi-Amit Shah-BJP juggernaut in its tracks. Mr Modi is no longer the man of the moment, who holds India in his tight grasp; that baton has passed on.

As a new narrative on the “UP ke Ladke” (Sons of Uttar Pradesh), namely Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, is crafted, the fact of the matter is that the combination of the Congress and powerful regional and smaller parties crafted an alternative that obviously captured the imagination of voters in crucial states, starting with Uttar Pradesh, moving on to Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Bihar, Karnataka, Rajasthan and even succeeded in shaking awake voters in Mr Modi’s bastion of Gujarat. The verdict in Maharashtra, where the BJP split the Shiv Sena

The 2024 Lok Sabha election confirms that regional parties have come of age. They are no longer the feared, almost despised, ‘parochial’ parties of the 1960s that popped up to ‘fragment’ the nation, as per pundits

and the Nationalist Congress Party to burgle the majority held by the Maha Vikas Aghadi, is a decisive indictment against the skulduggery of the BJP masterminded by Mr Modi and Mr Shah. This is also the passing of the mantle to younger leaders — Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, M.K. Stalin, Tejashwi Yadav — the despised “shehzade” of political parties where leadership is passed down within the family.

The mandate is, above all else, a celebration of the diversity of India, rather a verdict against the overweening ambition of the BJP, which believed that it alone was qualified to represent every region, sub-region and corner of the world’s most populated country. The regional parties are powerful stakeholders in the idea of India that is not hegemonicist as the BJP so clearly is. The manoeuvrings of the BJP to jostle its way into Kerala and Tamil Nadu and declare that West Bengal would give it the best results in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is a part of its hegemonistic vision, that is all too evident in the idea of “One Nation-One Party” and its follow-up “One Nation-One Election”.

The 2024 Lok Sabha election confirms that regional parties have come of age. They are no longer the feared, almost despised, “parochial” parties of the 1960s that popped up to “fragment” the nation, as political pundits propounded, fearing the imminent dismemberment of India. It was Mr Modi’s mistake to believe in an idea that was obsolete, though he should have known better given his claim of fast for-

warding India’s economic progress in his 10 years of being on top.

India, as the 2024 verdict indicates, cannot be represented by any one political party and certainly not by a leader whose ways are similar to the archetypal authoritarian demagogue. It is also a verdict that shows strong opposition to the idea of this demagogue telling the electorate that once his claim to power is confirmed, as Mr Modi did in West Bengal, he would overturn the popular mandate to the Mamata Banerjee government. Mr Modi and his partymen, in flagrant violation of democratic principles, repeatedly threatened Opposition-held state governments during the campaign that they would be busted. He said it in West Bengal; he repeated it in other states, warning voters and the regional parties in power that the BJP would seize power, by hook or by crook.

The bottom line is that Mr Modi does not have the mandate, because the BJP has not won a majority of the seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. By falling short, the BJP now has to depend on its allies to retain power. What the BJP does and how Mr Modi responds to this crisis of confidence will play out over the next few days. It is entirely likely that a period of hard bargaining within the NDA will follow as allies extract the maximum price for their support.

It would be a mistake for the BJP to hustle at this point; it not only needs to sound penitent for taking the voter for granted and abusing the power it held between 2014 and 2024, it also needs to act penitent. The INDIA bloc, at this point, is the declared alternative. To assume any other responsibility would betray the mandate. The one thing the INDIA bloc leaders should not forget is the responsibility of holding Mr Modi to account for his acts of omission and commission over the past 10 years.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

STRONG OPP.

Three very welcome developments have come about in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. One, we now have a very strong Opposition that has been eluding us for a decade. Two, we have a government that has chance to find the positives that a coalition would come with. Three, as a nation the electorate has attained a maturity that is getting scarcer even in established democracies elsewhere. People have authoritatively pushed to the front issues that are at the very core of their concerns. This will help the government do a course correction and lead to a retuning of policy.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

LESSON FOR BJP

WITH THE BJP unable to do a 400+ or even reach 350, the silver lining in the dark clouds is that it has done well in Karnataka and Bihar, and in Andhra allied with the Telugu Desam Party. The major debacle has been in UP where Yogi Adityanath has to be sent home with his bulldozers for allowing the INDIA alliance to creep ahead of NDA after boasting of bagging all 80 seats. In Delhi, the BJP is leading in all seven constituencies with no sight of AAP anywhere! The other surprise in these elections has been the LDF losing favour in Kerala. If its leaders have any sense, the BJP will now know better than to take the electorate for granted.

S. Kamat
Mysuru

JUNK EXIT POLLS

NOW THAT the local exit polls and reporters on the ground have been proved better forecasters than the national mainstream media with better resources, it is time to dump all the exit polls because they are nothing but a waste of time and resources culminating in endless and nonsensical debates on TV. This election has provided one important lesson. Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched; no matter what the exit polls say don’t invest in the stock markets on the basis of their reports. The Sensex which had jumped 2,500 points on exit poll reports is down by around 4,500, giving stock market investors a lesson they will not soon forget.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

Sriram Karri



How exit polls went off mark: Could they not read the signs?

You can’t fool all of the people all of the time, someone said long ago, but exit pollsters and psephologists, TV anchors and editors ignored this wisdom on June 1, when the broadcast, telecast and printed exit polls not only gave the Narendra Modi-led NDA a super majority, but also an upper spectrum possibility of breaching the historically elusive 400 mark.

They were all proven wrong, with the NDA struggling to touch even 300. The BJP, which was supposed to have not only won a third consecutive term with an absolute majority, but also increased its tally to over 350 seats, could not even get a basic majority of 272.

The exit polls also did not predict much by the way of a fight or even a good showing from either the Congress Party, or the INDIA alliance led by it — most projecting around 150 seats for it at the maximum. They obviously got that wrong as well.

The best supporter of the Indian media’s exit polls would also find that indefensible, with one of their poster boys, founder of Axis MyIndia polls Pradeep Gupta, who boasts of a track record of nearly 70 previous elections in the last decade, including two Lok Sabha elections, breaking down in tears.

But the exit polls got other things wrong, too.

The biggest showpiece of the general election, Uttar Pradesh, with its 80 parliamentary seats, largest population and voter count, was projected as being headed for a period under the “double-engine sarkar”. That narrative drew its strength from an a priori belief in the so-called unbeatable Modi-Yogi Adityanath combination.

Surprisingly, unlike most exit polls in the past, in India or worldwide, those published and broadcast on June 1 were broadly aligned in their results, seemingly keen to convince the country and its voters that the game was over and it was a done deal that the Narendra Modi government would win with its biggest vote-share and number of seats. Ironically, while all the exit polls were in agreement with each other and in near-perfect accord, they were found to be in discord with the actual mandate of the voters of India.

At the end of the actual counting day, while both the two main parties and arch-rivals could find some consolation, a semblance of a win, even with the BJP short of an absolute majority which they won in the last two Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019, the biggest loser was the exit poll industry.

How could so many exit polls, including ones by the most eminent of experts, individuals as

well as institutions, some of them with decades of experience, not anticipate that the BJP under Prime Minister Modi was going to suffer a huge reversal in the largest state? How could they miss it that it would be West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress boss Mamata Banerjee who would hold her fort, even strengthen its bastions, rather than the saffron party making inroads into the eastern state?

How could the performance of the ruling party and the main Opposition in several big states — Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Rajasthan — be so wrongly read as to obfuscate the very direction of the mandate, not just the scale and detail?

How could the exit pollsters infer, without an iota of doubt, that the Congress would not fare reasonably well in the southern states that it had won within the last year — Karnataka and Telangana? How could pollsters not relook at the spectacular gains they were projecting for the BJP in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, without really doubting their data at all? But they did, and they did not.

It is not that the exit polls did not get anything right at all. Almost all of them predicted that there would be a new government in Odisha after a quarter of a century and that

incumbent chief minister Naveen Patnaik would taste defeat after five terms. They also got it right that the BJP would rise at the cost of the Biju Janata Dal in the eastern coastal state.

They also had a handle on the events that were about to unfold on Tuesday in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh. Lots of them, if not all, correctly foretold that the YSRCP led by its chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would be defeated, both in the state Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha polls, even if not one could portend the scale of the rout.

The exit polls in India failed but thankfully, several other institutions did not fare badly. The Election Commission, its staff and those on election duty, security and counting duty, as well as the off-based Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), passed the test of credibility and proved themselves as fair custodians of democracy.

But above all, the people of India, with their unimpeachable spirit of democracy, decency and sense of equity, have once again cleared every test, and given a smart, just verdict. The exit polls may have failed, as has perhaps the media, but the real polls have won. Here’s a big cheer for the future of Indian democracy.

CRICKET

ICC MEN'S
T20 WORLD CUPPAGE
8

SHORT SINGLES

Dravid to bow out after T20 World Cup

Rahul Dravid on Monday confirmed that the T20 World Cup will be his last tournament as head coach of the Indian cricket team.

Dravid, who took charge of the team in November 2021, was not expected to reapply for the high-profile job after the BCCI invited applications last month.

Speaking to reporters ahead of India's World Cup opener against Ireland, Dravid said he enjoyed every bit of his coaching tenure.

"Every tournament is important. Every game that I've coached for India has been very important for me. So for me this is no different just because it is going to be the last one that I'm in charge of," Dravid said when asked if this tournament held more significance as it was his last one in charge of the team.

The former India captain had taken charge of the team following the 2021 T20 World Cup. "I love doing the job. I've really enjoyed coaching India and I think it's a truly special job to do. I enjoyed working with this team and it's a great bunch of boys to work with but yeah but just considering, unfortunately just the kind of schedules and where I find myself in the stage in my life, I don't think I'll be able to reapply," he added.

SL players slam unfair schedule

Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga and spinner Maheesh Theekshana have lambasted the scheduling of their team's matches in the ongoing T20 World Cup, saying the roster is "unfair" and has already forced them to cancel one practice due to the long travel time.

Sri Lanka lost their group D opener to South Africa and Theekshana spoke out on the scheduling which he believes has negatively impacted the team.

"So unfair for us, we have to leave every day (after the match) because we are playing (at) four different venues," Theekshana said. "The flight we took from Florida, from Miami, we had to wait like eight hours in the airport to get the flight. We were supposed to leave at 8pm but we got the flight at 5am. It's really unfair for us, but it doesn't matter when you play," he added.

"Even from the hotel, it (the practice venue) is one hour and 40 minutes. Even today (for the match against South Africa), we had to wake up around 5am to come here," Theekshana pointed out.

T20 form best in decade: Cummins

Australia pace spearhead Pat Cummins feels his T20 game is at its best in a decade as he heads into the World Cup high on confidence after a successful Indian Premier League campaign.

Cummins reached Bridgetown on Saturday. He enters the World Cup after a hectic IPL campaign where he led the Sunrisers Hyderabad to a runner up finish.

"Probably as well as I have for the last 10 years really," Cummins told cricket.com.au of his T20 bowling. Having never played in the Caribbean, the Australian Test and ODI captain had his first-ever training session in the West Indies on Monday. But Cummins is confident of how he's pitched ahead of the World Cup, having continuously played T20 cricket since March in the IPL.

Trott all praise for coach Bravo

Afghanistan chief coach Jonathan Trott on Tuesday said the decision to rope in Dwayne Bravo as the team's bowling coach for the ongoing T20 World Cup worked wonders as the West Indian has made his job easier. Riding on left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi's (5/9) fiery spell after Rahmanullah Gurbaz (76) and Ibrahim Zadran's (70) solid opening partnership, Afghanistan routed debutants Uganda by 125 runs here.

Speaking after his side's first win, Trott credited the contribution of Bravo, who according to him, has brought about a change in the approach of Afghanistan bowlers. "DJ (Dwayne Bravo) coming into the side, fantastic. Having quality coaches also with huge experience as players (is great), but also vast franchise experience in this format of the game," Trott said after the match.

"(It's) only a brilliant thing to have a player like him coming to the side as coach and it makes your job a lot easier but it also makes the coaching more enhanced, especially with the bowlers," Trott added.

EYE ON IRELAND

Upbeat Rohit Sharma-led India begin Cup campaign today

MOSES KONDETY | DC

NEW YORK, JUNE 4

The colours of Indian and Irish flags are the same. Both are referred to as Tri-colour in respective countries. That's where the similarity ends. When it comes to cricket, the sides are poles apart, with the former an absolute heavyweight and the latter sliding into the ring through the Europe region qualifying tournament.

The two will begin their T20 World Cup campaign at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium here on Wednesday, with an eye on making the top two of Group 'A' to qualify for the next stage of the competition.

India are hungry. They haven't won the T20 World Cup since capturing the first one in 2007. This is the ninth edition of the tournament and the Blues have made the final only one other time, in 2014.

Rohit Sharma, who has been part of every T20 World Cup, leads an upbeat Indian team to end a long title-drought — India last won an ICC title in 2013, the Champions Trophy in England. And it would rile the Blues that they haven't won the T20 World Cup since the advent of IPL, considered the top T20 tournament in the world. All this



India's Virat Kohli during a practice session ahead of the T20 World Cup cricket match against Ireland in New York on Tuesday.

would be on line and Ireland in the line of fire when the big guns take to the field on Wednesday.

Team India are undoubtedly loaded in terms of talent. The squad is a mix of youth and experience programmed for peak performance. Seasoned Virat Kohli is coming on the back of being the highest run-getter (741) in the recent IPL. Having made his T20 World Cup debut in 2012, the feisty fan-

puller will make his sixth, and probably the last, attempt at the title. He has scored 1,141 runs at an average of 81.50 and a strike-rate 131.30 in 27 games at the tournament.

India will look to a flying start from openers Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal. Then, with Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja to follow, the runs should flow. Allrounder Shivam Dube

could be in the mix too.

The bowling attack will be led by pace ace Jasprit Bumrah. Fellow quick Mohammed Siraj, spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzendrar Chahal should provide solid support.

Ireland have had it tough. They've lost all three games against India at ICC events — once in the T20 World Cup (2009) and twice in the 50-over format, in 2011 and 2015. The start here too has not been

favourable — they went down to Sri Lanka by 41 runs in a warm-up game.

Captained by all-rounder Paul Stirling, the Irish team is bereft of big names but would draw strength from individual experiences. Left-arm pacer Josh Little knows a lot about the pressure of playing T20s, having been part of the Gujarat Titans in the IPL. The team is likely to rally around him in their quest for a winning start.

Afghanistan too good for Uganda

Providence (Guyana),

June 4: Pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi produced a fiery spell after Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran struck half centuries in a solid opening partnership as Afghanistan began their T20 World Cup campaign with a comprehensive 125-run victory over debutants Uganda here.

Kolkata Knight Riders opener Gurbaz (76 off 45 balls) and his partner Zadran (70 off 46 balls) registered the second highest opening partnership (154) in the men's T20 World Cup as Afghanistan posted a challenging 183/5 after being asked to bat.

Left-arm pacer Farooqi (5/9) then knocked the wind out of the Ugandan batting line-up with his maiden five-wicket haul. The debutants were shot out for 58 in 16 overs.

"The kind of start we wanted as a team. Does not matter who we play, it is about the mindset," skipper and country's biggest cricket icon Rashid Khan said after the match.

"The hard work we have



Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman celebrates after the win against Uganda in the T20 World Cup match in Providence, Guyana on Monday.

done in the last few weeks, the way the openers started and the way our bowlers bowled - it was a great overall team effort," Rashid, who polished off the tail, added.

"That is the beauty of this team. We have so many options and that makes it easy as a captain," world's premier T20 spinner gushed.

Seamer Farooqi was

SCOREBOARD	
Afghanistan: Rahman-ullah Gurbaz c Riazat Ali Shah b Alpesh Ramjani 76, Ibrahim Zadran b Masaba 70, Najibullah Zadran c Dinesh Nakrani b Masaba 2, Mohammad Nabi not out 14, Gulbadin Naib c Masaba b Cosmas Kyewuta 4, Azmatullah c Alpesh Ramjani b Cosmas Kyewuta 5, Rashid Khan not out 2. Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-6, nb-1) 10. Total: (for 5 wickets in 20 overs) 183.	Fazalhaq Farooqi 4, Simon Ssesazi c Fazalhaq Farooqi b Mujeeb Ur Rahman 4, Roger Mukasalbw b Fazalhaq Farooqi 0, Riazat Ali Shah b Fazalhaq Farooqi 11, Dinesh Nakrani b Naveen-ul-Haq 6, Alpesh Ramjani c Gulbadin b Naveen-ul-Haq 0, Robinson Obuya c Gurbaz b Fazalhaq Farooqi 14, Brian Masaba c Gurbaz b Fazalhaq Farooqi 0, Bilal Hassan lbw b Rashid Khan 8, Cosmas Kyewuta not out 2, Henry Ssenyondo b Rashid Khan 0. Extras (lb-2, w-7) 9. Total:(all out in 16 overs) 58.
Bowling: Alpesh Ramjani 4-0-33-1, Cosmas Kyewuta 4-0-25-2, Dinesh Nakrani 3-0-37-0, Bilal Hassan 2-0-34-0, Henry Ssenyondo 2-0-19-0, Riazat Ali Shah 1-0-11-0, Brian Masaba 4-0-21-2.	Bowling: Fazalhaq Farooqi 4-0-9-5, Mujeeb Ur Rahman 3-0-16-1, Naveen-ul-Haq 2-0-4-2, Azmatullah Omarzai 2-0-7-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-12-2, Mohammad Nabi 1-0-8-0.
Uganda: Ronak Patel b	

twice on the brink of claiming a hat-trick. He was lethal with the new ball. After being hit for a four off his first delivery, he bowled a brilliant inswinger which clipped Ronak Patel's bat before crashing onto the stumps. He then trapped Roger Mukasa leg before wicket with a similar delivery. "I have missed it

(getting the hat-trick) a few times (smiles). Something that is not under my control and if I get a chance again, I will try to get that hat-trick," Farooqi said while collecting his 'Player of the Match' award. Naveen-ul-Haq also picked up two wickets in his first over, leaving Uganda in dire straits at 18/5. — PTI

KOHLI SHOULD OPEN FOR INDIA, SAYS GAVASKAR

New York, June 4:

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar feels Virat Kohli should open alongside skipper Rohit Sharma in India's T20 World Cup game against Ireland on Wednesday with Yashasvi Jaiswal dropping down to the number three position.

There has been a lot of debate around Kohli's batting position in the T20 World Cup.

Kohli has been India's designated number three batter in the white-ball format for a long time. He heads to the marquee event on the back of an excellent IPL season.

"Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to open the batting along with Yashasvi Jaiswal at three, Gavaskar said on 'Star Sports while giving his preferred line-up for the game here.

Opening for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Kohli piled up 741 runs in 15 matches at an average of 61.75 and a strike rate of over 154. — PTI

Additional tickets for India-Pak tie on Sunday: ICC

New York, June 4: The International Cricket Council on Tuesday released additional tickets for some of its key T20 World Cup matches, including the contest between India and Pakistan here on June 9, following a huge demand from fans for the highly-anticipated clash between the arch-rivals.

The World Cup is being co-hosted by the USA and West Indies.

"A final release of tickets have been made available across the event, following a thrilling opening weekend of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024," the ICC said in a statement.

"A selection of further General Admission tickets have been released for a number of big matches at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, including for the meeting between India and Pakistan in New York on June 9."

"The ICC has worked in collaboration with partners to make the additional release of tickets and ensure as many fans as possible can be part of the his-

toric event."

The ICC also said that it will make available more tickets in other categories as well for fixtures in Texas and Florida, the two other venues apart from New York, which are hosting the global event in the USA.

"Other matches now have more categories available, including for fixtures at Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium in Texas and Broward County Stadium in Florida where there are now limited General Admission tickets for sale.

"Fans wanting the ultimate World Cup experience in either the West Indies or USA can secure tickets to the Premium Club and the exclusive Diamond Club, where fans can rub shoulders with the legends of the game in the best seats in the house," the statement said.

India will play their opening Group A match of the World Cup against Ireland at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium here on Wednesday before taking on Pakistan at the same venue on Sunday. — PTI



Ground staff mop the field after rain delayed the start of the match between England and Scotland in the T20 World Cup at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Tuesday. — AP

England-Scotland match hit by rain

Bridgetown (Barbados), June 4: Intermittent rain halted Scotland's progress against England in a T20 World Cup match here on Tuesday.

Scotland had raced to 51 without loss in 6.2 overs before rain stopped the proceedings for the second time. Strong winds and showers had delayed the start of the match here at the Kensington Oval.

Michael Jones was unbeaten on 30 off 23 balls with three fours and a six, while George Munsey was on 18 off 19 balls with three hits to the fence.

Earlier, rain arrived here at the Kensington Oval shortly after the toss, which

was won by Scotland captain Richie Berrington, who decided to bat first.

While it looked like a passing shower, the rain delayed the start of the game by at least 20 minutes.

However, after inspection of the ground it was found that there was a wet patch on the pitch, which was being attended to by local groundstaff, leading to further delay in the start of the match. The match will start at 11:25am local time, said the officials. However, the match was halted again due to rain.

England and Scotland are placed in Group B along with Australia, Oman and Namibia. — PTI

Lakshya enters second round

Jakarta, June 4: Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen entered the men's singles second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament with a straight-game win over Japan's Kanta Tsuneyama here on Tuesday.

Sen took just 40 minutes to get the better of Tsuneyama 21-12, 21-17 in an opening round clash.

Sen, who sneaked into the Olympic qualification with back-to-back semifinal finishes at French Open and All England Championships, will next be up against the winner of the match between seventh seed Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia and Japan's Kenta Nishimoto.

However, it was curtains for Kiran George from the men's singles

event, but not before giving a tough fight to Hong Yang Weng of China 21-11 10-21 20-22.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of B Sumeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy had to battle hard before prevailing 18-21, 21-16, 21-17 over the American pair of Vinson Chiu and Jennie Gai in the opener. But a herculean task awaits the Indian pair as it will take on the winner of the match between top seeds Si Wei Zheng and Ya Qiong Huang of China and Indonesian combination of Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Lisa Ayu Kusumawati next.

Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will be up against Chinese Taipei's Yu-Pei Cheng and Yu Hsing Sun. — PTI

Injured Djokovic pulls out of French Open

Paris, June 4: Novak Djokovic withdrew from the French Open with an injured knee on Tuesday, ending his title defense and meaning he will relinquish the No. 1 ranking.

The tournament announced the news, saying Djokovic has a torn medial meniscus in his right knee. The extent of the injury was found during an MRI exam a day after Djokovic was hurt during a fourth-round victory against No. 23 Francisco Cerundolo that lasted five sets spread across more than 4 1/2 hours.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion was supposed to face No. 7 Casper Ruud, the runner-up each of the past two years at Roland Garros, in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. Instead, Ruud gets a walkover into the semifinals, where he will face No. 4 Alexander Zverev or No. 11 Alex de Minaur.



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns to Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic during their quarterfinal match of the French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Tuesday. — AP

With Djokovic, the owner of three French Open titles, gone from the bracket, and Rafael Nadal, owner of a record 14 titles, eliminated in the first round, someone will be

holding the French Open men's trophy for the first time on Sunday.

The group of remaining contenders includes current No. 2 Jannik Sinner, a 22-year-old Italian who

defeated No. 10 Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (3) on Tuesday to reach the semifinals and now is assured of replacing Djokovic atop the ATP rankings next week. Sinner won the Australian Open in January and is the first man from his country to reach No. 1. Seeing Novak (injured) is, for everyone, disappointing," Sinner said, so I wish him a speedy recovery.

SWIATEK SETS UP SEMIS SHOWDOWN WITH GAUFF

Iga Swiatek took another stride towards a third successive French Open title on Tuesday as she swept into the semi-finals with a 6-0, 6-2 rout of Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova. World number one Swiatek, bidding for a fourth Roland Garros crown in five years, will play US Open champion and third seed Coco Gauff for a place in final.

Swiatek improved her career record in Paris to 33-2 and is on course to become the first woman to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen three years in a row since Justine Henin did so from 2005-07.

"Honestly I think everything worked," said the 23-year-old Swiatek.

"I feel like I've been serving better than in previous rounds and that gave me an extra boost of confidence." "Today it was pretty straightforward. I'm happy I kept my focus. I felt like I was in the zone today," added the Pole.

Earlier, World number three Coco Gauff came back from a set down to defeat Ons Jabeur and reach her second French Open semi-final. Gauff, the reigning US Open champion and a former Roland Garros runner-up, rallied to win 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 on Court Philippe Chatrier. — Agencies