

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2006

## Election outcome positives

**F**ew popular contests in recent memory have been as interesting, as instructive, and as productive of democratic positives as the April-May 2006 round of Assembly elections. The first big positive of course was the magnificent voter turnout, ranging from 70 to 80 per cent, in the five spiritedly fought Assembly battles — in two large and two medium-sized States and one Union Territory. Voting percentages in Tamil Nadu (70.56 per cent) and West Bengal (81.63 per cent) went up quite sharply over the 2001 level while Kerala (72.12 per cent), Assam (75.72 per cent), and Pondicherry (85.89 per cent) registered their customary highs. Politically speaking, these are the vanguard Indian States in terms of political awareness and citizen participation in the democratic process. Studying elections is a challenging but very worthwhile business. For this newspaper, it is a matter of satisfaction that the trust it placed in scientifically conducted polls, done in this round by a large team put together and led by Yogendra Yadav of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, has been vindicated by the electoral outcomes in all the four State arenas. In particular, the seat estimates offered by *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN exit polls (combined in three of the four States with post-poll surveys) were spot on for the difficult-to-predict electoral contests of Tamil Nadu and Assam and also for the one-horse race in West Bengal; only in the case of Kerala did the exercise turn out to be a moderate over-estimate, by about 15 seats.

A nationally important political outcome is the emergence of a re-energised and stronger Left headed by the CPI(M). Led by a dynamic and far-sighted Chief Minister, the ruling front in West Bengal has increased its popularity, conquered new space, and routed a divided and confused opposition, setting a new world mark for the Left in multi-party elections. In Kerala, the outcome may seem to fit the traditional pattern of regime alternation but the Left Democratic Front has, following its clean sweep of the State's Lok Sabha seats in the 2004 general election, reaped its best-ever harvest of Assembly seats. After the Left, it is the Congress and the DMK that have done reasonably well in this round. The implications of all this for the health and stability of the United Progressive Alliance government are, in net, positive. But they can be turned to political advantage only if the proper lesson is drawn from the different outcomes: even in periods of fairly high economic growth, governments need to pay attention to the reality of mass deprivation and do something about it. In their own ways, the West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu campaigns have underlined this message from the voters. What is superficially understood and depicted by sections of the media as resistance to reform or 'populism' is actually a political coming to terms with structural inequities and the unmet basic needs of ordinary people. The UPA Government and all State governments need to be reminded that they can hope to do well politically only if they heed this lesson.

12 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# LDF headed for a landslide in Kerala

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Exit Poll predicts between 107 and 117 seats for Left alliance

Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva L. Karandikar, Gopa Kumar and Yogendra Yadav

**NEW DELHI:** The Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala is headed for a record performance in the Assembly elections that concluded on Wednesday. The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) after the votes were cast, leaves little doubt about who will form the next government in the State. The only questions are: what will be the margin of the LDF victory and if it will break the existing record?

The post-poll survey shows that the LDF added to the lead it enjoyed at the beginning of the campaign. The pre-poll survey, conducted by the CSDS in the first week of April, showed that

the LDF had a six-percentage point lead over the United Democratic Front. The post-poll survey indicates that the LDF added another four percentage points to it by polling day.

Taking all three phases into account, the LDF is expected to get 51 per cent of the votes as compared to 41 by the UDF. The Bharatiya Janata Party is down

by one percentage point from the five per cent it got in the last Assembly elections. Seen in terms of swing from the last Assembly elections, the LDF is likely to gain eight percentage points at the expense of the UDF. In Kerala, where a swing of one to two points is enough to turn the tide, this is nothing short of an electoral tsunami.

Translated in terms of seats, it would mean the number of MLAs representing the LDF in the 140-member Assembly is likely to be in three digits — between 107 and 117. The last time in the State was in the 1977 elections. The then 'United Front', which included the CPI, the RSP and the Praja Socialist Party be-

**VOTES AND SEATS PROJECTION FOR KERALA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006**

	VOTE SHARE FOR MAJOR-ALLIANCES (PER CENT)		SEATS FOR MAJOR ALLIANCES			
	VOTE SHARE IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2001	VOTE SHARE IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2004	VOTE ESTIMATE IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006	SEATS WON IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2001	SEGMENTS LED IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2004	SEATS ESTIMATED FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006
LDF	43.7	46.2	51	40	110	107-117
UDF	49.1	38.4	41	99	25	25-31
BJP	5.0	10.4	4	0	2	
Others	2.2	5.0	4	1	3	0-1

sides the Congress, won 111 seats. The all-time record, of course, is that of the Left-supported front — coincidentally also called the 'United Front' — in the 1967 elections. It won 117 seats in the then 133-member Assembly. The Muslim League was then a partner of this front led by the CPI(M).

## Breaking the records

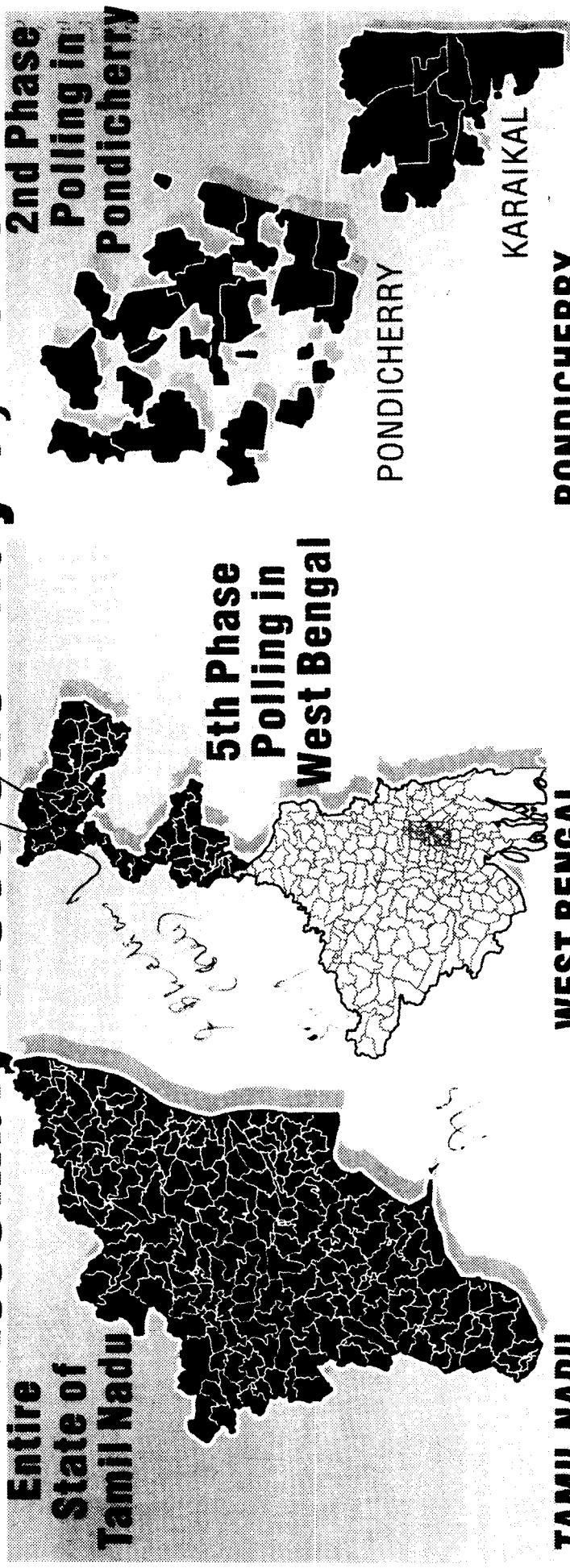
When the ballots are counted on May 11, the LDF would be looking to match or break these records. Even if it does not do so, the LDF performance is likely to be the best ever by any alliance since the stable two-coalition system came into existence in 1980.

Details of survey on Page 12

04 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

# Assembly Elections: May 8, 2006



TAMIL NADU		WEST BENGAL		PONDICHERRY	
Total Seats:	234	Total Seats:	294	Total Seats:	30
Seats Polling:	234	Seats Polling:	49	Seats Polling:	27
Total Candidates:	2586	Total Candidates:	306	Total Candidates:	199
Women Candidates:	158	Women Candidates:	26	Women Candidates:	11
Male Voters	2,30,65,446	Male Voters	42,66,754	Male Voters	2,99,016
Female Voters	2,34,68,260	Female Voters	38,97,456	Female Voters	3,14,641
Service Voters	67,700	Total Voters:	81,64,210	Total Voters:	6,13,657
Total Voters:	4,66,01,406	Polling Stations:	9,089	Polling Stations:	660
Polling Stations:	51,635	■ Constituencies going to poll		■ KBK Pollgraphics	

07 May 2006

# No serious challenge to the Left Front

Media coverage of the West Bengal elections portrayed it as a contest between the ruling Left Front and the Election Commission of India. This was reflected in the kind of questions asked: Can the Left Front win a free and fair election? What will be the effect of the large-scale deletion of names from the electoral rolls? Who gains from the insistence on voter ID cards? Will the presence of Central security forces and observers help anti-Left voters come out and vote for their candidates? Can the Left Front successfully turn the EC's role into an election issue and win more votes?

The focus on such questions underlines the absence of a serious challenge to the Left Front. But it also tends to distract attention from the real, serious political processes silently at work. The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll, conducted by the CSDS, finds that these factors mattered more than the EC factor. The EC's intervention did make a difference to the size of the electorate and turnout, but it does not appear to have changed the way people voted. The Left Front has gained due to three major factors. First, its overall vote share has gone up from 49 to 53 per cent, a net gain of four percentage points. The gain could be a little more or a little less, depending on how accurate the estimate of the 'over-reporting' in favour of the Left is. Second, and more important, the Left's gains are not evenly spread. It has gained more where it needed to, especially among urban voters. A better distribution of votes helps the Left win more seats, even with the same vote share. Third, the Left benefits from a disunited Opposition, something the Congress used to in its heyday. While the overall vote share of the Opposition is about the same as that of the Left, the former is more disunited than before.

Here are the highlights of *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* Poll, based on a detailed analysis of the post-poll surveys conducted in the first four phases of the elections:

## THE LEFT HOLDS ON TO ITS MASSIVE PRE-POLL LEAD

As expected, the Left Front was more successful in retaining loyal voters than other parties. Among those inclined to vote for the Left Front in the pre-poll survey, the Front got the vote of over 80 per cent. Most of its voters made up their minds before the campaign began and stuck to their decision. The figure for the Trinamool-BJP alliance was 72 and for the Congress, 60 per cent. The Congress may have done a little better in the final phase, which is not included in this analysis. The LF appeared to slip among voters who decided whom to vote for during the campaign. But among voters who made up their mind on the very last day the TMC-BJP combine suffered badly. The gains went to the Left Front and the Congress.

### Left retains more of its potential voters

	RETENTION RATE (%)
Left Front	81
Trinamool-BJP	72
Congress	60

Note: Retention rate refers to the proportion of those who voted the way they said they would in the pre-poll surveys.

## THE LEFT FRONT IS GAINING WHERE IT MATTERS

The real story of this election is not so much that the Left has gained votes, but that it is gaining among sections where it was considered weak. The last decade showed signs of a slackening of the Left's appeal among young voters. That appears to have reversed for the first time. Among voters below 21, the Left has established an enormous lead of more than 40 points. The Left's gains have come entirely from the urban electorate, a section it needed to gain from. Compared to its performance in the last Assembly elections, the Left has gained 10 percentage points among the urban voters, while shedding one point among rural voters, where it can afford to lose votes. A careful analysis of the class basis of the Left vote again backs the point made in the pre-poll survey: the Left is gaining among the well to do in the rural areas, a section that has not supported the Left ever since its land reform programmes. More important, the Left seems to be gaining among the urban middle class and the urban rich. Overall, the social base of the Left is shifting from a political formation of the working classes and marginal farmers to that of a 'catch all' party.

### Massive support for the Left among the youth

VOTERS BELOW 21	VOTE
Left Front	68
Trinamool-BJP	19
Congress	13

Note: All figures in per cent. 'Youth' refers to voters below 21 years of age.

### Major gains for the Left among urban voters ...

	VOTE FOR LEFT FRONT IN 2006	CHANGE FROM 2001
Rural	53	-1
Urban	52	+10

### ... especially among the urban well-to-do and rural rich

	VOTE FOR LEFT FRONT IN 2006	CHANGE FROM 2001
Rural voters		
Poor	60	-1
Lower class	52	-3
Middle Class	49	+6
Rich	47	+24
Urban voters		
Poor	53	+3
Lower	56	+12
Middle	49	+8
Rich	55	+18

Note: All figures in per cent.

## BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE AN ELECTORAL ASSET

Big political changes of this kind need a personality to symbolise them. There is no doubt that Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has emerged as that in West Bengal, symbolising the transformation of the CP(M). While he was the most preferred leader even in the 2001 Assembly elections, there were signs of a strong nostalgia for Jyoti Basu among the Left supporters. On his own, he was not an electoral asset. That seems to have changed now; not only is he ahead in the overall rating, his popularity spills over to supporters of other parties. That is what distinguishes Buddhadeb from his colleague V.S. Achuthanandan in Kerala, whose popularity is still limited to the Left.

### Buddhadeb is way ahead of his rivals as the Chief Ministerial choice ...

	BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE	MAMATA BANERJEE	PRANAB MUKHERJEE	TAPAN SIKDAR
All	52	28	5	1
Left Front voters	88	1	3	--
Trinamool voters	3	88	1	--
BJP voters	6	48	2	17
Congress voters	21	13	25	--

### ... and is also considered most trustworthy

	BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE	MAMATA BANERJEE
All	51	29
Left Front voters	84	3
Trinamool voters	7	77
BJP voters	11	52
Congress voters	30	27

## CAMPAIGN AGAINST ELECTION COMMISSION DID NOT WORK

The voters do not seem to have bought the idea that this election was about the EC. Notwithstanding a strong position taken by many Left leaders from West Bengal against the EC's special monitoring of the West Bengal elections, it seems the voters are not convinced. Even the supporters of the Left Front agree that the EC's steps were necessary for conducting a free and fair election in the state. There is little endorsement for the standard charges put against the EC by the Left Front. It is not that the voters disagree with these statements. Most of the Left voters simply did not have an opinion on the subject. Clearly Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's calling a halt to the anti-Left tirade had some basis. There is clearly an endorsement of the way the EC conducted the polls this time. When asked to compare the present election with the last Assembly election, as many as 58 per cent of the voters said that the current election, as many as 13 per cent felt it was better than the earlier ones, while only 13 per cent felt it was worse or the same. The remaining 29 per cent had no opinion.

## Voters generally approved of the Election Commission's initiatives in the State

PER CENT WHO AGREED THAT...	ALL	LF VOTERS
The EC's initiatives were necessary for conducting free and fair elections	79	78
The EC was biased against the Left Front	28	35
The EC's assertive role was necessary, but officers exceeded their limit	28	36
Banning posters and wall writings was unnecessary	35	40
Holding elections in five phases was an insult to the State	26	33

## PHOTOLOGY

Though commonly referred to as an exit poll, *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* Poll for West Bengal is a mix of post-poll surveys and exit polls of 4,529 respondents in 224 polling booth areas in 56 constituencies of West Bengal. In a post-poll survey, electors randomly selected from the voters' list are interviewed at home after the day of polling. This allows more rigorous sampling and in-depth probing of the respondents. The CSDS team carried out a post-poll survey for the first four phases of elections, and an exit poll for the last phase. The locations and the constituencies are the same as were sampled for *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* pre-poll survey conducted by the CSDS in the first week of April.

A total of 3,181 people were interviewed in the post-poll survey in the 44 sampled constituencies that went to the polls in the first four phases of the elections. Of these 2,229 respondents were the same who were interviewed a month ago. This method could not be followed for the 12 constituencies that went to the polls in the last phase. In these constituencies, 1,328 people were interviewed in an exit poll, i.e., voters were interviewed as randomly as possible outside the polling station. Since the exit poll setting does not allow surveyors to ask many questions, most of the opinion-related data in this analysis draws upon only the post-poll survey. The sample included 47 women (48 per cent in State), 69 per cent rural voters (72 per cent), 77 Hindus (82 per cent), 17 per cent Muslims (25 per cent), 28 per cent Scheduled Castes (23 per cent) and four per cent Scheduled Tribes (five per cent). The fieldwork for the survey was coordinated by Supriyo Basu of Kalyani University and supervised by Pradeep Swarnakar, Paromita Guha and Brijendra Mishra. Sanjay Kumar of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, directed the survey. The central team which designed, coordinated and analysed the survey consisted of Yogendra Yadav, Sanjeer Alam, Banasmita Bora, Praveen Rai, Pallavi Srivastava, Vikas Gautam, K.A.Q.A Hilal, Himanshu Bhattacharya, Kanchan Malhotra, Ninu Nair and Ramajayam of CSDS, and Professor Rajeeva Karandikar of Cranes Software International Ltd, Bangalore.

09 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

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# DMK front headed for a big win in Tamil Nadu

The Hindu CNN-IBN Exit Poll finds 10% point lead, predicts 157-167 seats for DPA; coalition government likely



**D-DAY:** Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam president M. Karunanidhi getting the indelible ink mark on his finger at a polling booth in Chennai on Monday as he prepares to exercise his franchise for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. PHOTO: K. RAAGHU

Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva L. Karandikar, G. Kofeshwar Prasad and Yogendra Yadav

**NEW DELHI:** After a month of suspense and impressions of a cliff-hanger, the voters of Tamil Nadu have given a decisive verdict. The late swing has worked once again, this time for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led alliance.

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Exit Poll, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, has found that the DMK-led alliance has a clear lead of 10 percentage points over the AIADMK-led alliance in terms of vote share. The DMK-led alliance is expected to secure around 45 per cent of the vote, as against 35 per cent for the AIADMK front. This gap is sufficient to give the Democratic Progressive Alliance a handsome majority of anything between 157 and 167 seats in the 234-member Assembly. However, it is not enough to give the dominant partner, the DMK, a majority on its own. If this seat prediction proves correct, this will be the first time since 1957 that no single party has a majority on its own. Tamil Nadu looks set to have its first coalition government.

## Not a sweep

Although a decisive victory, this is not the kind of electoral sweep one has come to associate with Tamil Nadu. In the 2001 Assembly elections, the gap be-

tween the two major alliances was 19 percentage points. In the 1996 Assembly elections, it was 22. A gap of 10 percentage points should normally yield a bigger victory than the one projected by this exit poll.

But the DMK alliance's substantial lead is not evenly spread across the State's regions. It appears to have swept all before it in the southern region. The AIADMK's tie-up with the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam does not appear to have helped much here. In the northern regions, the AIADMK has put up stiff resistance. Here, the Pattali Makkal Katchi does not appear to have helped the DMK alliance much but the Congress and the Left parties have pulled their weight. The other two regions, the west and the Cauvery delta, have swung to the DMK alliance. But it may not be a clean sweep here.

A surprising development is the emergence of Vijayakant's party, the Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam, as a significant player. This new outfit ap-

pears to have garnered about 10 per cent of the vote. Since these votes are fairly evenly distributed, the party may find it difficult to pick up more than a few seats.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, other smaller parties, and independents account for the remaining 10 per cent of the popular vote.

The exit poll was conducted in 77 Assembly constituencies (the returns for one constituency, Mylapore, were cancelled for technical reasons). A total of 11,394 respondents were interviewed in 314 polling stations across the State. The profile of the sample was a fair reflection of the demographic mix. The sample comprised 45 per cent women.

Seven per cent were Muslims, eight per cent Christians, and 27 per cent Dalits. About 67 per cent of the respondents were from rural areas.

## THE FORECAST

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006		
	PROJECTED VOTE SHARE (%)	ESTIMATED SEATS
DMK-led alliance	45	157-167
AIADMK-led alliance	35	64-74
DMDK	10	2-6
Others	10	--





# Left leads victory charge, Cong & DMK follow

## Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 11: The outcome of the Assembly elections in five states today did not spring any major surprise, with the Left Front coming to power in Kerala and retaining its bastion in West Bengal, while the DMK-Congress alliance wrested power in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The incumbent Congress suffered a setback in Assam in securing majority but emerged as the single largest party.

Clearly, the entire election sweepstakes were claimed by the constituents of the UPA amalgam ruling in New Delhi. The election results might effect some changes in the power equations at the Centre among the UPA partners. The principal opposition, the BJP had

been a marginal player in this round of elections right from the start.

The CPM-led LDF dealt a severe blow to the Congress-led UDF in Kerala, winning 98 seats in the 140-member Assembly. In Tamil Nadu, known for ping-pong landslide victories achieved alternately by the two Dravidian parties, Ms Jayalalitha's AIADMK was ousted from power but the victor DMK fell short of a majority by about 15 seats in a House of 234.

This raises the possibility of a minority government in the state for the first time. It appears the DMK's allies are keen on staying out of the government and providing outside support.

The picture will become clear in a couple of days when the DMK and its smaller partners, including

the Congress, deliberate on the issue.

Assam, where the Congress had a clear majority in the 2001 elections, returned a split verdict. The Congress emerged as the single largest party and has to look for allies in a faction of a Bodo party and the Assam United Democratic Front headed by Mr Badruddin Ajmal, besides other smaller parties and Independents.

In the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha by-election, whose result was a foregone conclusion, the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, won by a staggering margin of over 4 lakh votes.

The Congress-led coalition appeared set to retain power in Pondicherry, where they won 20 seats in the 30-member Assembly.

In Tamil Nadu, where the

election was marked by freedoms promised by both the DMK and the AIADMK, the DMK supremo Mr Karunanidhi appears set to become the chief minister for the fifth time in his long political innings.

The crucial question whether the charismatic leader of the faction-ridden Kerala CPI-M, Mr Achuthanandan, is able to become the chief minister of the state hangs in the balance.

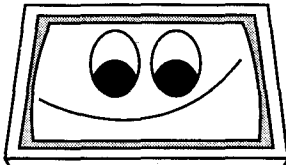
The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, said the election results were a victory for the UPA coalition and secular forces. Dr Singh said he had already congratulated the chief ministers of West Bengal and Assam and the DMK chief, Mr Karunanidhi, on their triumph in the elections.

Editorial: Results, responsibilities, page 8

State	Total Seats	Won/Contested	Major Party	Other Parties
<b>KERALA</b>	140	98	Left Democratic Front (LDF)	CPI-M ~ 61, CPI ~ 17, JD-S ~ 5, RSP ~ 3, NCP ~ 1, KC-Joseph ~ 4, KC-Secular ~ 1, Congress-S ~ 1, INL ~ 1, LDF-Independents ~ 4
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>	234	130	DMK	DMK ~ 96/130, Cong ~ 34/48, PMK ~ 18/31, CPI-M ~ 9/13, CPI ~ 6/10
<b>ASSAM</b>	125	52	United Democratic Front (UDF)	Congress ~ 24, IUML ~ 7, KC-M ~ 07, KC-B ~ 1, DIC-K ~ 1, JSS ~ 1, CMP ~ 0, UDF-Independent ~ 01
<b>PONDICHERY</b>	30	20	Congress-led alliance	Congress ~ 10, DMK ~ 7, PMK ~ 2, CPI ~ 1
<b>AIADMK ALLIANCE</b>	6/35	2/9	AIADMK	AIADMK ~ 6/35, MDMK ~ 6/35, DPI ~ 2/9, Others ~ 1, DMDK 1, Independent 1

CL

**BLOG SPOT**



[http://rana.typepad.com/weblog/2006/04/calcutta\\_goes\\_t.html](http://rana.typepad.com/weblog/2006/04/calcutta_goes_t.html)  
Posted by Rana in Singapore on April 28, 2006

My wife voted in the West Bengal state Assembly elections in Calcutta (Kolkata). I just called her from Singapore and then we chatted with our son at his college in America... My father must have voted too... (he) will have plenty to say. After all, the world's longest-ruling communist government looks likely to return to power for another five years in West Bengal. But though the state has been voting for the communists for such a long time, it does not mean everybody is a communist. There are people who are not seriously interested in politics at all. But many of them may vote for the communists because they have ensured law and order. And people respect Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the gentlemanly, culturally inclined Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader... He is a breath of fresh air after Jyoti Basu. Someone visiting Calcutta for the first time may see it as a dusty, overcrowded city with little remarkable about it. But we who were born and raised in Calcutta know how much it has changed since the bad old days of Jyoti Basu. That in itself deserves a vote of thanks

<http://india-dreamland.blogspot.com/>  
Posted by peter n joel on April 28

How the elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala pan out is anybody's guess. But one thing is sure, the Left parties are likely to come out with added teeth after these elections. West Bengal is beginning to look like an eternal red bastion now with not a single party standing up to the CPM might. And it increasingly looks like we may have a left government in Kerala as well. But what impact will that have on the UPA government at the Centre??? Will the Left continue their 'barking-dogs-never-bite' role or will they become more aggressive and transform their words into action? My guess is the former, as the Left has been saying that avoiding a BJP government at the Centre is the first priority and it will continue to remain so

**POLLBITES**

The voters who have lodged complaints with me are all genuine and it is a violation of human rights that they were denied the right to exercise their franchise

SHYAMAL SEN  
chairman of the state human rights commission

# Voters take EC to court

## Officer admits error in deletions

STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, April 30: The Election Commission has been dragged to court by 11 people who were not allowed to vote on Thursday despite having valid voter identity cards.

The day Calcutta and neighbouring North and South 24 Parganas went to the polls, the poll panel was flooded with complaints or faced angry outbursts from voters who were turned away from booths.

Half a dozen of them have also moved the human rights commission.

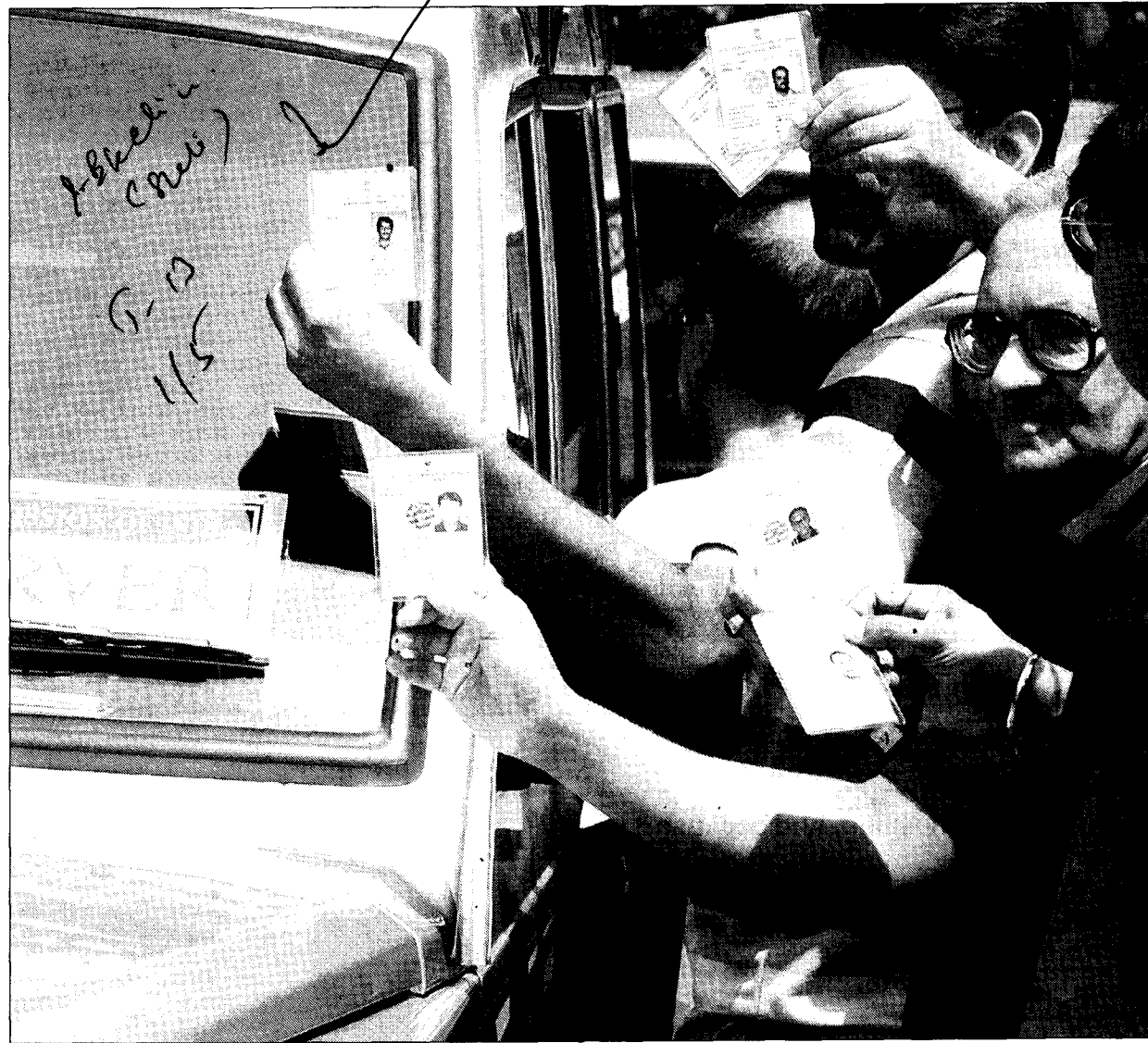
"Eleven people have moved court against the Election Commission in connection with (the) deletion of names of genuine voters," confirmed chief electoral officer Debashis Sen.

The chairman of the state rights commission, Shyamal Sen, said tonight: "The voters who have lodged complaints with me are all genuine and it is a violation of human rights that they were denied the right to exercise their franchise."

The names of his daughter-in-law Debarati and nephew's wife Ushri had been struck off the electoral rolls earlier, though they had voter IDs and had been living in the same area in north Calcutta for years.

They had complained to

### WHEN A BIRTHRIGHT IS DENIED



Voters turned away from polling stations surround an observer's vehicle in Calcutta on election day

the chief electoral officer.

Voters gheraoed deputy election commissioner Anand Kumar waving their identity

cards across the districts during the second and the third phase of the elections.

"I've been living here for

over 25 years. I haven't died yet. How could they delete my name?" 60-year-old Ranajit Roy, a Salt Lake resident, had

asked Kumar.

"I'll see what I can do," Kumar had told him and later in the day, in the face of

protests almost everywhere he went, he said there would be a probe.

Polling officials said at least 7,000 people having voter I cards were turned away from booths in Calcutta and the 24 Parganas because their names didn't figure on the rolls.

The chief electoral officer today admitted a lapse on the part of the poll panel.

"We were in the midst of a huge cleaning operation and some unintentional errors might have crept in for which we express our regret," Debashis Sen said.

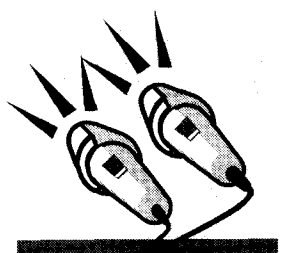
About 23.33 lakh names have been deleted from the rolls across the state so far. "Even 1 per cent of 23.33 lakh means over 23,000 names," an election official tried to explain.

Another official associated with the rolls revision in the districts said following the high-profile visits of election observers — often flown down from Delhi on short notice — and their whirlwind tours, ground-level officers worked at a "frenzied pace" to weed out as many ghost voters as possible. "In a situation like that, errors are not unlikely."

The commission's action against some ground-level officials in the south Bengal districts for "dereliction of duty" had also put the others under "psychological pressure".

"Our officers were under tremendous pressure. The inquiry before deleting names was often minimal," a Nadia official said.

Kumar and Sen would tomorrow fly down to Burdwan, Murshidabad and Birbhum; where elections will be held on Wednesday. In all, 235 companies of paramilitary forces would be deployed in the three districts.



### VOTER'S VOICE



**Name:** Sharmistha Ghosh  
**Age:** 24  
**Education:** BA from Krishnanath College, Behrampore  
**Family:** Father, mother and brother  
**Likes:** Travelling during vacations  
**Dislikes:** Lies  
**Ambition:** To become a good human being, financially independent

Will you cast your vote? **Yes**

Which issue is top of your mind? **Low literacy**

Who do you think can address it? **Amartya Sen**

It is beyond the politicians to make Bengal really literate

How would you rate the present government on a scale of 1 to 10? **5**

How would you rate the Opposition on a scale of 1 to 10? **3**

Which do you think have been the most neglected areas? **Health**

## Tolly's loss, Cong's gain: SKG's turn to be SRK

INDRANIL GHOSH & SOUMI BHATTACHARYA

Suri, April 30: When Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said early this month that he has had to embrace capitalism, a Congressman raised a toast some 230 km from Calcutta.

"I like him, we need people like him to build a new Bengal. We actually need hundreds of capitalists... if only his party allowed him a free hand," says Swapan Kanti Ghosh, the Congress candidate trying to wrest Suri from the CPM, which had the 1998 bypoll and then the 2001 election.

He is 42 and the richest man in the fray in Election 2006. He presides over a business empire involved in such diverse fields as mining, agriculture, real estate and entertainment.

The affidavit filed with the Election Commission in support of his candidature, which details the wealth at the disposal of his wife, two children and himself, however, does not tell the SKG story.

Ghosh is SKG in the Congress circles of Suri. He had once wanted to be someone like SRK, though.

In 1993, SKG starred in *Kalanko* (Scandal) opposite Shatabdi Roy, but it sank without a trace and Ghosh came back to what he did best, business, and began dabbling in politics.

A star he could not be but the desire to be counted among the culturewallahs refused to die. So he set up a troupe of folk artists called Achin

Pakhi (Stranger Bird), which performs across the state.

Suri, a 250-year-old town, is a blend of urban and rural areas. Once a prosperous trading centre, it had long nursed a bias against the Left.

Until 1998, the Congress's influence was best symbolised by Suniti Chatteraj, a son of the soil.

He has lost much of his clout having switched base to Salt Lake and switched loyalties to Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress. A string of scam charges have not helped.

Chatteraj is in the fray this year, too, and vows to wipe out the 1,452-vote margin by which he had lost to the CPM's Braja Mukherjee in 2001. Mukherjee had got 60,860 votes, 46 per cent of the total.

In the multi-cornered contest, the CPM's Tapan Roy, a former MLA and library minister, is a surprise entry.

Better known in these parts for his family's contribution to the communist movement — his un-

cle, the late Saradish Roy, was a four-time MP from Bolpur — the soft-spoken Tapan had

been the MLA between 1987 and 1996. He had to make way for Mukherjee because he had failed to address the people's needs. Now Mukherjee has been replaced by Roy for precisely the same reason.

The Congress supporters are looking to Ghosh's flair and ability to put together and

lead a team.

An observer said that like the late Ghani Khan Chowdhury of Malda, Ghosh has been able to bring together the Congress factions. Defence minister and state party president Pranab Mukherjee's blessings are a bonus.

Like Chatteraj, Ghosh is an outsider now. His address, too, is Salt Lake, but unlike Chatteraj, he has kept the relationship with Suri going. He has engaged a large local workforce in his stone-crushing operations and enjoys the halo of a provider a la Ghani Khan.

His other advantage is proximity to the CPM, where he is believed to have several friends. When Mukherjee was MLA, Ghosh is rumoured to have been close to him. "It is not for nothing that not a single day is lost in his units because of labour trouble," a Trinamul functionary said.

The CPM is pretty sure the chief minister's personal charisma and the party's efforts to acquire a new look will reflect in the result.



**Name:** Swapan Kanti Ghosh  
**Age:** 42  
**Education:** HS  
**Profession:** Businessman  
**Would encourage the next generation to join politics because:** A large army of young men and women is needed to rescue Bengal from the tyranny of CPM  
**Claim to fame:** Among the highest income-tax payers in Bengal; was feted by the IT department for paying Rs 52 lakh as advance for the 1995-2000 period  
**Wears:** Usually white pyjamas and coloured kurtas; sometimes trousers and shirt  
**Accessories:** 3 cellphones  
**Heels:** Leather sandals  
**Munch:** Kochuri and curry, tea and kebabs occasionally

## Man next door versus 'missing' MLA

ANINDYA SENGUPTA & ABHIJEET CHATTERJEE

Benachity, April 30: He was a Congress Seva Dal activist in charge of Indira Gandhi's security when she came to Durgapur for an AICC session about 40 years ago.

He is now the CPM's poster boy there.

Biprendu Chakraborty is Bhajanda to everyone in town — from the rickshaw-puller dozing off at the bend to the guy at the corner pan shop or the local doctor — because he is an all-weather man. People ask him to fix the menu for weddings, not because he is known to be a culinary expert.

As an acknowledgement of his soaring popularity, the CPM plucked him out of the local municipal corporation's mayor-in-council and fielded him in Durgapur II.



Biprendu Chakraborty

Chakraborty is embarrassed when asked if Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee knows he is called Durgapur's *mukhyamantri* (chief minister). "Don't ask me all this," he blushes. "For the past 15 years, I have been closely associated with civic and trade union work without bothering about political differences. That may be the reason why people have accepted me."

Bishnu Khanra, a rickshaw-puller, would vouch for that. "When I fell sick and could not work for months, he supported me, financially and otherwise."

That Chakraborty is "always available" makes him popular, but will that fetch him

enough votes? Sitting MLA and Trinamul Congress candidate Apurba Mukherjee doesn't think so.

To him it is not such a big issue. "I never visited any locality without a rhyme or reason. If there was a need, I attended to that. The CPM is spreading canards to tarnish my image."

But the issue of closeness with voters could become real big for Mukherjee because the Congress is also in the fray. If there is an equal division of Opposition votes between Mukherjee and the Congress's Mrigen Pal, the 2001 margin of 9,477 votes would not seem as comfortable.

Probably mindful of that, the MLA adds: "I was never invited to inauguration of big projects or foundation stone-laying ceremonies because the CPM wanted to alienate me from the people."

Chakraborty says: "I had even helped Apurba's brother when he wanted it. I had a responsibility as a human being. He simply wasted the

five years he got."

Power cuts, bad roads or lack of water do not seem as much of a bother for the voters as whether their MLA is approachable. The town is wearing a new look with shopping malls and hangouts coming up and "the municipality is there to take care of the civic woes", says a young man.

"We need the MLA for certificates or ration card problems. Bhajanda would be our man next door," says Bipin Mukhoti, who works in a departmental store.

That should worry Mukherjee. Satish Jha, who runs a car spares business, says: "I don't need an MLA or an MP to survive. But I never saw the Trinamul Congress legislator in five years. He disappeared."

But, then the CPM could beat the CPM here, say some. The Chakraborty camp does not share the best of relations with the one led by mayor Rathin Roy Durgapur's Bhajanda scoffs at the suggestion. "No way."

**Veterinary Council of India**  
(Statutory Body of the Government of India)  
A Wing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, August Kranti Bhawan  
Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110066  
**NOTICE**

All the registered Veterinary practitioners are hereby informed that consequent upon the notification issued by the Central Government (Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India) vide Extra-ordinary Gazette of India (dated 8.2.2006) calling upon the persons enrolled in the "Indian Veterinary Practitioners' Register to elect Members from amongst themselves for the Veterinary Council of India as provided under Section 3(3)(g) of the Indian Veterinary Council Act, 1984. The draft Electoral Roll has been prepared as provided under rule 4 of the Indian Veterinary Council Rules, 1985.

The Electoral Roll contains the names of all the registered Veterinary practitioners whose names have been included in the Indian Veterinary Practitioners' Register upto 31.3.2005.

The said Roll has been made available at the offices of all the State/U.T. Veterinary Councils for display during the period from 1-15 May, 2006. The Roll is also available at the office of this Council and website [www.vciroll.com](http://www.vciroll.com) for reference.

Claim for inclusion of a name in the Roll and objection to the entry therein, if any, need to be lodged to the Registrar of the State/U.T. Veterinary Council in whose register the name of the claimant has been included, or as the case may be, from whose register the objection requires a name to be deleted within the aforementioned period. Claims/Objections made after the last date shall not be entertained.

SECRETARY

davp 1198/1/2006

**OFFICE OF THE IG/CHAIRMAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**HQRS NB FR BSF, P.O. KADAMTALA, DISTT-DARJEELING (W.B.)**  
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Applications are invited from Indian Citizens for appointment of Headmaster/Headmistress in BSF Primary School Kadamtala in the pay scale of Rs. 5500-175-9000. The post is purely temporary, non-governmental and transferable to any other BSF Primary School in India.

- Qualification - i) Graduate with at least 45% marks in aggregate; ii) B.Ed.
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- Age - 35 years or less.

3. Application on plain paper containing all relevant informations duly filled by the candidate in his/her own handwriting, Bio-data, a latest passport size photograph affixed on the application as well as attested photocopy of all testimonials, accompanied by a crossed BD/PO for Rs. 100/- drawn in favour of Chairman, BSF Primary School Kadamtala payable at SBI Siliguri (0184)/Post Office - Kadamtala alongwith one registered envelope containing self postal address should reach the IG/Chairman, BSF Primary School, HQ NB FR BSF, PO - Kadamtala, Siliguri, Distt-Darjeeling (WB), PIN No. 734011 within 30 days from the date of advertisement. The envelope containing the application must be superscribed in bold letters as "Application for the post of Headmaster/Headmistress in BSF Primary School".

4. The decision of the Chairman, BSF Primary School Kadamtala, with regard to the matters connected with the appointment will be final in all respect.

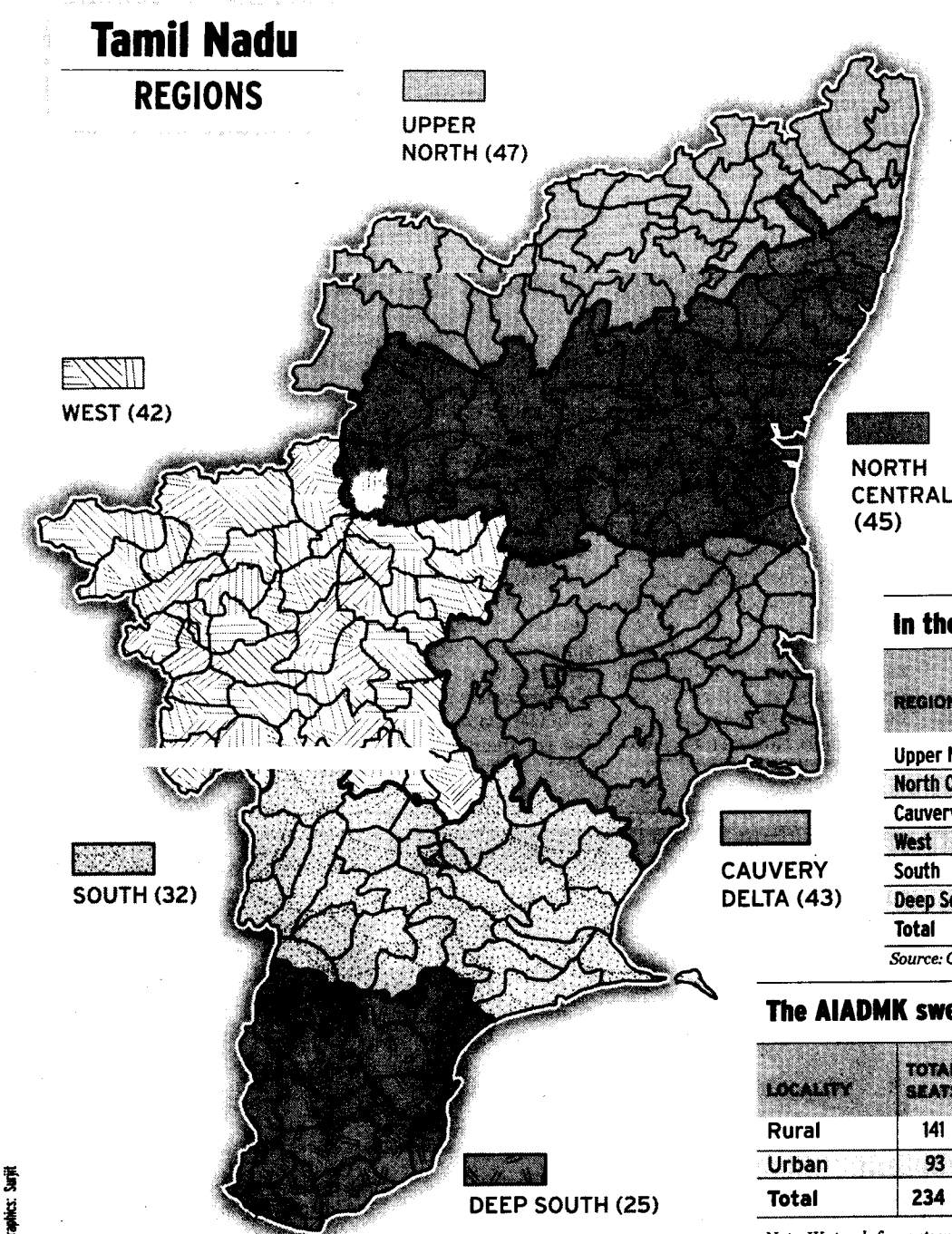
5. The applicant should also submit a declaration that information furnished by him/her is correct and in the event of any wrong information, his/her candidature will stand cancelled. No TADA will be paid to candidates for attending the interview.



# ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006

## Nothing is ruled out in Tamil Nadu

The only thing that can be said with a measure of certainty is that — barring a late swing — no one party is likely to get a majority on its own, say YOGENDRA YADAV AND SANJAY KUMAR



### Clear majority for a single party, usually a sweep for winning alliance

YEAR	TOTAL SEATS	WINNING PARTY	SEATS	% OF VOTES	ALLIANCE PARTIES	SEATS	% OF VOTES
1957	205	Congress	151	45.3	--	--	--
1962	206	Congress	139	44.1	--	--	--
1967	234	DMK	138	40.8	DMK+	158	46.1
1971	234	DMK	184	48.6	DMK+	190	51.6
1977	234	AIADMK	130	30.4	AIADMK+	143	33.5
1980	234	AIADMK	128	38.7	AIADMK+	140	41.9
1984	234	AIADMK	132	37.1	AIADMK+	194	53.6
1989	234	DMK	150	33.2	DMK+	165	38.0
1991	234	AIADMK	164	44.4	AIADMK+	224	59.6
1996	234	DMK	173	42.1	DMK+	221	53.8
2001	234	AIADMK	132	31.4	AIADMK+	195	50.0

Notes: Allies by year of elections are as follows:  
1977 & 80 - AIADMK+ includes Forward Bloc, CPI(M), Muslim League; 1984, 1991 & 1996 - AIADMK+ includes Congress; 2001 - AIADMK+ includes Congress, TMC, PMK, CPI(M), CPI; 1967 & 1971 - DMK+ includes Swatantra Party; 1989 - DMK+ includes CPI(M), CPI; 1996 - DMK+ includes TMC, CPI

### Possible scenarios and election outcomes

WHAT WOULD BE THE FINAL RESULT IF...	Seats for AIADMK+	Seats for DMK+
Vote shares stay as reported in <i>The Hindu</i> -CNN-IBN survey (AIADMK+ 46%, DMK+ 44%)	118	110
DMDK gains 4 percentage points, but takes more from the DMK (AIADMK+ 45%, DMK+ 41%, DMDK 9%)	132	93
There is a 2 point swing in favour of the AIADMK since there is a 2 point swing in favour of the AIADMK since the survey (AIADMK+ 48%, DMK+ 42%)	157	71
There is a 4 point swing in favour of the AIADMK (AIADMK+ 50%, DMK+ 40%)	187	41
DMK gains 2 percentage points from the AIADMK (DMK+ 46%, AIADMK+ 44%)	79	146
DMK gains 4 percentage points from the AIADMK (DMK+ 48%, AIADMK+ 42%)	51	170

### In the 2001 elections, regional differences were evened out

REGIONS	TOTAL SEATS	TURN OUT	AIADMK & ALLIES		DMK & ALLIES		MDMK		OTHERS AND INDEPENDENTS	
			W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%
Upper North	47	53.60	33/47	49.69	14/47	40.78	0/42	3.24	0/280	6.29
North Central	45	62.64	39/45	51.53	6/45	37.88	0/44	3.77	0/239	6.83
Cauvery Delta	43	64.07	32/43	49.00	11/43	40.88	0/39	4.33	0/143	5.79
West	42	59.81	40/42	53.06	2/42	34.72	0/39	5.67	0/219	6.54
South	32	59.45	29/32	47.43	2/32	38.77	0/28	5.45	1/181	8.35
Deep South	25	55.45	22/25	46.65	2/25	38.83	0/19	7.34	1/119	7.19
Total	234	59.07	195/234	49.99	37/234	38.67	0/211	4.65	2/1181	6.70

Source: CSDS Data Unit.

### The AIADMK swept rural constituencies while the DMK did better in urban areas in 2001

LOCALITY	TOTAL SEATS	TURN OUT	AIADMK		AIADMK ALLIES		DMK		DMK ALLIES		MDMK		OTHER PARTIES	
			W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%
Rural	141	62.92	95/98	36.46	33/43	14.12	10/107	29.11	1/34	7.77	0/129	4.38	2/608	8.17
Urban	93	54.60	37/43	24.72	30/50	24.47	21/76	33.36	5/17	7.71	0/82	5.02	0/573	4.72
Total	234	59.07	132/141	31.44	63/93	18.54	31/183	30.92	6/51	7.74	0/211	4.65	2/1181	6.70

Note: W stands for seats won and C for seats contested. Source: CSDS Data Unit.

### Alliance effect has become decisive since 1998

YEAR	AIADMK+ PARTNERS	Seats won	Vote%	DMK+ PARTNERS		Seats won	Vote%
				DMK+ PARTNERS	Seats won		
1998 Lok Sabha	BJP, PMK, MDMK, JP	29	46.1	TMC, CPI	9	42.7	
1999 Lok Sabha	Congress, CPI, CPI(M)	13	41.7	BJP, PMK, MDMK, MADMK, TMC	26	47.1	
2001 Assembly	Congress, TMC, PMK, CPI, CPI(M)	195	50.0	BJP, PT, MTD, MGRKTB, MADMK, CNMK, PMK	37	38.7	
2004 Lok Sabha	BJP	0	34.8	Congress, MDMK, PMK, CPI, CPI(M)	39	57.4	

### Alliance arithmetic favours the DMK

DMK +	2004 VOTE%	AIADMK +	2004 VOTE%
DMK	24.6	AIADMK	29.8
Congress	14.4	MDMK	5.9
PMK	6.7		
CPI	3.0		
CPI (M)	2.9		
Total	51.6	Total	35.7

Note: The AIADMK's smaller allies did not contest in 2004.

Tamil Nadu is where the real excitement is as far as this round of Assembly elections go. A week ahead of polling day, even the broad contours of the outcome are unclear. Three weeks ago, before the nominations began, *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN Poll conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) had declared this election "too close to call." News reports and polls since then have not clearly indicated which way the wind is blowing. Unlike the other States, one cannot rule out any outcome: a clear victory for either the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or even a tie. This election could change the pattern of government formation and policy orientation in the State.

This is not how things appeared six months ago. Everyone thought that the election would be a replay, in reverse, of that in 2001. In opposition, AIADMK chief Jayalithaa had put together a grand alliance that defeated the sitting DMK-TMC combine. This time, the DMK is in the opposition and has sewn up a grand alliance. Six months ago, every political observer expected the DMK to sweep the polls, just as it did in the Lok Sabha elections of 2004.

It was not an unreasonable assumption. Tamil Nadu is one of the few States that has never had an unclear verdict. Ever since the present boundaries of the State were fixed in 1957, it has seen decisive verdicts. The Congress won the general elections in 1957 and 1962 with a clear majority. Thereafter, it has been one of the two Dravidian parties. The winning party was usually in alliance with the Congress (or breakaway factions such as the Tamil Maanila Congress). But it is important to remember that one single party has always enjoyed a clear majority in the Assembly. The winning alliance could easily win a three-fourths majority or even up to 90 per cent of the seats.

The alliance pattern changed radically in 1998, but the tradition of electoral sweeps continued. Defeated and humiliated by the DMK-TMC combine in 1996, Ms. Jayalithaa created a new rainbow coalition by admitting many small parties. The success of her coalition forced the DMK to play the same game. The winning formula in the Lok Sabha elections of 1998, 1999 and 2004 and the Assembly elections of 2001 was very simple: whichever party had the bigger alliance won. The Pattali Makkal Katchi switched sides regularly and was a part of every winning alliance.

Going by that logic, the DMK should have had an irreversible lead in this election. Its alliance in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections was formidable. It included the re-united Congress (after the TMC's merger), the two Communist parties, the PMK and the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. The AIADMK had only the Bharatiya Janata Party for a partner. DMK president M. Karunanidhi has succeeded in keeping this broad alliance more or less intact, except for the MDMK, which replaced the BJP as the AIADMK's main ally.

#### Smaller parties

Both alliances have added some smaller parties to boost their strength. While the DMK has allied with a faction of the Muslim League, the AIADMK has roped in many small groups: the Dalit Panthers of India, a faction of the Forward Bloc, the Janata Dal (Secular), a faction of the INTUC, the Indian National League and another faction of the Muslim League. If we add up the votes secured by the DMK and its allies in the Lok Sabha elections, it comes to 51.6 per cent. The corresponding figure for the AIADMK and the MDMK is only 35.7 per cent. Most of the AIADMK's smaller allies did not contest the Lok Sabha elections;

so it is not easy to ascertain their strength. But even if this vote was taken as two to three per cent of the popular vote, the alliance share comes to about 38 per cent, way behind the DMK alliance.

This formal arithmetic is based on two assumptions: the allies retain more or less the same proportion of votes and the popularity level of the DMK and the AIADMK remain what it was in 2004. We know that both these assumptions are not true. Therefore, the formal arithmetic of alliances is not a good guide to this election.

The assumption that the major alliance partners have a fixed proportion of votes they can carry to any alliance was true between 1998 and 2001. It is not true any more. Some of them have suffered a sharp erosion in their vote base. The Congress and the TMC got more than nine per cent of the vote in 2001; in 2004, the re-united Congress got more than 14 per cent. But *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN Poll found that the real strength of the Congress was no more than 4.5 per cent. Similarly, the PMK's real strength is about two per cent, the six to seven per cent of vote it has received is thanks to alliances. The Communist parties bring in less than two per cent of the vote on their own. Similarly, the

MDMK does not contribute much to the AIADMK. Its own vote share is less than two per cent, much lower than the four to five per cent it won in previous elections. Taking everything into account, it seems that the DMK's alliance gives it an advantage of four to five percentage points over the AIADMK. It is still a significant advantage, but not an unbridgeable lead.

The second assumption is also no longer valid. The chemistry in the State is not what it was in 2004. *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN Poll analysed this in considerable detail. The AIADMK Government's and Ms. Jayalithaa's personal ratings have improved dramatically. Her Government is credited with effective tsunami and flood relief measures and better governance.

When compared to the previous DMK Government, the AIADMK Government was preferred, though only by a small margin. More importantly, Ms. Jayalithaa was preferred over Mr. Karunanidhi by more voters and was seen to be a better administrator, more pro-poor and more effective in controlling corruption. Mr. Karunanidhi's weakness for his son and family members seemed a political liability in the public eye.

*The Hindu*-CNN-IBN Poll estimated that by the first week of

April, when the poll was conducted, the arithmetical advantage of the DMK had already been overtaken by the AIADMK's turnaround in popularity. The poll estimated that the AIADMK combine stood at 46 per cent and the DMK one at 44 per cent. The AIADMK's turnaround has been confirmed by polls conducted over the last two years by the School of Media Studies, Loyola College. These surveys — conducted in November 2004, April-May 2005, January 2006 and April 2006 — have shown a steady rise in the share of popular votes for the AIADMK and a corresponding decline in the popularity of the DMK-led alliance.

The real question is: will the two-point lead for the AIADMK alliance reported by *The Hindu* hold till May 8? If it does and the scenario projected by *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN Poll comes true, the AIADMK could scrape through by winning a bare majority of 118 seats, the thinnest ever in the State. If the Poll caught the AIADMK in the middle of an upswing and if it continued to gain since then, its victory margin could be more comfortable. A two-point swing since then will give the AIADMK alliance 157 seats and a four-point gain could turn it into a familiar sweep. On the other

hand, if the DMK has gained since early April, as per the latest survey by the Loyola College team, the DMK alliance could gain a majority. There is a third scenario involving major gains for Vijayakanth's Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam. But that too would favour the AIADMK, for the DMDK is gaining more at the expense of the DMK and its allies than the AIADMK. The DMDK may get a significant proportion of votes but is unlikely to win many seats, thus helping the AIADMK secure a majority.

#### Keen competition

The final outcome may or may not be close. But the crucial thing is that it is perceived to be so. This has activated a very keen competition for every tiny slice of votes. Party manifestos have become a point of discussion. Parties are competing to offer something more to the voters. The DMK has also joined the populist plank normally associated with the AIADMK. *The Hindu*-CNN-IBN survey showed that the alliances retained their traditional social profile: the AIADMK was stronger among women and the poor, besides the Thevars and a section of the Dalits. The DMK had a clear lead among the minorities, Vanniyars, Gounders and Pallars.

In Tamil Nadu, the social equation is bound up with the regional patterns. The DMK's hope rests on the two regions in the northern plains where the PMK and the DMK have their strongholds. The AIADMK has always done better in the west and the south and would hope to counter the hold of national parties in the deep south with the MDMK's votes.

The last decade has seen a lot of upheaval, and both alliances have a substantial base in every single region. Similarly, the big urban-rural divide has nearly disappeared from the State's politics. The DMK still does a little better in the urban areas and the AIADMK in the rural areas, but the differences have narrowed considerably.

No matter what the final outcome, one thing is almost certain. Barring a late swing, it is highly unlikely that any one party will get a clear majority on its own. The logic of electoral alliances that has unfolded since 1998 will find its logical culmination in the formation of a coalition government in the State. If the DMDK gets a significant share of votes this time and decides to join an alliance the next time, coalitions could become a regular phenomenon. That could change the face of Tamil Nadu politics.

# 70 p.c. vote in Kerala

O. B. C. L. as (Stat.)

HD-1

2 30/9

## Second phase polls witness blast, incidents in Kozhikode district

Special Correspondent

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** The second phase of polls in Kerala on Saturday, covering six districts, saw a heavy turnout. While the final polling percentages are yet to come in, available figures indicate that the average was nearly 70 per cent.

The polling was by and large peaceful. An explosion and some minor incidents of violence occurred in Kozhikode district.

Several prominent leaders of the State are seeking election in this phase covering 66 constituencies. Their constituencies recorded above average polling.

The Malampuzha constituency in Palakkad district, from where Opposition Leader V.S. Achuthanandan is seeking election, recorded a polling percentage of nearly 75 per cent. Polling was well above 75 per cent in Koduvally constituency where the son of former Congress leader K. Karunakaran and president of the Democratic Indira Congress (Karunakaran) K. Muraledharan is seeking mandate. The VIP constituencies of Kuttippuram, Ponnani and Palakkad also reported heavy polling.

Ponnani drew attention as

convenor of the Opposition Left Democratic Front Paloli Mohammedkutty is in the fray, while Palakkad evoked interest because of the candidature of BJP leader and former Union Minister of State O. Rajagopal.

Kuttippuram witnessed some minor skirmishes. Supporters of Muslim League leader and former Minister P.K. Kunhalikutty pitted against youth leader K. T. Jaleel, who had been expelled from the party for opposing him, were involved in clashes.

### LDF win predicted

Renu Ramanath

**KOCHI:** The India Vision-AC Nielsen Exit Poll conducted among the Kerala voters after polling for the second phase of Assembly elections in 66 constituencies in six districts on Saturday predicted that the LDF will come to power with a clear majority.

See also Page 8

## Two Suicides Only Incidents In West Bengal Polls Second phase peaceful, 76% of voters bite ballot



**Our Bureau**  
KOLKATA

**T**HE second phase of the five-phase polls in West Bengal passed off peacefully on Saturday. Elections were held in four districts of Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia and East Midnapore and about 76% voters polled during Saturday's elections. Voting was conducted for 66 Assembly seats.

Though no poll-related violence was reported from the four districts, a number of un-

fortunate incidents occurred. A BSF jawan committed suicide in a booth in Howrah while a female voter died of snake bite in East Midnapore. A Congress supporter who was supposed to function as election agent for the party in Howrah, also committed suicide.

The BSF jawan, Ashok Kumar, who was on duty at a booth in Uluberia, committed suicide by shooting himself in a booth. Polling was delayed for sometime following the incident. At Kalyanpur Assembly

constituency in Howrah, a Congress supporter who was supposed to function as election agent for the party, deputed his son for the job and left the booth to hang himself to death.

A 36-year-old woman died of snakebite on her way to a polling station at Halhara village under Tamluk Assembly constituency in East Midnapore district.

Reports reaching the Election Commission office in the city said Trinamool Congress could not depute agents in many booths in the four districts. CPI(M) politburo member and state party secretary Biman Bose corroborated this.

It is learnt that there were no Trinamool Congress agents in

shipara Assembly constituency in Nadia district.

The second phase was crucial for the CPI(M) as the Opposition parties like Trinamool Congress and Congress had

bagged 23 of the total 66 seats in these four districts. Mr Bose said on Saturday that the Left parties had garnered 48.49% votes here during the 2001 Assembly polls. In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, Left Front had improved its situation when it bagged 51.18% votes.

"We had bagged 43 of the total 66 seats in these districts which went for polls on Saturday. This time we expect to increase our seats and share of

votes in all the four districts," he claimed.

Arambagh, Gourhati and in all the 37 booths under Arambagh municipality areas in Hooghly district. Trinamool agents also were not present at a number of booths in Khanakul.

Mr Bose alleged that Congress had engaged election agents in booth number 34 to 42 and 45 to 48 for the BJP candidate at the Tarakeswar Assembly constituency. Neither Trinamool Congress nor Congress have put up their nominees in the constituency and BJP is the only Rightist party contesting the elections against fire services minister Pratim Chatterjee.

Trinamool Congress had given a call for vote boycott at Baragachi village under Naka-



# ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006

## Tough task ahead for the UDF

Small swings of votes have caused regular regime change

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS YEAR	TURNOUT (%)	UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT		LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT		WINNING ALLIANCE	MARGIN (% POINTS)
		Seats	Vote%	Seats	Vote%		
1980	72.3	46	44.0	93	50.0	LDF	6.0
1982	73.5	78	48.5	62	46.7	UDF	1.8
1987	80.5	61	44.3	79	46.6	LDF	2.3
1991	73.4	90	48.2	50	45.6	UDF	2.6
1996	71.2	59	44.8	80	46.1	LDF	1.3
2001	72.5	99	49.1	40	43.7	UDF	5.4

The Kottarakara Assembly seat was won by the KC(B) in the 1980 Assembly elections  
The Kazhakkootam Assembly seat was won by an Independent in the 2001 Assembly elections

Support for both alliances was spread in all the three regions in 2001

REGIONS	SEATS	VOTE%	UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT		LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT		BJP	VOTE%
			Seats	Vote%	Seats	Vote%		
Malabar	42	75.4	25	48.8	17	43.2	--	6.3
Kochi	44	72.1	34	49.3	10	43.6	--	4.7
Travancore	54	70.3	40	49.0	13	44.2	--	4.2

UDF stronghold goes to the poll in the second phase

POLLING PHASES	2001 ASSEMBLY ELECTION		UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT		LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT		BJP	VOTE%
	SEATS	TURNOUT%	Seats	Vote%	Seats	Vote%		
Phase I	59	70.7	44	48.8	14	44.1	--	4.1
Phase II	66	73.0	50	50.2	16	42.6	--	5.3
Phase III	15	76.8	5	45.1	10	46.6	--	7.1

LDF seems to be gaining both among the poor as well as the rich

ECONOMIC CLASS	UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT		LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT	
	Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001	Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001
Poor	38	-2	57	+6
Lower	43	-2	51	+5
Middle	44	-7	46	+6
Rich	44	-12	37	+2

Figures for change in percentage points

Both alliances very broad based, not dominated by any one party

PARTY	UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT		LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT	
	SEATS CONTESTING	SEATS	SEATS CONTESTING	SEATS
Congress (I)	77		CPI (M)	85
IUML	21		CPI	24
DIC (K)	17		JD (S)	8
KC(M)	11		KC (Joseph)	6
JSS	5		RSP	3
KC (Jacob)	2		NCP	2
CMP	3		INL	3
KC(B)	2		KC (S)	1
RSP (B)	1		Congress (S)	1
RSP (Shibu Baby John)	1		LDF supported Independent	7

Major gains for the LDF among more educated voters

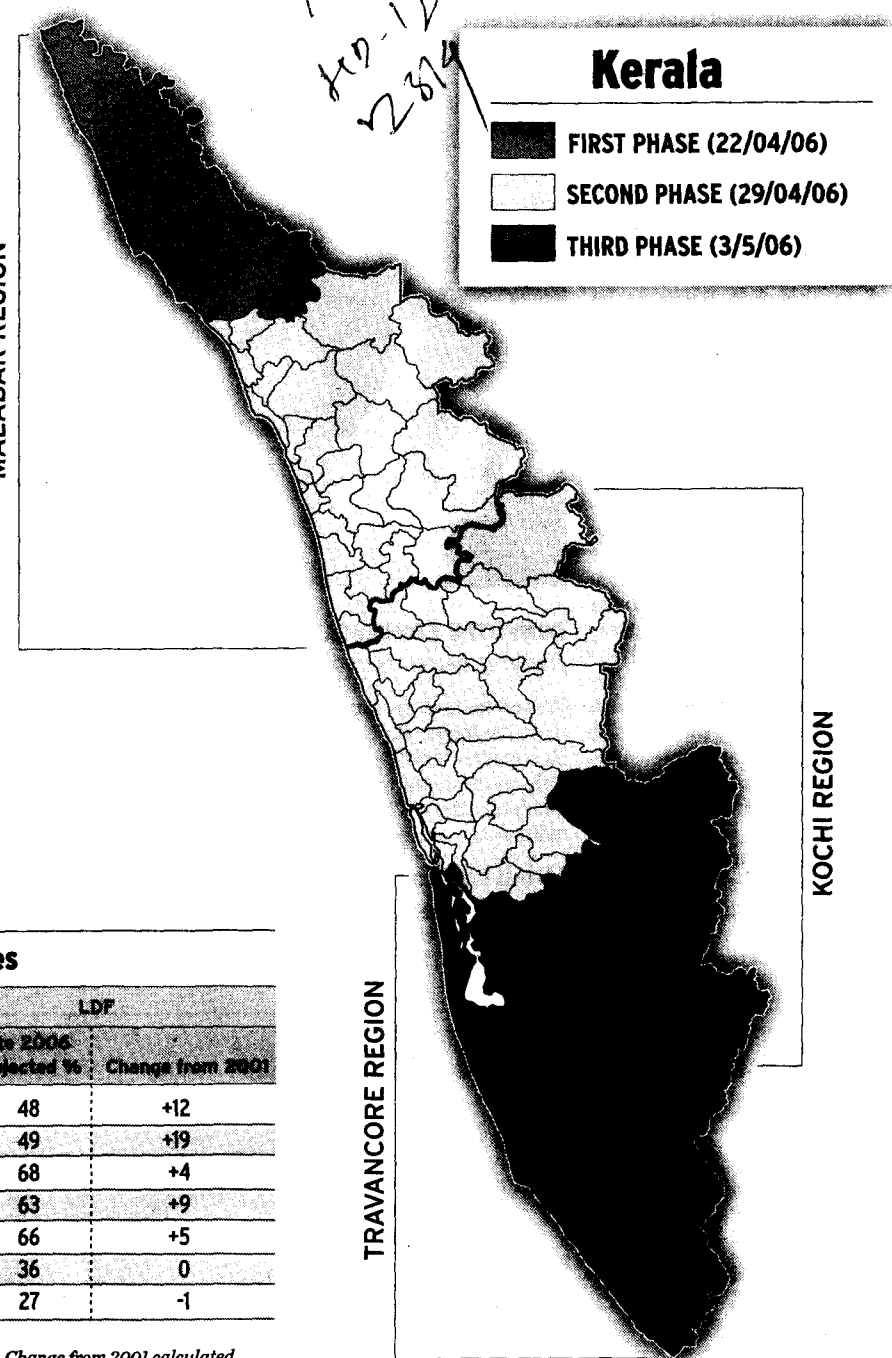
EDUCATION LEVEL	UDF		LDF	
	Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001	Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001
Primary	43	-8	50	+9
Middle	41	-2	52	+5
High School	41	-7	50	+6
Graduate	41	-9	48	+14

Figures for change in percentage points

LDF gains in all communities, especially among upper castes

CASTE COMMUNITY	POPULATION SHARE ESTIMATE (%)	UDF		LDF	
		Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001	Vote 2006 projected %	Change from 2001
Nairs		35	-9	48	+12
Other upper castes		30	-24	49	+19
Ezhavas		26	+1	68	+4
Other OBCs		26	-8	63	+9
SCs	10	28	-5	66	+5
Muslims	25	61	0	36	0
Christians	19	66	0	27	-1

Note: Projected vote of 2006 based on The Hindu-CNN-IBN pre-poll survey conducted by CSDS. Change from 2001 calculated from post-poll survey carried out after the 2001 Assembly elections by CSDS. Figures for change in percentage points



The UDF may be re-energised but this is unlikely to offset the LDF's considerable advantage, say YOGENDRA YADAV AND SANJAY KUMAR

Political commonsense would suggest that it is the turn of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala in this Assembly election. Power has alternated with every Assembly election in the State since the bipolar race between the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the LDF started in 1980. It was the LDF in 1980, the UDF in 1982, the LDF in 1987, the UDF in 1991, the LDF in 1996 and the UDF in 2001. Logically, it is the turn of the LDF in 2006. But such patterns are at best indicative and cannot be relied upon. We have already noted that the pattern of alternation may be broken in Assam this time. Why can't the same happen in Kerala?

The former Chief Minister, A.K. Anthony, whose popularity rating had sunk very low, was replaced by Oommen Chandy. By all accounts, the new Government was more dynamic and performed better. Could this help the UDF recover from its electoral debacle? After a lot of suspense and political drama, K. Karunakaran, the rebel Congress leader, returned to the UDF fold, though as leader of the Democratic Indira Congress (Karunakaran).

**The Karunakaran factor**

Many analysts credited the LDF's victory in the local body elections and by-election to the overt and covert support lent by Mr. Karunakaran. Could his return to the UDF re-energise the front and cut into the LDF's votes? Finally, the intense factional struggle within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) took unprecedented public expression. Could this struggle dilute the LDF's appeal?

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll enables us to answer some of these questions and make sense of how political parties stood at the start of the electoral race. First, it confirms the general impression that the Chandy Government has improved the voter level of satisfaction with the State Government. The proportion of those dissatisfied with the State Government was as high as 41 per cent in 2004; now it is down to 35 per cent. A clear majority of voters feel that roads, electricity supply, drinking water, public education, hospitals and law and order have improved over the last five years. Very few Governments in power in the north Indian States can claim this kind of rating. The poll also showed public disapproval of the Government's mis-handling of specific issues and

LDF manages to retain more voters

VOTED IN 2004	WILL VOTE IN 2006		
	UDF	LDF	OTHERS
From UDF to	92	7	1
From LDF to	4	95	1
From Others to	11	9	80

Figures are in % of the votes secured in 2004.

Who are these floating voters?

	TRADITIONAL UDF SUPPORTERS		TRADITIONAL LDF SUPPORTERS		NOT COMMITTED
	UDF	LDF	UDF	LDF	
All	33	38	38	29	
Nairs	27	36	37		
Ezhavas	20	52	28		
Other OBCs	19	46	35		
SCs	20	54	26		
Muslims	50	29	21		
Christians	57	18	25		

Figures in % of social groups.

on the prevailing level of corruption. Despite the positive rating received by the Chandy Government, the floating voters thought that the previous LDF Government was better. On balance, they felt that the UDF Government should not be given another chance.

The poll also showed what many political analysts have suspected all along: the Karunakaran factor is perhaps a grossly over-rated one in Kerala's politics today. Merely three per cent of the State's electorate feels Mr. Karunakaran is the best man for the Chief Minister's post. When compared to Mr. Chandy and Mr. Antony, he finishes in the third spot. This suggests the LDF's leadership were not unwise in spurning an alliance with him, even if only after prolonged dilly-dallying. If the UDF was looking for a magical remedy, Mr. Karunakaran is not going to provide it.

Finally, the poll revealed that a large proportion of Kerala's electorate is aware of the

fractional fights in the CPI(M). While it may have affected the party's credibility, the loss to the LDF in terms of votes is fairly limited.

**Achuthanandan ahead**

LDF voters and supporters have an overwhelming preference for V.S. Achuthanandan as the next Chief Minister. He is well ahead of his rivals and the present Chief Minister in the popularity ratings. This is a plus point for the LDF, but also a reason for anxiety.

All in all, it is unlikely that short-term developments and issues that grab news headlines are going to fundamentally change the outcome of the elections. Current indicators suggest that the leading political fronts will attract votes from their familiar social blocs. The Left secures more votes from Hindu Other Backward Castes and Dalits, and the UDF from Muslims and Christians. There are some subtle shifts though. This time, the LDF seems to be

gaining more ground among the upper castes, including Nairs. This is also reflected in the gains made among more educated voters.

**Muslim support**

There has been considerable effort and plenty of discussion about the increasing Muslim support for the Left. But the survey offers no evidence that the LDF vote among Muslims has crossed the levels reached in 2001. Over the last decade, the Left has improved its vote share among Christians as well, but there are no signs of further improvement. In class terms too, the LDF gets more support among poor voters, but its gains as compared to the last elections are spread across all classes. Some of this can change by the time elections take place. But we are unlikely to witness a major change in the social basis of voting. A thin slice of 'floating voters' — cutting across all social groups more or less evenly — is shifting to the LDF this time.

This lends the LDF an advantage and the exact quantum of this shift will determine how many seats it will win. The LDF had an advantage of eight percentage points in the Lok Sabha elections in 2004.

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll estimated that the advantage stood at six percentage points at the starting point of the race, which would have given it between 93 and 100 seats in the 140-member Assembly. If the advantage is cut down to two percentage points, the LDF will win around 80 seats, a comfortable majority. The UDF will have to do something extraordinary, especially in the second phase of elections (where it won 50 of the 66 seats last time) to stop the LDF in its tracks. That is a tough task.

## Questions and Answers

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll for Kerala has raised many questions about the methodology used. YOGENDRA YADAV has the answers

**The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll for Kerala (April 13) had found that the LDF had established a six-percentage point lead over the UDF, a comfortable margin for a Kerala election, at the starting point of the race. The poll raised many questions, some of them of a critical nature. Scrutiny and criticism of opinion polls in the public domain are healthy and democratic practices, even if sometimes the criticism is unkind and not fully informed.**

Here are brief answers to some questions asked so far.

**Kerala has more than two crore voters. How can we take seriously conclusions drawn from a survey of only 4,000 persons?**

That is the whole point of a sample survey. In the United States, a sample of about 1,400 is normally used to estimate the vote share of leading candidates. The sample of 4,377 respondents in this poll is large enough to generate estimate of votes for the two leading alliances with an error margin of one per cent (in 95 out of 100 cases).

**What is special about the method used in this poll?**

Most opinion polls make a careful selection of the constituencies to be surveyed. But the choice of persons to be interviewed is often left to the discretion of the investigator. This often leads to bias in the selection of the sample. This poll uses the most scientific method of random sampling. Within each of the 46 selected Assembly constituencies, four polling stations were selected randomly. Within each of these booths, the voters list was used to randomly pick the respondents. This eliminated the possibility of bias or distortion.

**Is the sample fully representative of Kerala's electorate?**

In an effort to raise the credibility of polls, we have started the practice of sharing the social profile of our sample with the public. As reported in *The Hindu*, the poll sample represented different social groups in the correct proportions. Operational difficulties resulted in under-estimation of Muslim voters in this poll. Since this could adversely affect estimates, we used statistical weightage to correct this imbalance.

**The poll says that the current UDF Government is not very unpopular with the electors. Yet it says that it is going to lose the elections. Isn't that contradictory?**

It is unusual, but neither unprecedented nor contradictory. The Congress Government in Rajasthan, led by Ashok Gehlot, was rated positively by the voters before and even after the 2003 Assembly elections. Yet, it lost the elections. This happens because the voters judge the party on several dimensions, developmental work being one of them. They might not vote for the government for they expect much more from the rival party. Sometimes, voters can be inconsistent or even irrational. The poll simply reports what respondents say on how they will vote and how they assess the government. The two may or may not be consistent, but that does not render the findings of the poll contradictory.

**The poll was conducted well before the official campaign began. How can we be sure that the trend will continue till polling day? How can the final outcome be forecast a**

**month before counting day?**

Actually, the poll does not make a definite forecast of the final outcome. *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* will carry out a post-poll and exit poll survey and make a forecast after the last vote has been cast. This first round of voting simply offered an estimate of vote share and seats if the elections were held in the first week of April. That is to say, it offers a picture of the starting point of the electoral race, not of the end point.

**Can we trust a poll like this? How can we be sure it is not biased in favour of a party or an ideology?**

*The Hindu-CNN-IBN* Poll is carried out by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi. This is a non-profit and independent social science research organisation supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Our organisation follows a policy of not doing any survey for an interested party.

**Sephology is not yet a mature science in our country. Comment.**

That is fair criticism. Election forecasts have not enjoyed a high credibility lately. *The Hindu-CNN-IBN* Poll aims at restoring credibility to polling. This is why it involves the CSDS team and Professor Rajeeva Karandikar, one of the foremost statisticians of the country. We hope to make election forecasting less prone to errors and to making polling more credible, transparent and accountable. To this end, we are opening our data for examination to all political parties. We are also happy to answer questions by readers about the methodology of the survey. Write to us at election@csdsdelhi.org

## SOUNDBYTES

People seem to be looking for a change. It is a question of who is going to bell the cat. We signify change; we want to do something new.



Santhanagopalan Vasudev  
Lok Paritran candidate  
Mylapore, Tamil Nadu

I am not for confrontational politics. I want the voters to decide on the Smart City project.

Oommen Chandy  
Chief Minister  
Kerala

If the LDF comes to power, it will create thousands of job opportunities in the IT sector without giving any land free to anybody.



Pinarayi Vijayan  
CPI(M) secretary  
Kerala

Kerala has rediscovered the rhythm of development under the UDF rule.

P. Chidambaram  
Union Finance Minister

At the time of elections big promises are made (by the Left parties) only to be forgotten after they are over.



Sonia Gandhi  
Congress president




# জনমত সমীক্ষার ইঙ্গিতই স্পষ্ট প্রথম দফায়


নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: সকাল বুঝিয়ে দেয়, দিকটা কেমন যাবে। প্রচলিত এই প্রবাদেই ইঙ্গিতফলন প্রথম দফার নির্বাচনে স্পষ্ট। প্রাক-নির্বাচনী জনমত সমীক্ষায় বামফ্রন্টের যে ফলাফল বেরিয়ে এসেছে, সোমবার পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুর, বাঁকুড়া ও পূর্বলিয়ায় ভোটের পরে নেওয়া বুথ-ফেরত সমীক্ষা থেকে তারই আভাস মিলল। বিরোধীদের অবস্থানও স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই একই জায়গায়।

এ দিনের বুথ-ফেরত সমীক্ষার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে করা সামগ্রিক হিসাবে দেখা যায়, বামফ্রন্ট রাজ্যে সব মিলিয়ে ২২৯টি আসন পেতে পারে। প্রাক-নির্বাচনী জনমত সমীক্ষা থেকে যা মাত্র দুটি কম। কংগ্রেস আগের সমীক্ষার হিসাব থেকে একটি আসন বাড়িয়ে ৩১-এ পৌঁছালেও প্রধান বিরোধী দল তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস সেই ৩৬-এ দাঁড়িয়ে। অর্থাৎ রাজ্যে বামফ্রন্টের অগ্রগতির লেখচিত্র উৎসাহজনক। বিরোধীদের মোট আসন গতবারের চেয়ে কুড়িটির মতো কমছে।

এ দিন যে তিন জেলায় ভোট হয়েছে সেখানে উন্নয়ন না হওয়ার স্লোগান বড় করে তোলার চেষ্টা করেছিল মাওবাদীরা। ভোট ব্যকটের হুমকি তো ছিলই, সেই সঙ্গেই ছিল অশান্তির আশঙ্কা। কিন্তু ভোট পড়েছে ৭০ শতাংশেরও বেশি। অশান্তি হয়নি বললেই চলে। রিগিংয়ের অভিযোগ তুলতে পারেনি বিরোধীরা। নির্বাচন কমিশনের পর্যবেক্ষকদের সক্রিয় ডুমিকা ছিল সর্বত্র। মাওবাদী হুমকি যে



আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা



বুথ ফেরত সমীক্ষা

প্রথম দফা

মোট আসন	৪৫	৪০	৩
বামফ্রন্ট	৪০	৩	১
কংগ্রেস	৩	১	১
তৃণমূল	১	১	১
অন্যান্য	১	১	১

সহায়তায় এ সি নিরেলসন

কোথায় গেল? যাঁদের জন্য এই হাওয়া তোলার চেষ্টা হয়েছিল, তাঁরাই কি বামফ্রন্টের পক্ষে ভোট দিয়ে তা খালি করলেন? অর্ধনীতির শিক্ষক অনুপ সিংহের মতে, এক কথায় কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত করা হয়তো ঠিক নয়। কারণ অনুন্নয়নের সংজ্ঞা ওই সব এলাকার মানুষের কাছে যা, শহরের ব্যাখ্যা তার সঙ্গে না মিলতে পারে। কিন্তু যেটা তার চেয়েও বড়, তা হল নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্ন। তিনি বলেন, "যারা সত্যিই দারিদ্র সীমা বা তার নিচে বাস করেন, তাঁদের মুখে দৈনন্দিন জীবনে নিরাপত্তার বিষয়টি কম জরুরি নয়। সেই নিরাপত্তা মাওবাদী-সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে হতে পারে, কিংবা খরা-কন্যা-বিপর্যয় থেকে বাঁচা। আর সেখানেই আসে বিকল্পের কথা। বিকল্প হিসাবে কেউ সেই নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে না পারলে ওই জনসমষ্টির ভোট শাসক দলের দিকেই যাবে। মানুষ চোখের সামনে যাদের সংগঠন দেখে, তাদেরই ভোট দেয়।" তার মানে যুগের সেই বিরোধীদের সংগঠন না-থাকার সত্যিই প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়।

প্রায় একই ব্যাখ্যা দেন সমাজবিজ্ঞানী রণবীর সমাদার। তিনিও বলেন: "উন্নয়ন হওয়া না হওয়ার সঙ্গে ভোটে সমর্থন পাওয়াকে গুলিয়ে ফেলা উচিত নয়। ভোট পাওয়া রাজনৈতিক সংযোগের ফল। হতে পারে, যারা অনুন্নয়নের কথা তুলে ধরতে চায়, তারা হয় তো মানুষের কাছে সে ভাবে

## জনমত সমীক্ষার

প্রথম পাতার পর পৌঁছেতেই পারেনি। যাদের সেই যোগ নেই, তাদের পক্ষে ভোট মেলা শক্ত।" তবে উন্নয়ন না হওয়ার প্রসঙ্গে তিনি এ কথাও বলে দেন: "উন্নয়ন না হওয়ার কিছু তথ্য তো আছেই। তাই যারা বিপুল জনসমর্থন নিয়ে আসেন, উন্নয়নের অভাব মেটানোর কথা তাঁদের ভুললে চলবে না।"

বিরোধীদের ভিত না থাকার কথা যথারীতি মানেননি তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। বলেননি রিগিং-সন্ত্রাসের কথাও। বরং দাবি করেছেন: "গণনার পরেই দেখা যাবে সি পি এম কত পেয়েছে।" এক ধাপ এগিয়ে প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের নির্বাহী সভাপতি প্রদীপ ভট্টাচার্যের অভিযোগ: "বহু গ্রামে ভয় দেখানো হয়েছে। মানুষ সর্বত্র ভোট দিতে পারেনি।" তাঁর এই মন্তব্যের লক্ষ্য মূলত কেশপুর ও গড়বেতা। কেশপুর ও গড়বেতা পূর্বের তিনটি বুথে ৯৫ শতাংশের মতো ভোট পড়া তাঁদের সন্দেহের উদ্রেক করেছে। সেখানে পুনরায় নির্বাচনের দাবি তুলেছে তৃণমূল। তবে সামগ্রিক ভাবে নির্বাচন কমিশনের ডুমিকা নিয়ে এ দিন রাত পর্যন্ত কোনও নেতিবাচক কথা শোনা যায়নি বিরোধী কোনও দলের কাছেই। এই প্রসঙ্গে চূপ থেকেছেন সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক বিমান বসুও। নিন্দা-প্রশংসা কিছুই করেননি তিনি।

এ দিন প্রথম দফা ভোটের পরে স্টার আনন্দ-আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকার বুথ ফেরত সমীক্ষা অনুযায়ী বামফ্রন্টের প্রাপ্ত ভোট ৫৭ শতাংশ। তৃণমূলের ২৫ শতাংশ এবং কংগ্রেসের ৯.৪ শতাংশ। অন্যদের ভাগে গিয়েছে ৮ শতাংশ ভোট। তবে আসন সংখ্যার বিচারে এ দিন তিন জেলার যে ৪৫টি কেন্দ্রে ভোট হয়েছে গত লোকসভা নির্বাচনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে তাতে বামফ্রন্টের আসন সামান্য হলেও কমেছে। বুথ-ফেরত সমীক্ষা অনুযায়ী তারা হারাচ্ছে তিনটি আসন। বাড়ছে কংগ্রেস—১ থেকে ৩। তৃণমূল থেকে যাচ্ছে একই জায়গায়।

তবে ২৯৪টি আসনের সামগ্রিক হিসাবে বামফ্রন্টের শতকরা ভোটের ভাগ প্রথম দফার তুলনায় কিছুটা কমে যাওয়ার ইঙ্গিত দিচ্ছে এ দিনের বুথ ফেরত সমীক্ষা। ফ্রন্টের প্রথম দফার ৫৭ শতাংশ কমে ৫০-এ দাঁড়াতে পারে। তৃণমূলের ২৫ শতাংশ বেড়ে হতে পারে ২৯। কংগ্রেসও প্রায় ৫ শতাংশ বেড়ে পেতে পারে ১৪ শতাংশ ভোট। আর অন্যদের ক্ষয় সব থেকে কম। ৮ থেকে নেমে ৭ শতাংশ।

তা হলে অনুন্নয়নের জিগির

"জনতাম কিছু হবে না।"

# Congress close to majority in Assam

J. Bredin (Blah)

RD 1

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll suggests a fragmented verdict

Sanjay Kumar, Rajeeva L. Karandikar, Sandhya Goswami and Yogendra Yadav

**NEW DELHI:** Assam appears headed for an Assembly election verdict in which no single party or combination would have a majority in the newly elected Assembly. However, the Congress appears to be close to forming a government.

A divided Opposition and a moderately positive record of governance have helped the Congress forge ahead of its rivals. But a substantial drop in its popularity may stop it well short of the majority mark. The AGP has managed to recover from its split and staged something of a comeback, but not enough to catch up with the Congress even if the BJP were to join hands with it.

The Hindu-CNN-IBN Poll suggests that this could be one of the most fragmented verdicts ever to come from Assam. The poll was conducted in 260 locations spread over 65 Assembly constituencies. A total of 6,194 electors of the State were interviewed in this poll. A post-poll survey was conducted for the areas that went to the polls on April 3. The constituencies in the second phase of elections were covered with an exit poll.

If the poll findings are translated in terms of seats, the Congress is likely to win between 52 and 60 seats, short of the majority mark of 64. The party is likely to lose more than 10 seats from its tally of 71 in the last elections. The AGP is likely to improve its tally a little from the 20 seats it won last time to end up with 25 to 31 this time. The BJP is also likely to improve slightly and is likely to end up with 10 to 15

## THE FORECAST

	ESTIMATED SEATS 2006	SEATS IN 2001	PROJECTED VOTE SHARE 2006	CHANGE FROM 2001
<b>CONGRESS</b>	<b>52-60</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>-8.75</b>
<b>AGP+</b>	<b>25-31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>+ 0.9</b>
<b>BJP</b>	<b>10-15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>+1.7</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>28-35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>+ 6.1</b>

Note: Figures for 2001 follow current alliances. Figures for vote change in last column in percentage points

seats. But even if the AGP and the BJP were to join hands, they are far short of the numbers for government formation.

The election is expected to throw up an unprecedented number of 'others' in the new Assembly. The number could be between 28 and 35, or more. They could become pivotal players in the formation of a new government in Assam. The 'others' here include many small formations like the two factions of the BPPF, the ASDC, the CPI (ML), the minority front AUDF and, of course, a number of Independents. The Congress has seats adjustment with one faction of the BPPF. Many others among these small players may not be unwilling to cut a deal with the Congress. Therefore the ruling party remains a front-runner in government formation.

### Clear lead in round 1

The poll suggests that the Congress established a clear, almost comfortable lead in the first round of elections held mainly in upper Assam and the Barak Valley. But indications from the second round of polling held in the constituencies of lower Assam suggest the picture is fragmented. Many constituencies witnessed multi-polar con-

tests that are very difficult to predict. The Opposition and the smaller players are expected to gain a majority of seats in the second round of the polls. This has stopped the Congress' march to a clear majority.

The Congress is expected to get about 31 per cent votes, a big loss of about 9 percentage points since the last Assembly elections.

The AGP is expected to add 1 point to its vote share to reach 22 per cent this time. The BJP's estimated vote share of about 11 per cent is a substantial decline from the votes it managed to get in the last Lok Sabha elections. For a party wanting to emerge as the second force in Assam politics, this is bad news. The break-away Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive) led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta appears to have made little impression on the voter and is likely to end with a miniscule share of the vote.

The above losses are gains for others. More than one-third of the voters have opted for smaller political parties and Independents. This marks a major shift in Assam's politics. With this election the process of political fragmentation and ethnic polarisation that began in Assam in 1985 seems to have reached its culmination.

# ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006

## 'Pragmatism, not opportunism'

The firebrand politician and orator from Kallangipatti, in southern Tamil Nadu, has raised another storm this time by shifting his alliance from the DMK to the AIADMK. In this interview with S. Vijay Kumar, in Karur recently, Vaiko not only justifies his alliance with Ms. Jayalalitha, but is confident that the AIADMK will win an absolute majority in the May 8 Assembly elections. Excerpts from the interview:

### Q&A

VAIKO

**There is criticism from DMK quarters to the effect that you have become an opportunist?**

The DMK was born out of sacrifice of the hard-core rank and file in the DMK. Twelve years ago, when I was charged with a murder conspiracy, lakhs of DMK cadres

revolted against the high command to protect me. The same cadres have now realised that our party will be sabotaged and ditched by a determined hidden agenda of the DMK. They were unequivocal that we should align with the AIADMK. In 1976, hundreds of DMK cadres were detained under MISA and two even lost their lives. In less than three years, the DMK forged an alliance with the Congress. The DMK sent feelers to the Congress while enjoying the fruits of Ministry in the Vajpayee Government. This is the worst form of opportunism and treachery. Our stand is totally justified. We have aligned with the AIADMK not for selfish interests. This is pragmatism, not opportunism.

**Have you compromised on your ideology by aligning with the AIADMK?**

There is no compromise on our ideology. The alliance is only an understanding to



**The DMK will stoutly defend Jayalalitha's party and her Government with all its might.**

achieve a common goal in the larger interests of the State.

**But the AIADMK has differences on implementation of the Sethusamudram project?**

We have included the implementation of the Sethusamudram project in our election manifesto. While Anna and Kamaraj raised their

voice for the Sethusamudram project, it was only MGR who passed a resolution in the Assembly. The Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, made an effective speech in the Rajya Sabha for carrying out the project. Of course, she is concerned about the environmental aspects and the welfare of fishermen. It is important that the interests of fishermen are

protected. Environmental issues can be discussed and sorted out. Mr. Karunanidhi cannot claim any credit for the Sethusamudram project. Although he was Chief Minister for four terms, he never took up the demand with the then Prime Ministers.

**And on the linking of rivers project?**

I have been advocating the importance of the linking of rivers scheme as a panacea for the country. Excepting the DMK, all parties spoke in favour of the Bill [on linking rivers] introduced by me in the Lok Sabha. It was because of my persuasion that the project was included in the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government. Ms. Jayalalitha is very emphatic about the implementation of the project. We will work together.

**You and eight other DMK members were detained under POTA. Have you demanded your release from**

its case?

POTA was launched by the BJP Government. It was a mistake that we continued in the Ministry even after the arrest and detention. I came out on bail and not because of any help from Mr. Karunanidhi. I have not made any request [relating to], or discussed, the POTA case with the Chief Minister. Though I made vehement attacks politically against Ms. Jayalalitha, she has never used harsh words against me.

**What will be the DMK's nature of support after the elections? Will any party get absolute majority?**

I am of the firm opinion that the AIADMK will get an absolute majority and form the government. In case that does not happen, we will support them without taking part in the Ministry. There will be no room for horse-trading. The DMK will stoutly defend Ms. Jayalalitha's party and her Government with all

its might.

**How is your equation with Ms. Jayalalitha?**

In 1984-85, we were in the Rajya Sabha sharing the same bench. We were very friendly and she used to appreciate my work in Parliament. During 1998 also, we were allies. She has always been cordial and affectionate to me. She has the patience to listen to others' views.

**Mr. Karunanidhi has denied your charge that the DMK included four DMK MPs in its list to get more berths in the Cabinet.**

This is a serious charge I have made against Mr. Karunanidhi. After prolonged silence, he has denied it. But, no denial has come from New Delhi.

**Do you believe there are no permanent friends or foes in politics?**

Yes, I do. There are no permanent enemies but only permanent interests.

### POLL POURRI

#### The binding factor

What do Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam have in common? For one, they have had Assembly elections at the same time since 1991. This is the fourth time the three States will go to the Assembly polls together. For another, Governments in these States have been formed by one of two principal political formations. Kerala has alternated between the Congress-led United Democratic Front and the Left Democratic Front; in Assam, it has been the Congress or the Asom Gana Parishad; and in Tamil Nadu, it has been the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

#### Up, up and away

With the election scene hotting up in Tamil Nadu ahead of the Assembly elections on May 8, party leaders and functionaries on the campaign trail are looking for a quick way to get around. And Air Deccan is hoping to cash in on the demand. The Bangalore-based low cost carrier has a fleet of helicopters, with seating capacity ranging from 5 to 12, which it says can do the job. Capt. G.R. Gopinath, Managing Director of Air Deccan, says his helicopters are already doing election duty in Assam and Kerala. "We are waiting for the call. Air Deccan offers tariffs by the hour or day. We are well-equipped to air lift political leaders, especially those with high security risk. The choppers can land in and take-off from play grounds making it easy for party candidates and leaders to reach remote areas in any constituency," he says.

**A list gone awry**  
Naming candidates for some constituencies has turned out to be a confusing and difficult task for the BJP. In the process, it even named a candidate for a non-existing constituency. The list of candidates released by the party headquarters in Delhi as well as the State headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram named Ramachandran Anchukunnu as the candidate for 'Manandavady' constituency. No such constituency exists in the Election Commission's list - the place falls under the North Wayanad constituency. Several candidates in the list did not file their nominations, citing health as the reason. But the actual reasons ranged from police warrants outstanding against them to factionalism in the party. Some could not manage to secure the required documents to file the nominations. The BJP was left scrambling to find alternatives at the last minute. The party allocated four seats to its ally, the Janata Dal (United). But neither the BJP State president nor the party office knows who the JD (U) candidates are though the last dates for filing of nominations are over. The State president himself admitted this on Friday.

(Contributed by T. Ramakrishnan, T.S. Shankar and Roy Mathew).

### Captain's man in Tiruchi

#### IN THE FRAY

A.D. SENDHURESWARAN



Constituency: Tiruchi II

Electoral politics may be a completely different ball game, but A.D. Sendhureswaran isn't fazed by it. The 36-year-old basketball international is quietly confident about taking on his powerful political opponents in the Tiruchi II Assembly seat as a candidate of actor Vijaykant's newly-floated Desiya Murpokku Dravidar Kazhagam (DMDK).

"I have faced serious challenges as a basketball player. My long innings in the international level has toughened me and has given me the confidence to face and overcome any challenge. Though politics and electoral battles are totally new to me, I have jumped into the fray with confidence so as to serve society. 'Win and only win' is the motto of any sportsman, and it will stand me in good stead in this election", he says.

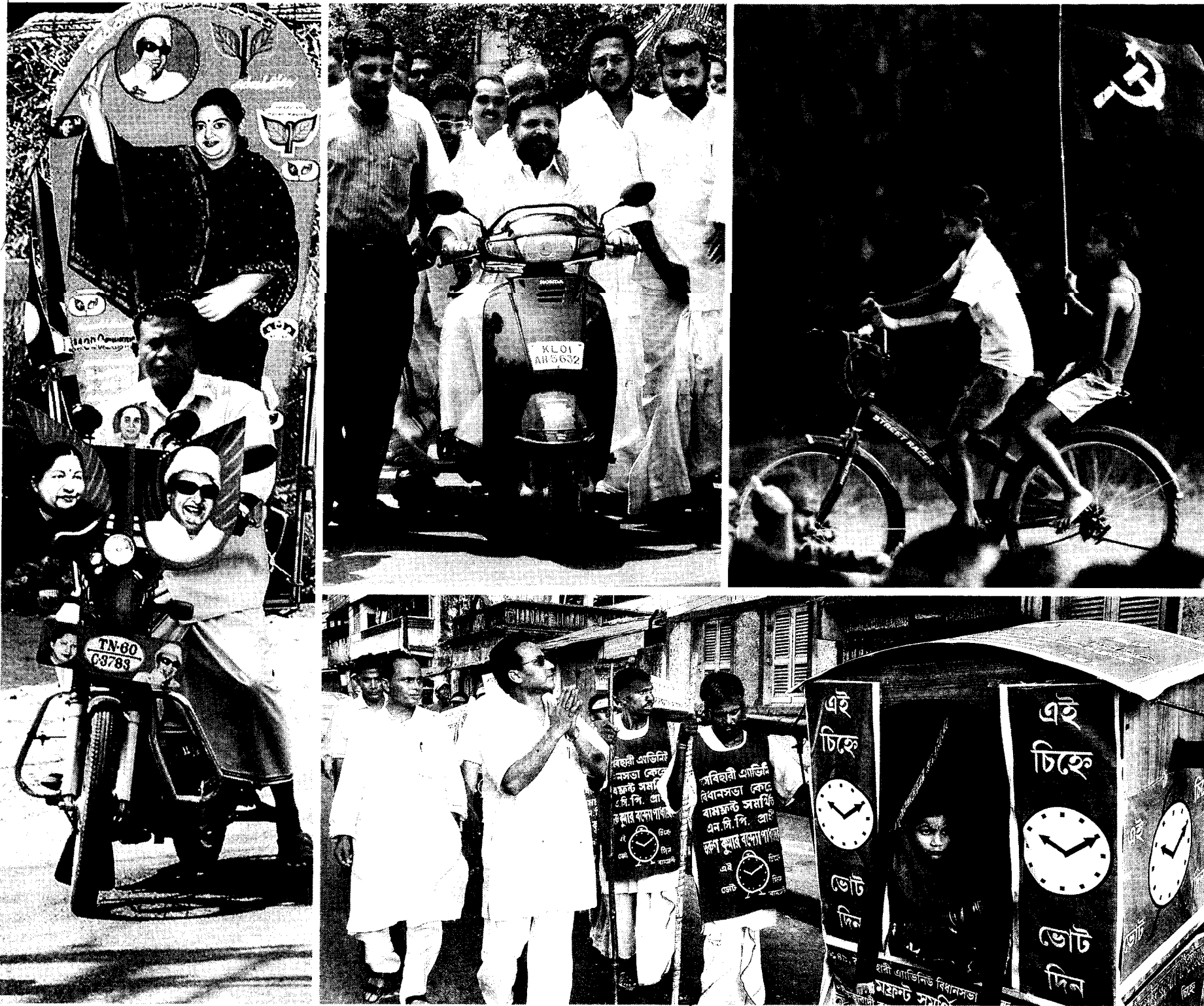
Sendhureswaran, who represented India for eight years (1989-97) as captain and player, also has the honour of ensuring the national basketball championship for the Tamil Nadu team for five years in a row from 2000.

His entry into politics was accidental. After the Madurai conference, when 'Captain' Vijaykanth launched his political outfit, he was attracted by the actor's commitment to serve the people. The 'Captain' had a lot of interest in sports and when both met up, they found they had many things in common. "We both had the same wavelength. I wanted to take the plunge into politics and I thought the new political outfit with its mass base would be the best option. I immediately joined the party".

"When 'Captain' wanted me to fight the elections from the Tiruchi II constituency, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands. I am confident of a win here, as the party has a very wide network of effective units at all levels. There is a big team of youngsters to do the campaigning and woo the voters," says Sendhureswaran. Sendhureswaran, son of the former IAS officer, A. N. Dyaneswaran, is not alien to Tiruchi. "My father hails from Arasangudi village near Tiruverumbur and my paternal grandmother was a doctor here. I have lots of relatives in the district."

SYED MUTHAAR SAOAF

### Ticket to ride Transporting the campaign



Some of the modes of transport adopted for the election. PHOTOS: K. V. SRINIVASAN, S. GOPAKUMAR, RITU RAJ KONWAR AND SUSHANTA PATRONOBISH

## In West Bengal, the Left plays the industry card

The Left Front's poll plank highlights industrial gains as economic issues take centre stage, says INDRANI DUTTA

For many decades, intimidated by the combination of a Left government and perceived labour militancy, private industry steered clear of West Bengal. In these years, the State was known more for its gains on the farm front. Elections, then, were fought and won in the State on other issues: land reforms, agricultural policy, social welfare.

In a sign of the changing times, industrialisation and infrastructure development are now poised to feature prominently in the run-up to the Assembly elections in West Bengal. That may not come as a big surprise; but what's surprising is the manner in which matters such as shifting patterns of land use, job generation and income

augmentation are becoming issues that may take centre stage in the battle-of-the-ballot.

Corporate majors within the country as well as multinationals are now singing hosannas to the State's leadership and this is the image that will be publicised in the elections. The image is that of an industry-friendly and 'preferred destination' State, which the West Bengal Government has painstakingly rebuilt over the last few years, since the announcement of the new industrial policy in 1994 by the Jyoti Basu government.

The combined effect of a growing internal market and increased purchasing power (especially in the rural areas), coupled with the State's pool of skilled workers and

### POLL THEME

INDUSTRIALISATION

its location gives West Bengal an edge which the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee Government has now begun capitalising on, aggressively, wooing private capital - both domestic and FDI - to turn round the State's industrial fortunes.

Thus, construction of major roads, setting up of new townships, increased power generation with improved transmission, granting of special incentives for investment in backward areas, form part of the CPI (M) poll plank.

Alongside, the State Government is also trying to re-fashion its position to project the picture of a State, which is now consolidating on the gains made on the rural front while looking ahead to build an industrialised State. In line with an earlier slogan coined by the State industry department to hard sell the 'State - Destination Bengal' - it is a Bengal where farm outputs are high and land reforms are in place. 'Agriculture is our foundation and industry is the way ahead' says a new slogan painted on State buses and trams.

With land reforms being the basic tenet, the West Bengal Government has sought to dovetail the improved rural scenario with

the increased demand for industrial goods (rural markets is the mantra of multinationals too). Industrial projects, for which foundations stones were laid in the days before the announcement of the poll schedule, stress the rural market for products rolling out of the factories.

For decades, West Bengal has been the country's top producer of food grains such as paddy besides some varieties of vegetables.

Many feared that agro-production and the gains made would take a hit due to the aggressive pace of industrialisation. But statistics show that although the area under cultivation of some crops has dropped slightly, the yield has been higher leading to increased production in the main crops like rice.

The State Government feels that these numbers could be jacked up further, so as to bring a balance between

production of staple crops and vegetables, fruits and flowers, which yield better value with good employment linkages too.

If the high-tech Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd was showcased during the last Assembly elections, this time round the emphasis is on setting up major manufacturing industries in the districts. Visible projects with sizeable employment potential, technical training institutes which would help train locals, improving their chances of finding jobs, obviously score over high-tech IT and service sector projects. Today, the Ambani brothers, the Tatas and overseas majors are all knocking on the doors of a State they had earlier given a go-by or at best, an askeance look.

The poll plank of the ruling Left Front thus highlights the industrial gains but seeks to put a human face to the process.

### GRAFFITI

Jana manassukale thottarinjukundu ini e kaserayil aru?

Which person who knows the mind of the people will occupy this chair?

The poser above a painting depicting the Secretariat at a busy junction in Thiruvananthapuram

### POCKET WATCH

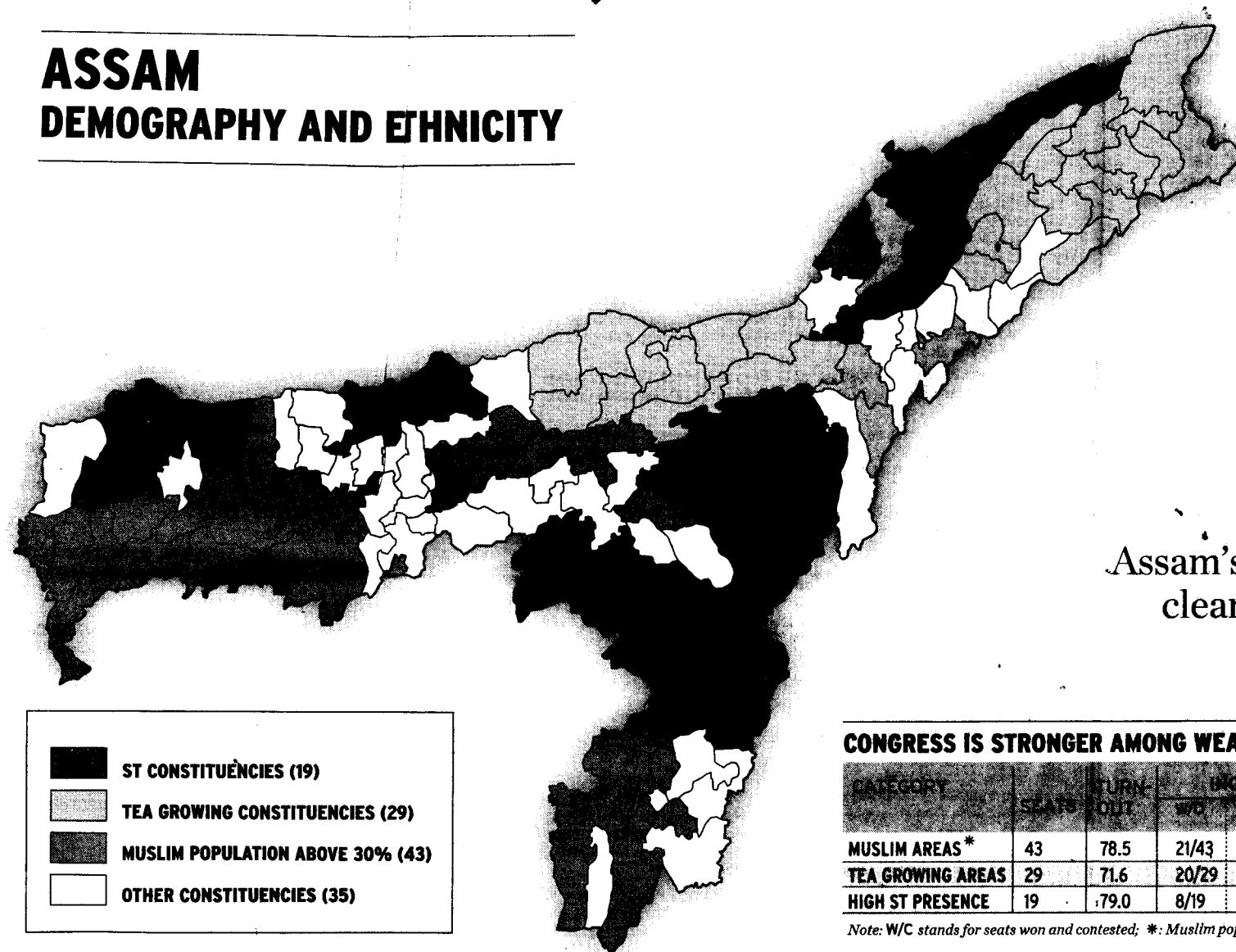


HE'S PROMISING. IF VOTED TO POWER, FREE COOKED FOOD AT THE DOORSTEP.



# ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2006

## ASSAM DEMOGRAPHY AND ETHNICITY



# An election too close to call

Assam's electoral history and existing ground realities provide no clear picture about the outcome of the Assembly elections, say YOGENDRA YADAV and SANJAY KUMAR in this analysis

### CONGRESS IS STRONGER AMONG WEAKER SECTIONS, EXCEPT ADIVASIS

CATEGORY	SEATS	TURN-OUT	CONGRESS		BJP		NCP		ASSAM		INDEPENDENTS		OTHERS			
			W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%		
MUSLIM AREAS*	43	78.5	21/43	36.6	9/31	22.3	3/14	9.3	3/27	4.0	0/0	0.0	4/163	17.9	3/79	9.9
TEA GROWING AREAS	29	71.6	20/29	49.6	6/17	23.9	2/13	11.6	0/15	1.9	0/0	0.0	1/73	8.4	0/45	4.7
HIGH ST PRESENCE	19	79.0	8/19	30.3	1/5	6.8	0/4	3.7	0/5	0.6	2/5	6.9	8/45	40.4	0/31	11.2

Note: W/C stands for seats won and contested; \*: Muslim population about 30%. Figures from 2001 Assembly elections. Source: CSDS Data Unit. Infographic: Surjit

With the first phase of elections over and the final phase scheduled for tomorrow, we still do not have a clear picture of the contest in the State. There are no reliable opinion or exit polls about this election to guide us. Yet a clear victory for the AGP can be ruled out. The AGP's best hope would be to match the Congress' seats in a hung assembly and forge a wider post-poll coalition than it has been able to do in the elections. The Congress appears to have an edge, but it is not clear if that can give it a clear majority in the Assembly.

A simple reading of Assam's electoral history in the last two decades shows a pattern of regime alteration with every election. It began with the landmark elections of 1985, following the Assam Accord the same year between the leaders of the Assam movement against foreign immigrants and the Government of India headed by Rajiv Gandhi. The Assam Gana Parishad, a new political outfit and a political expression of the Assam movement, succeeded in mobilizing its core Assamese speaking constituency in a big way and won a clear majority. The next elections were held six years later, in 1991, following another short period of disturbance and President's rule. The Congress managed to come to power this time, taking advantage of a divided AGP. The AGP came back to power in 1996 by putting together a large coalition that included the Left and smaller political parties. But this AGP government, led again by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, proved very unpopular and was voted out unceremoniously in 2001 in favour of the Congress led by Tarun Gogoi.

Going by this simple logic, it should be the AGP's turn in the Assembly elections of 2006. But nothing can be more misleading than this simple-minded reading of history. Even the AGP's supporters would not claim that we are seeing another wave in favour of the party. This long-term policy has a short term cost: it reduces the AGP's capacity to take on the Congress. If it was possible for the AGP and the BJP to pool their votes, their combined strength would have been adequate to take on the

State, though its vote share dropped to 35 per cent. The AGP won two seats, an improvement upon its disastrous shows in the previous Parliamentary and Assembly elections. The BJP also won 2 seats but finished second in terms of votes.

### AGP split

Since then the AGP has suffered a major split. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, one of the AGP's founders and a two-time Chief Minister, has left the party and floated the Assam Gana Parishad (Progressive), which is fielding 90 candidates in this election. The AGP had split earlier too and suffered because of that. This is arguably the most serious split the party has faced so far. It is true that Mahanta is not longer the icon of Ahomiy nationalism that he once was and had become a moral and political liability for the AGP by the time he was forced out of the party. It is therefore unlikely that his claims of being the real AGP will have much popular support. It is the parent party, led now by Brindaban Goswami, that looks all set to inherit the legacy of the AGP. In the long run, Mahanta's exit may be a blessing in disguise and might enable the party to rejuvenate itself. Yet, in this election Mahanta's candidates will inflict some damage to the AGP, especially in districts like Nagaon, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Darang and Hailakandi.

The effect of the split is compounded by the break-up of the AGP's alliance with the BJP. This was a short-lived alliance stitched together during the last Assembly elections, vigorously opposed within both the parties and not accepted by their voters. The alliance compromised the AGP's secular credentials and threatened to reduce its already small catchment area further by alienating Muslims of Assamese origin. Besides, in the long run the BJP was a rival to the AGP, not its ally. This may have prompted the AGP to opt for the two Communist parties' as smaller but older and more durable allies this time. This long-term policy has a short term cost: it reduces the AGP's capacity to take on the Congress. If it was possible for the AGP and the BJP to pool their votes, their combined strength would have been adequate to take on the

Congress; at present the AGP-led alliance is simply too small and fragile. It includes the CPI, the CPI (M), the SP and the ASDC (H). Too many 'friendly contests' among the partners reduces the effectiveness of this alliance. Mahanta's AGP has aligned with Nationalist Congress Party, a small force in this part of the North East, and a faction of the Bodo party. But none of these alliances appear very formidable.

Besides the short term factors like the party split and the break up of the alliance with the BJP, there is a long term factor that makes it difficult for the AGP to come back to power with a clear majority of its own. Ironically, this has to do with the success of the Assam movement. The politics of Ahomiy nationalism accentuated the anxieties of not just the majority Assamese speakers, but also of all other ethnic groups. Since then each ethnic group has sought to carve out an exclusive politics of its

own. This has led to the rise of many small, ethnicity based, political parties. The major parties have also defined their identity by appealing to specific social groups. The era of 'catch all' parties has given way to a political system based on 'social cleavages'. The last few elections have seen nearly 20 seats in a 126-member Assembly going to small parties and Independents. The AGP and the BJP have no presence in these seats, though the Congress has a chance of picking up some of them.

### No dominance

Since no single social group enjoys an overwhelming dominance in this State divided by linguistic, religious and tribal identities, it is very difficult to create a political majority. The AGP's Ahomiy nationalism has focused on the 'indigenous' Assamese speakers. But only 58 per cent of the population speaks Assamese, leaving a very large chunk of population inaccessi-

ble to the AGP. This includes the 22 per cent Bengali speakers and speakers of languages such as Bodo, Karbi, Rabha, Mishing and Hindi, etc that serve as markers of ethnic identity. Most of these small linguistic groups represent the 12 per cent Schedule Tribe population of the state. Then there are religious and community divisions that cut across the linguistic divide. Nearly one-third of the State population is Muslim (31 per cent, to be precise), which includes both local Assamese speakers and the 'immigrant Bengalis'. The AGP has had a fair share of support among the Assamese speaking Muslims, but this has declined of late. This is the AGP's basic dilemma in electoral politics: it is required to produce a political majority out of barely half of the State's electorate. This can happen in moments of extraordinary mobilization such as 1985 or with skillful coalition building as in 1996. It would be very hard to

replicate those conditions this time. The AGP's task is made much more difficult by the entry of the BJP in the last decade. If the AGP would like to polarize the State on linguistic line, the BJP is trying to do so on religious lines by playing up fears about the Muslim immigrants. If the AGP has the advantage of being able to access Assamese Muslims, the BJP has a special appeal among the Bengali Hindus. But both of them compete for the core Hindu Assamese vote. Earlier a nonentity in Assam politics, the BJP has paid a lot of attention to the State in the last decade and has improved its performance. It commands about 10 per cent of the votes in the Assembly elections and overtook the AGP to emerge as the second largest party in the last Lok Sabha elections. This time it is contesting all but one seat in the State and trying to occupy the second position in State politics as well. For the BJP, its best bet in the current

round of election lies in Assam. No wonder it has lined up all its political leaders and screen stars for campaigning. The BJP is a long-term problem for the Congress as well, but in this election the BJP will cut into the AGP votes and thus help the Congress.

### Wide appeal

This explains the edge the Congress appears to have in this election. The Congress is the only party in the State that can appeal to a cross section of the population. The Congress has a much larger pool of votes to draw upon compared to its rivals. In the years following the Assam Accord, Congress support among Assamese Hindus eroded sharply, rendering it into a party of the religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities. But in the last few elections, the Congress has improved its position among Assamese Hindus. It has traditionally had a strong hold over the tea garden workers who

constitute a big voting bloc in the upper Assam areas that went to polls in the first phase of elections. The Tarun Gogoi government has had a mixed record, but is certainly not as unpopular as the Mahanta-led AGP government was at the end of its tenure. Ongoing negotiations with ULFA may not have produced very much, but the very fact that these negotiations are on produces a climate of peace and hope that may work to the advantage of the ruling party.

It is still not clear how this edge for the Congress would translate in terms of seats. All the four Assembly elections held in the State since 1985 have been won with very thin majorities. In the last Assembly elections in 2001, a resurgent Congress contesting against a discredited AGP could not sweep the State; it won 71 seats, a clear majority but not the kind of majority this situation would have produced in any other Atate. This time it is going to be tougher for the Congress to repeat the performance, due to five years of incumbency and a resurgent AGP.

What makes the situation particularly difficult for the Congress is the possibility of a large-scale disaffection of Muslim voters. The IM(DT) Act, originally meant to deport illegal migrants, had become something of a shield for the immigrant communities, mainly Muslims. The rejection of the Act by the Supreme Court has made them feel vulnerable. The Central Government reacted, perhaps a little late, by making an Assam specific amendment in the Foreigners Act that provides the same safeguards against summary deportation as provided by IM(DT).

However the resentment among the Muslims has not subsided. This has given rise to a new political front, the AUIF that seeks to repeat the performance of United Muslim Front in the 1985 elections. The AUIF may not succeed in winning many seats on its own but has the potential to damage the Congress in half a dozen constituencies going to the polls tomorrow. If a significant section of Muslims move away from the Congress, the State would appear to be headed for a hung assembly and considerable political uncertainty.

The Congress appears to have an edge, but it is not clear if this can give it a clear majority in the Assam Assembly

### CONGRESS SUPPORT IS ACROSS COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITIES	LOK SABHA 2004		
	CONGRESS	BJP	AGP
Bengali speaking Hindu	24	50	10
Assamese speaking Hindu	22	19	36
Bengali speaking Muslim	72	08	09
Assamese speaking Muslim	52	07	21
Adivasis	22	24	09

Note: Figures from 2004 Lok Sabha elections and in %. Source: National Elections Study 2004, CSDS Data Unit.

### UPPER ASSAM IS A CONGRESS STRONGHOLD

REGION	TOTAL SEATS	TURN-OUT	CONGRESS		BJP		NCP		ASSAM		INDEPENDENTS		OTHERS			
			W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%	W/C	VOTE%		
BARAK VALLEY	20	70.84	08/20	34.27	01/5	6.21	04/12	19.40	00/7	0.42	02/5	7.31	02/103	15.92	03/38	16.46
LOWER ASSAM	50	78.33	25/50	35.00	07/36	20.79	01/10	3.72	03/26	4.30	0/0	--	14/144	28.80	00/87	7.38
UPPER ASSAM	56	73.56	38/56	46.48	12/36	24.21	3/24	11.37	0/29	1.47	0/0	--	03/146	11.51	00/82	4.97
Total	126	75.05	71/126	39.75	20/77	20.02	8/46	9.35	03/62	2.51	2/5	1.11	19/393	19.51	03/207	7.74

Note: W/C stands for seats won and contested; figures for 2001 Assembly elections; Source: CSDS Data Unit

# Amid the violence of statehood, a craving for peace



Karbis at the Baghmari relief camp in Diphu. PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

It is the ordinary Karbis and Dimasas who have suffered because of the mayhem

### SUSHANTA TALUKDAR

#### Diphu

"I solemnly declare that I shall dedicate myself to strive, through thick and thin, for the creation of an autonomous state for Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills till the end. I further declare that I shall not be lured by bribes or opportunism nor be disheartened by threat or intimidation till the autonomous State is created by the Government of India." This is the oath Karbi leaders took in English and in the Karbi lan-

guage on June 20, 1986, at a rally held at this headquarters town in central Assam's Karbi Anglong hill district. Twenty years later, it is time for Karbi and Dimasas politicians to renew their pledge as they vie for electoral supremacy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills. Thousands of Karbis and Dimasas have been displaced due to violence between the Karbi militant outfit, United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), and the Dimasa group, Dima Haram Daogah. The clashes

claimed 103 lives and rendered more than 75,000 homeless in October-November last. "The Congress stand on the issue is very clear. We have been demanding the creation of an autonomous State but we are also utilising the powers that we get till statehood is achieved. The CPI-ML and the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) have betrayed the people by reaching an understanding for more autonomy and compromised the cause of the movement," said Bidyasing Inglang of the Con-

gress, who is seeking re-election from Diphu. CPI-ML leader Jayanta Rongpi said, "If the Congress is sincere about the cause, what is stopping it from creating an autonomous State? They have Governments in Delhi, Dispur and also in Diphu." Temporary arrangement The ASDC also echoed Dr. Rongpi's allegations against the Congress. "Although we signed the MoU with Delhi and Dispur for more powers to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council

and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, we agreed to it only as a temporary arrangement," said Chomang Kro of the ASDC. "The UPDS has been demanding a separate State for the Karbis that includes areas inhabited by the Dimasas. The DHD has been demanding a separate State of Dimaraji that includes areas of Karbi Anglong. As they have been trying to establish supremacy over the demanded territories, ordinary Karbi and Dimasa villagers have suffered the most. In the

past, the Karbis and the Dimasas never fought each other. But today we are afraid to go to each other's village," said Paresh Bey, who lives in the Baghmari relief camp in Diphu. He said the 2,690 inmates had not been provided rations by the authorities for the past month. The feelings were echoed by Deben Maibongsha, who lives in a Dimasa relief camp near Manja. For the victims of violence, peace may take preference over Statehood when they cast their votes on April 10.



# It's EC versus the CPM

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, April 5

WHAT TILL the other day was unspoken though, barely concealed mistrust of each other, is now a full-blown war. There was enough tension between the CPI(M) and the Election Commission (EC) ever since the latter ordered staggered polls for the state. Things only got worse as the EC kept piling restriction upon restriction on parties in the fray.

On Wednesday, the conflict came out in the open with battle raging on at least three fronts. The EC came down heavily on CPI(M) heavyweights and transport minister Subhas Chakrabarty, lodging an FIR against him at Lake Town police station for threatening, intimidating and obstructing public servants from carrying out their duty. Also, in Keshpur, West Midnapore, it ordered a series of raids by central security forces on Tuesday night

## BATTLEGROUND

### KOLKATA EC lodges FIR against

Subhas Chakrabarty for threatening and intimidating public servants from carrying out their duties

**WEST MIDNAPORE** EC sends central forces to raid CPI(M) party offices

**SOUTH 24-PARGANAS** CPI(M)-ruled KMC refuses to provide district with facilities for poll personnel

on party offices of the CPI(M). District magistrate Dushmant Nariala said the raids had been ordered by poll observer M.K. Singh who had received complaints from the Keshpur Trinamool candidate, Ashis Pramanik, that the CPI(M) had stocked up arms inside its offices.

The Left-ruled KMC, in turn, turned down the South-24-Parganas DM's request that the corporation supply water and other basic amenities to polling officials. Mayor Bikash Bhattacharyya said, "Our first priority is to provide water to our citizens. We will supply water to polling personnel only if we have water in excess".

The CPI(M), which despite its displeasure at some EC measures, had been sulking in silence, issued a strongly worded statement, calling the EC's action in Keshpur "one-sided, unnecessary, undemocratic, autocratic and biased".

Asked to comment on the FIR against Subhas, CPI(M) state secretary Biman Bose said, "We are seeking legal opinion. Let the EC function in its own way, the law will take its own course". On the West Midnapore raids, he said the EC should restrain the election observers from ordering such action.

State chief electoral officer Debasish

Sen, the man who lodged the FIR against Subhas on the EC's behalf, admitted that the minister could not be barred from contesting the polls, unless convicted for violation of the code of conduct. But the sections (186, 189 and 506) under which the FIR was filed expose the minister — if convicted — to a prison term of up to two years, or a fine or both. The charges, EC officials said, were grave: obstructing public servants from performing their duties, issuing threats and making remarks that amount to criminal intimidation. "The police have been told to investigate and do the required proceedings, including prosecution," Sen said. Some video clips, showing Subhas making disparaging statements against poll officials at a Lake Town rally in March, were submitted with the complaint. The operative parts of the clips show Subhas saying that some public servants were overstepping their limits.

03 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# 68 per cent polling recorded in Assam

65 of 126 constituencies covered in the first phase; rain affects voting in Guwahati

Special Correspondent

**GUWAHATI:** An estimated 68 per cent polling was recorded in the first phase of the Assembly elections in Assam on Monday. Polling took place in 65 of the 126 constituencies. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and 514 other candidates are in the fray.

Chief Electoral Officer J.P. Prakash told *The Hindu* that the polling passed off peacefully. He said repolling might be ordered in one or two booths where polling could not be held due to mishandling of the electronic voting machines.

One minor incident was reported of miscreants entering a polling station in Chabua constituency of Dibrugarh district and destroying an EVM.

## A dampener

Polling, which began on a moderate rate, slowed down due to rain but picked up in the afternoon after the sun reappeared.

The four constituencies in Guwahati witnessed a low turnout, with Dispur recording 45 per cent, Guwahati East 44 per cent, Guwahati West 42 per cent and Jalukbari recording a moderate 48.5 per cent till 5 p.m. It was raining in the city during the poll hours.

## Final figures awaited

Brisk polling was reported from Jonai (72 per cent), Dhemaji (70 per cent) and Sadiya (70 per cent) while the river island recorded 69 per cent. Final figures were still awaited from many polling stations.

## Heavy security

There was heavy security around the polling booths, with the Election Commission deploying 300 companies of paramilitary forces to ensure free and peaceful polling.

Mr. Gogoi is seeking re-election from the Titabor constituency. Other prominent candidates are: former Union Ministers Bijoya Chakrabarty (BJP) from Dispur, Birendra



**EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT:** Voters waiting for their turn at a booth at Panikhati in Assam on Monday. — PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Prasad Baishya (AGP) from Guwahati East, PCC president and former Industry Minister Bhubaneswar Kalita from Rangiya, Cabinet Ministers Anjan Dutta, Bharat Narah, Hemoprova Saikia, Ministers of State Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) president and businessman-turned-politician Maulana Ba-

daruddin Ajmal.

## “Code violation”

New Delhi Special Correspondent reports:

Deputy Election Commissioner R. Bhattacharya told reporters here on Monday that the Commission was looking into the BJP's complaint that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had

violated the Model Code of Conduct by announcing a Rs. 602 crore package for Assam.

## CPI(M) complaint

On the CPI(M) complaint on West Bengal polls, R. Balakrishnan, Deputy Commissioner said that all the issues addressed in the petition had been answered. The petition presented to the

Commission related to deletion of names from the voters lists; complaints against few observers; deployment of forces and powers of Commission on cancellation of polls on the counting day. He said the Commission was acting as per the guidelines and all these matters would be sorted out.

To a question on filing a spe-

cial leave petition in the Supreme Court against a judgment of the Madras High Court in the issue relating to the transfer of Chennai Police Commissioner R. Nataraj, Deputy Commissioner Anand Kumar said the judgment was being examined and a decision on filing an appeal would be taken in a day or two.

THE HINDU

04 APR 2006

# Left objects to Central forces in poll booths

Protests other measures in West Bengal

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** Left parties on Monday petitioned the Election Commission against the deployment of Central paramilitary forces inside polling booths of West Bengal and the ban on posters and wall-writing in the State.

In a memorandum to the Commission, the parties also questioned the conduct of some poll officials and the deletion of names of bonafide voters, including some of their own sitting and former members of Parliament, from the electoral rolls.

Briefing mediapersons later, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Prakash Karat said the parties registered their opposition to the decision to hand over the entire security arrangement within the polling premises to electoral authorities with the State Government only being informed about their decisions. Besides Mr. Karat, others who formed part of the delegation were CPI national secretary D. Raja, Revolutionary Socialist Party leader Abani Roy and Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M).

"Given the fact that a large number of security forces from outside the State will be exclusively responsible for maintenance of law and order within the poll premises, communication [given the language barrier] may become a major problem," the Left parties noted in their memorandum. In turn, they demanded that specific guidelines be issued to allow the State police to play a coordinating role in handling any untoward incidents.

## 'Uncalled for'

The Left parties are also particularly peeved at the Commis-

• "Security forces from outside the State may lead to communication problem"

• "The basis for ascertaining booth-capturing is not clear."

sion's ban on wall-writings and use of posters and banners in any public or private place in the whole of West Bengal. Describing the ban as "uncalled for," the Left parties noted that this had resulted in the denial of a cheap mode of campaign for political parties. Also, according to Mr. Karat, this could well raise election expenditure.

Further, they have questioned the manner in which genuine voters had been struck off the electoral rolls by terming them Bangladeshis. Though the Commission is said to have conceded that some genuine names had been dropped, Mr. Karat said it had at first expressed inability to make amends on the premise that it was too late in the day for that. However, at Monday's meeting, the Left parties secured an assurance from the Commission that instructions would be issued to include such cases in the electoral rolls, he said.

Another issue that they raised at the meeting pertained to the Commission's guideline that allows an observer to stop counting of votes if in his/her opinion booth-capturing had taken place at a large number of polling stations.

The opinion of the Left parties is that the basis for ascertaining booth-capturing is not "clear, transparent and self-explanatory" and, therefore, could be open to subjective interpretation.

# Left no to Central forces in WB booths

SANTWANA BHATTACHARYA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

**I**N A petition to the Election Commission raising concerns that go beyond the current series of Assembly polls, the Left parties have objected to posting of only Central Paramilitary Forces in West Bengal polling stations contending it would lead to communication problems.

"Given that a large number of security forces from outside the state will be exclusively responsible for maintenance of law and order at polling stations, communication may become a major problem, given the language barrier," said CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat, along with CPI's D Raja and RSP's Abani Roy. Asserting that maintenance of law and order was an exclusive state subject, they said deployment of paramilitary forces from outside the state can affect smooth conduct of the elections. The delegation which met CEC BB Tandon today, mentioned this in the petition.

However, K Balakrishnan, the Deputy Election Commissioner in charge of Bengal elections told them, "The language was discussed and the Commission has clarified its position to the (Left) delegation. At every stage



Left party leaders Abani Roy, Prakash Karat and D. Raja at the CEC's office. PTI

there has been consultations with the state authorities." The EC recently decided to reduce use of state police in West Bengal elections, except for duties such as showing the way to poll personnel and patrolling outside the immediate periphery of polling stations.

This seemed to be a follow-up on Alzal Amanullah's report on West Bengal elections after the last general elections. The EC decided not to deploy state police, which was said to be highly unionised, near polling stations, and post

Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 1976, to the entire state, the Left leaders said this had "led to the denial of a cheap mode of campaign". With loud-speaker restrictions in place till April 13, they said candidates for the first phase (on April 17) were facing severe constraints in propagating election symbols, their names and other relevant information. It was also pointed out to the EC that Tamil Nadu, also going to polls, faced no such restrictions. To this, the EC officials reportedly said, "The EC has to work within the parameters of the state laws." On the electoral roll revision, the Left leaders, while seeking annual revision of rolls, alleged that Trinamool Congress and other opposition parties were attempting to delete names of genuine voters by furnishing "frivolous" and "motivated" information.

The situation is such that "anybody can accuse anybody of being a Bangladeshi and get that person eliminated from the list," Karat said, citing instances wherein names of some of CPI(M)'s senior leaders were deleted, including that of MP Alakesh Das and former MP Sudhir Giri. Another Lok Sabha MP Prasanta Pradhan was served a show-cause notice. The EC is said to have assured the leaders that these cases would be looked into.

CPMF jawans inside and outside polling stations instead. As in the last Bihar elections, each polling station would be under a commanding officer of the CPMF. The Left leaders urged the EC to give specific "guidelines" so that "the state police administration can play a coordinating role in overcoming any untoward incidents". Karat said, "How can they work without the help of the state and district administration?"

Also objecting to EC's decision to extend the Kolkata-centric West Bengal

06 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN





# EC cracks whip on Mahajan

Statesman News Service

## BJP to move poll panel against PM

NEW DELHI, April 2. — The Election Commission has reportedly directed the Assam chief electoral officer to file a case against BJP leader Mr Pramod Mahajan and others for conducting a press conference after the end of the campaign yesterday.

The Commission has asked the CEO to order the District Election Officer of Kamrup district to file the case under provisions of the Representation of People Act against Mr Mahajan and organisers of the press conference.

The EC held the view that holding a press conference after the close of campaign amounted to holding a public meeting, which is prohibited under the Act.

After seeing the report received from the CEO that Mr Mahajan had addressed the press conference after the end of the campaign, the Commission passed the order.

### No violation of Act: Mahajan

Later in a statement, Mr Mahajan said he had not violated the model code of conduct as he had not canvassed for any candidate of Guwahati, or for that matter, any candidate figuring in the first

GUWAHATI, April 2. — The Assam unit of the BJP today decided to move the Election Commission on the alleged violation of the election code of conduct by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. According to the party's North-east in charge, Mr V Satish, this decision was taken after Dr Singh "mentioned" an economic package at an election rally in Karbi Anglong district today. Party activists tonight staged a dharna in front of the Kamrup deputy commissioner's office to register their protest and submitted a memorandum addressed to the President and the Chief Election Commissioner. — PTI

phase of polling.

"It cannot tantamount to holding a public meeting... this cannot be called campaigning," he said adding that since Guwahati is the state capital, leaders of different political parties visit the town and interact with the media. Mr Mahajan said he was yet to receive the notice and that he would reply appropriately.

See also page 3

02 APR 2008

THE STATESMAN

# Abjure violence, Mammohan Singh tells youth

MD  
 9.5.2006  
 C. Neta

First phase of elections in Assam begins today



**POLL PREPAREDNESS:** Electronic voting machines being checked by officials in Guwahati on Sunday, the eve of the first phase of Assembly elections in Assam. — PHOTO: REUTERS

Sushanta Talukdar

**GUWAHATI:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday appealed to "misguided youth" in Assam to abjure violence and return to the mainstream. He said violence in the State affected the entire north-east.

The Prime Minister was addressing an election rally at Tezpur for the second phase of polling scheduled for April 10.

The first phase, covering 65 constituencies, is to be held on Monday.

Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, who is seeking re-election from Titabor, PCC president Bhubaneswar Kalita and president of the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) Maulana Badaruddin Ajmal are among the prominent leaders contesting in the first phase.

Maulana Ajmal is contesting from Jamunamukh in Nagaon district for the first phase and from South Salmara in the second phase.

Chief Electoral Officer J.P. Prakash told reporters that more than 60,000 personnel deployed for the first phase have reached their destinations. Altogether, 92,07,512 voters would decide the fate of 515 candidates, including 38 women candidates, on Monday. Of the 9,723 polling stations, 3,227 have been identified as sensitive and 1,719 as hyper-sensitive, for which adequate security arrangements have been made.

- Manmohan campaigns for second phase
- First phase to cover 65 constituencies
- A total of 515 candidates in fray

## Progress and development

Urging the people to vote for the Congress, Dr. Singh said at the Tezpur rally that the party, under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, had been successful in bringing about progress and development in Assam and other States where it was in power.

He said the schemes under the Bharat Nirman Yojana initiated by the United Progressive Alliance Government would help solve the unemployment problem and ensure development of both rural and urban areas.

Earlier, while addressing a rally at Donkamokam in the

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has fielded candidates in all 65 constituencies, the Congress in 64, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in 54, and the AGP (Progressive) in 48.

The Nationalist Congress Party is contesting in 25 constituencies, the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) in 28, the CPI (M) in 8 and the CPI in seven.

Algapur in Barak valley has the highest number of candidates (25), while Titabor, from where Mr. Gogoi is seeking re-election, has only four candidates, the lowest.

Karbi Anglong hills district, Dr. Singh stressed on the need for connecting remote villages of the district with better roads.

## PMO's denial

PTI adds:

The Prime Ministers' Office on Sunday night denied that any package was announced by Dr. Singh during his electioneering in Karbi Anglong district hit by ethnic violence. The Prime Minister's media adviser, Sanjaya Baru, refuted any such announcement. "This is factually incorrect," he said.

"The Prime Minister was in Assam and met representatives of the autonomous district council of Karbi Anglong and received a memorandum submitted by them.

"The Prime Minister did not make any announcement that contravenes election laws," he added.

## Congress surrendering to immigrants: Advani

**BATADRABA (ASSAM):** BJP leader L. K. Advani on Sunday accused the Congress of "surrendering" to the immigrants on the issue of infiltration into Assam.

Addressing a poll rally at Kopahara in Batadraba Assembly constituency, he said that the Congress had promised it would not

compromise on illegal immigration, but in fact surrendered to the immigrants for the sake of votebank politics.

"By amending the Foreigners' Act, the Congress has in fact, brought in the IMDT Act, which was scrapped by the Supreme Court, through backdoor," he said.

Mr. Advani in his brief speech also accused the Congress of not delivering good governance and accused it of "destroying" the country. He claimed the BJP-led NDA Government had ensured good governance and initiated several projects to develop infrastructure and economy of the country. — PTI

# LDF dumps two tainted candidates

HT Correspondent

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2

FORMER STATE transport minister Neelalohithadasan Nadar (JD-Secular), convicted in two sexual harassment cases and former MLA Antony Raju, who was charge-sheeted in a case recently, are out of the Left Democratic Front candidates' list.

Briefing newsmen on Sunday, LDF convener Paloli Muhammedkutti said all coalition partners agreed to avoid controversial candidates. "Their respective parties would decide about it and announce replacements soon," the LDF convener said.

Ignoring popular sentiments, the JD (S) had retained Nadar, who is facing one-year imprisonment for sexually assaulting senior IAS officer Nalini Netto and another three months' jail for harassing IFS officer Prakruti Srivastava, for Kollam seat. Many women organisations and social activists had threatened to campaign against him.

## KERALA VOTES

Similarly, Kerala Congress (Joseph) decision to field Antony Raju from Thiruvananthapuram West had caused enough heartburn in the LDF camp. Raju, who was charge-sheeted recently, is facing serious charges of tampering with evidence in a sensational drug smuggling case.

A counsel for an Australian drug-peddler, he was accused of tampering with the main piece of evidence — Australian's underwear — facilitating the foreigner's acquittal. The high court has reopened the case recently.

## CPI(M) to fight 91 seats, leaves 49 to allies

With the successful completion of the seat-sharing exercise in the LDF in Kerala, the CPI(M) and its independents will contest 91 seats, while the front partners will share the remaining 49.

The CPI — the second largest partner in the front — will field candidates in 24 seats, while the Janata Dal-S will contest in eight. The Kerala Congress-J will get six, RSP four, NCP two, INL three and Kerala Congress-S and Congress-S one each.

The CPI(M), on its own, will contest 84 seats — eight more than last time. While it fielded four independents in the last poll, seven persons are in the fray this time, including IAS officer Alphonse Kannanthanam, who voluntarily retired from service recently.

Briefing reporters after an LDF meeting, Paloli Mohammed Kutty said the LDF had decided to support two ex-Muslim League leaders, K. T. Jaleel from Kuttippuram against IUML leader P.K. Kunhalikutty and PTA Rahim from Koduvalli against DIC-K president K. Muralaeeharan. CITU national leader P.K. Gurudasan will contest the Kollam seat.



Security personnel wait at Guwahati railway station on their way to voting centres on Sunday. The first phase of polling will be held on Monday.

# CPM secy waits for his chance

RAMESH Babu

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2

DURING A march crisscrossing the state two months back, Pinarayi Vijayan, the powerful state secretary of the CPI(M), received more memoranda than chief minister Oommen Chandy. Power at an arm's length, he did not spare anyone in his ambitious march. Leaders from all strata of life, the rich and powerful, rubbed shoulders with Pinarayi.

But even before his rally reached Thiruvananthapuram, his ambition fizzled out. Once rated as a best power minister of the state, he turned the worst overnight: A power scam during his tenure took the wind out

of his sails. His honeymoon with Karunakaran was cut short and his bete noire and Opposition leader V.S. Achuthanandan superseded him.

But this beedi roller's son from Pinarayi village (Kannur), who rose from the grassroots level, knows well how to strike back. He has a brute majority in the state committee and majority of the party candidates are his camp followers. He taught Achuthanandan a lesson by denying him a seat. An "available politiburo" was needed to ease his stiff posture.

Thanks to politiburo, Achuthanandan made an eleventh hour entry into the candidates' roll. But, as long as Pinarayi holds the party fort, Achuthanandan can only

dream of his long-cherished ambition.

An economics graduate from Brennan College, Thalassery, Pinarayi has made his agenda clear in the LDF manifesto. Unlike Achuthanandan, for him development is not a synonym for corruption. And he has no qualm in pointing out the communists' blunders of blocking tractors and smashing computers. He represents the modern face of the communists. For him, development and wealth creation go hand in hand. With two TV channels, multi-specialty hospitals and amusement park, he assiduously built a CPM Inc worth Rs 3,50,000 crore.

He is wounded, but not out. He is not the one to forgive so easily. Pinarayi is waiting for an opportunity.

# PM & Mahajan in code battle

RAHUL Karmakar

Guwahati, April 2

THE CONGRESS and the BJP were locked in a spat over violation of the model code of conduct on Sunday. The Election Commission pulled up BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan for violating the model code by addressing a Press conference after the deadline for campaign was over. The BJP, reacting to the EC move, charged that the Prime Minister himself violated the model code by promising largesse for victims of ethnic violence in Karbi Anglong.

The campaign for the first phase of poll, due on Monday, closed at 4 pm on Saturday. Mahajan addressed the Press in Guwahati at 10 am on Sunday. The EC asked the deputy commissioner of Kamrup to file a complaint against Mahajan and office bearers of the BJP's Assam unit for violation of the model code.

The BJP, on the other hand, led by its Assam unit president Indramani Bora, submitted a memorandum each to the DC Kamrup (Metropolitan) and the CEO late on Sunday evening, seeking action against the PM for "announcing a Rs 603-crore package" as a bait for voters in Karbi Anglong. The PM, while addressing a rally at Dongkamokam earlier on Sunday, apparently promised an economic package for rehabilitation of some 12,000 victims of ethnic riots in the hill district in the past six months.

■ "It's a violation of Representation of People Act," said the CEO, Assam.

■ The CEO referred the complaint to the EC.

The Assam PCC claimed the PM made no such announcement. The PMO also denied "contravention" of poll laws, saying the PM made no such announcement as was being alleged by some parties.

The first phase of polling in 65 of the 126 constituencies will be an acid test for the Congress. It will also decide if the minority-specific Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) will emerge as a major player in the state's political landscape.

## ASSAM VOTES



■ Campaign for first phase was over on Saturday. Mahajan addressed a Press meet in Guwahati on Sunday.

■ "It's a violation of Representation of People Act," said the CEO, Assam.

■ The CEO referred the complaint to the EC.

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 THE HINDUSTANIAN

# Election Commission vs State Government

## Judiciary shows the constructive path

V. Jayanth

**CHENNAI:** The Madras High Court has tossed the dispute over the transfer of the Chennai Police Commissioner, R. Nataraj, back to the Election Commission and the State Government, instructing them to find a solution through discussion.

The underlying message was that the two sides should show a more constructive spirit in resolving such sensitive issues involving senior officers.

The core issue, according to informed legal sources, relates to the power of the Election Commission to transfer officers involved in the electoral process before the election notification is issued.

The State Government sought an order on merit, on whether the Election Commission could order the transfer of a senior official before the notification and

without adducing any reasons for seeking the shift. The High Court seems to take the view that the power is absolute after the notification and makes it clear that the State Government has no role after that. Hence the advice to sit across the table and sort out the differences constructively.

Election Commission sources say that at the heart of the issue lies Article 324 (6) of the Constitution that grants absolute powers to the Commission in the conduct of the elections. It was accepted practice that the model code came into force on the date of announcement of the poll schedule, which this year was March 1.

These sources add that in the case of Tamil Nadu there was no problem as the election was on May 8 and on a single day.

A senior Election Commission official explains: "Take the

case of West Bengal. It has a five-phase election, and the poll will be notified on different dates. How can there be a case where some parts of a State come under the EC's purview because of the notification and others where it has not been issued? It is for such reasons that the date of announcement of the schedule is taken as the base for enforcement of the model code of conduct." To clinch this point, the EC may consider filing a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court.

The Tamil Nadu Government's basic argument was that the notification for the election becomes critical and till then the powers of the administration should not be taken away.

Aside from a couple of retired police officials, the Principal Secretary-Home filed a petition in the High Court. Even if it appears that the Government will

not be able to retain the same Commissioner unless the Election Commission is persuaded to change its mind, it might think it has earned a couple of bonus points.

It has now become clear that unless the State Government accepts and acts on the court's advice, the Chennai Police Commissioner will be transferred as soon as the notification is issued — on April 13. The State Government will then be asked to submit a panel of names from which the Commission will choose the successor.

An option before the State Government now is to effect a shift in consultation with the Commission, just to make a point about its own jurisdiction. If the two sides do not want to prolong the standoff, they must have an earnest dialogue in a constructive spirit to resolve the problem.

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01 APR 2006

THE HINDU



# EC bans convoys on poll day

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, March 19. — The spectacle of large convoys of cars or two wheelers may no longer be a common sight on the election eve or polling day.

New instructions given by the Election Commission today prevent convoys of pro-active political leaders from tearing around poll-bound areas beyond their assembly segments after 3 pm on 15 April when election campaigning stops.

What's more, candidates or the election agent will be restricted to using two cars or the same number of two wheelers on polling day, Mr Debasis Sen, chief electoral officer said today.

As for the long convoys during the campaign, the CEO said that permission has to be taken from the election officer for each vehicle. The permit has to be displayed on the windshield of the car, though not more than three cars can move around in a single convoy, he added.

The instructions preventing leaders from visiting areas beyond their assembly segments will hold good for the time period before each of the

polling days in this five phase elections as well as the election day itself. However, this restriction will not be applicable to the leaders to whom government does not provide security.

The movement of the leaders enjoying security will "presumably" be restricted within their assembly segment where they are voters even if they are MPs, Mr Sen said.

If his "presumption" is anything to go by, the movement of the MPs who enjoy the support of the voters in several assembly segments will not be travelling freely within this period.

Thus, the commission's instruction imply that movement of Miss Mamata Banerjee, Trinamul Congress supremo and Mr Amitava Nandy the CPI-M MP from Dum Dum, to name only a few who share a penchant for rushing to areas beyond their assembly segments "in aid of" their respective party workers will have to stay put on the polling day.

Instances can be cited from previous elections when the movement of such "mobile leaders" sparked off tension while they were ostensibly coming to the aid of their party workers.

20 MAR 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# EC cracks whip, first graffiti arrest in state

## Development funds freeze

### OUR BUREAU

**Calcutta/Suri, March 2:** The Election Commission today made it clear that no further wall writing would be allowed in the state.

Bengal's chief electoral officer (CEO) Debashis Sen said he would talk to the poll panel on how to deal with existing graffiti.

That the EC means business was evident from the arrest of four Trinamul Congress supporters in Suri town of Birbhum district, 230 km from Calcutta, in the early hours today. This is the first arrest in the state for writing graffiti. The Trinamul activists were caught red-handed by a night patrol while writing slogans on walls. They were, however, released on personal recognition bond later in the day.

Till yesterday afternoon, the state had the jurisdiction over matters relating to defacement of walls. But after the announcement of the poll schedule, the EC will enforce the West Bengal Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 1976. Also, the model code of

conduct comes into force.

A meeting was held at Writers' Buildings today to discuss the model code of conduct for ministers. The meeting was held in chief secretary Amit Kiran Deb's chamber and was attended by home secretary Prasad Ranjan Roy, inspector-general (law and order) Raj Kanojia, police commissioner Prasun Mukherjee and the CEO. Officials said enforcement of the ban on graffiti was also discussed.

The CPM had so far been saying it would only follow the EC's guidelines on poll graffiti because it considers the poll panel the supreme authority on election-related issues.

Left Front chairman Binoy Bose today iterated that the government may work accordingly to its agenda, while the party would take its own course. "Let the government do its work and the party would do whatever is required," said Bose, when asked whether the CPM would clean up walls smeared with graffiti.

Bose admitted that the law against defacement of property was a "stumbling block" to

his party's electoral campaign but that would not be a problem. "We have told our party workers to organise small meetings and undertake a door-to-door campaign," he said.

The CEO said today that the provisions under the 1976 law against defacement of walls would be enforced across Bengal. "The law is very strict and it will be implemented across the state," Sen said.

"There is no question of allowing fresh graffiti and the EC is now empowered to deal with the issue as poll schedules have been announced. As for walls which have already been defaced, we will talk to the EC and I hope to get a clarification from the poll panel."

He added that the commission had issued a circular in July 2005 saying the state act on prevention of defacement of walls may be implemented. This time too, the state government issued a notification on February 23 banning wall writing across the state.

However, after the notification was issued, the CPM said it would only go by the EC's directive on the issue.

### MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

- Ministers not to lay foundation stones for projects, participate in inauguration ceremonies or give assurances to people
- New projects cannot be undertaken
- Work orders for new projects not permitted
- Special repairs not permitted
- New financial grants not allowed
- Ad hoc appointments not allowed
- Fresh allocation from MPLAD fund not permitted
- Officers associated with poll work cannot be transferred without EC permission



### OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, March 2:** The Election Commission has directed the Centre and the five poll-bound states not to release funds under local area development schemes, of both MPs and state legislators, until the Assembly election process is complete.

Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry will go to polls from April 3.

The budget session of Parliament could also be rescheduled for the elections. Instead of having the second half of the session in April, it may be put off till after the elections conclude on May 8.

The finance bill, however, may be passed before Parliament breaks up for recess in

March as a rule stipulates that there should not be more than a 75-day gap between the introduction and passage of the bill.

In today's poll panel communication, the Centre and the governments in the five poll-bound states were instructed to impress upon ministers and authorities not to announce grants, lay foundation stones or make ad-hoc appointments in government and PSUs.

The commission said no fresh work should start under the local area development schemes, but work that had already begun could continue. There would be no bar on payments for completed work, subject to the full satisfaction of the concerned officials, the poll panel said.

# Assam parties hail poll schedule

CPI (M) wants elections in two phases

Sushanta Talukdar

**GUWAHATI:** The ruling and Opposition parties in Assam have welcomed the announcement of election dates for the State (April 3 and 10). The CPI (M), however, wants the polls to be held in more phases.

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president, Bhubaneswar Kalita, said the Congress had requested Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) B. B. Tandon that elections be held before Bihu as the onset of monsoon after the festival might hamper the poll process. The party was fully prepared and selection of candidates was on. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was fully prepared and started poll related exercises, its spokesman Apurba Kumar Bhattacharyya said.

The Bharatiya Janata Party said it was in an upbeat mood and confident of winning the elections. "We welcome the EC decision to hold the poll before Bihu and in phases. The new As-

• Congress fully prepared, says Bhubaneswar Kalita

• New Assamese calendar year will see dislodging of Congress: BJP

samese calendar year will see dislodging of the corrupt and anti-people Congress from power and installation of a new transparent and pro-people government at Dispur," said senior BJP leader V. Satish.

The CPI (M), however, said that in view of the "deteriorating law and order situation," particularly in Karbi Anglong hill district and upper Assam, polls should be held at least in three phases so that adequate security forces could be made available for all the constituencies.

State CPI (M) Secretary Uddhab Barman said the party had petitioned the CEC to hold the polls before Bihu but in multiple phases for free and fair polls.

# Bengal poll in five phases

Stateman News Service

## Opp happy, CPM glum

NEW DELHI, March 1. — The Election Commission today announced the dates for Assembly elections in four states — West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala — and one Union Territory, Pondicherry. In West Bengal polls would be conducted in five phases spread over 27 days keeping in mind what the EC termed “ground realities”.

The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr BB Tandon, instructed poll officers to be “impartial and apolitical” and asked them to adhere to the model code of conduct. District authorities have been asked to extensively videograph the electioneering and polling to make it “free and fair”, particularly in West Bengal.

While election in West Bengal would be held between 17 April and 8 May, that in Kerala would be held in three phases, in Assam and Pondichery in two phases and in Tamil Nadu at one go.

According to the EC, in the first phase on 17 April, 45 Assembly seats in West Bengal would go to polls, 66 in the second phase on 22 April, and

KOLKATA, March 1. — While Opposition leaders welcomed the Election Commission's decision to hold a five-day poll in Bengal, the CPI-M leadership was terribly unhappy. “This is unprecedented in Bengal. And unnecessary as well. But we have no problems. We stay in touch with the people of Bengal round the year which is as good as a poll campaign,” CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas said. “The Commission has said that Tamil Nadu will have a single-phase election because the political parties in the state had demanded so. Here, the EC never asked for the CPI-M's opinion on the subject. I don't know whether it had approached other political parties,” he added. Miss Mamata Banerjee was overwhelmed. Since Bengalis would celebrate their New Year on 14 April, she urged voters to elect a new government when the first phase of polling began on 17 April. Pat came Mr Biswas' reply: “The Left Front has been in power for 30 years. We will be in power for 30 more. I assure her (Miss Banerjee) and send my wishes in advance.” — SNS

77, 57 and 49 Assembly segments in the third, fourth and fifth phase on 27 April, 3 May and 8 May respectively.

In Assam, election would be on

held on 3 April and 10 April in 65 and 61 Assembly segments, respectively. In Kerala, which has 145 segments, polls will be in three phases, with the polling for 59 constituencies in the first phase taking place on 22 April. The second and third phases of elections for 66 and 15 constituencies, respectively, would be held on 29 April and 3 May respectively.

In Tamil Nadu, all 234 Assembly segments would go to polls on 8 May, the EC said. But in Pondicherry polls would be held in two phases to honour the state government's request. Three constituencies which border Kerala and Tamil Nadu would go to polls in the first phase on 3 May, and the remaining 27 segments on 8 May, the Commission said.

Counting of votes in all states will take place on 11 May, and election process would be wrapped up before 20 May, the Election Commission said. Mr Tandon said electronic voting machines had been sent to all poll-bound states and arrangements completed for deployment of paramilitary forces. Also, states have been sent advisories to maintain law and order and hold free and fair elections, he said.

Dates with democracy, page :

07 MAR 2006

# Poll schedule announced

## Assembly elections to start on April 3

Siddharth Narrain

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission on Wednesday announced the schedule for elections to the West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Pondicherry Assemblies.

While all 234 constituencies in Tamil Nadu will go to the polls on May 8, elections in West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Pondicherry will be spread from April 3 to May 8. Counting of votes for all States will be on May 11.

Chief Election Commissioner B.B. Tandon said the West Bengal polls would be in five phases — 45 segments would go to the polls on April 17, 66 on April 22, 77 on April 27, 57 on May 3, and 49 on May 8.

### Ground realities

Asked why the elections had been staggered, he said the Commission had taken into account the "ground realities" and availability of paramilitary forces.

"We want to provide adequate area combination coverage and deployment of forces, especially in the naxal-affected areas."

In Kerala, elections would be held in three phases. While 59 segments would go to the polls on April 22, the second one would be on April 29, covering 66 constituencies. Elections in 15 segments in Kasargod and Kannur districts would be on May 3.

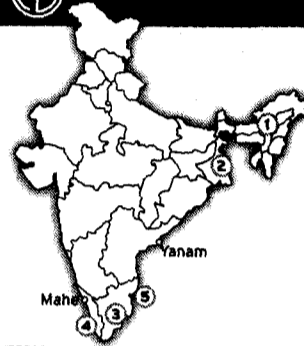
Mr. Tandon said the main reason for staggered polls in Kerala was the absence of adequate police force.

Mr. Tandon said in Assam polls would be held in two phases: sixty-five segments would go to the polls on April 3 and the remaining 61 on April 10.

### Parties' views

The schedule was decided after taking into consideration views of political parties. They felt elections should be held be-

### POLL SCHEDULE



1. Assam:	April 3, 10
2. West Bengal:	April 17, 22, 27 and May 3, 8
3. Tamil Nadu:	May 8
4. Kerala:	April 22, 29, and May 3
5. Pondicherry:	May 8 (but in Yanam and Mahe on May 3)

fore the Bihu festival. The Commission also took into account the possibility of an early monsoon.

The 30 seats in Pondicherry would see elections in two phases.

The Mahe seat and the Yanam segment that adjoin Kerala would go to the polls on May 3, coinciding with the third phase of elections in the State. Twenty-seven seats in Pondicherry witness elections on May 8.

The entire electoral process, Mr. Tandon said, would be completed by May 20.

With the announcement of the schedule, the Model Code of Conduct has come into effect and it would apply to all candidates, political parties, and the governments of the election-bound States and Pondicherry, he added.



# অবশেষে নির্দেশ পুলিশের হাতে, লিখন মুছতে আজ সব দলকে ডাকলেন সিপি

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: মুখ্যসচিবের ঘোষণার পাঁচ দিনের মাথায় অবশেষে দেওয়াল-লিখন নিষিদ্ধ করার সরকারি নির্দেশ পেল কলকাতা পুলিশ।

ওই নির্দেশে কী আছে, তা জানাতে আজ, মঙ্গলবারেই পুলিশ কমিশনার সব রাজনৈতিক দলের প্রতিনিধিদের বৈঠকে ডেকেছেন। তবে পুরসভার কাছে ওই নির্দেশ পৌঁছয়নি। পৌঁছয়নি জেলা প্রশাসনগুলির কাছেও। ফলে জেলাগুলিতে দেওয়াল-লিখন বন্ধ করতে উদ্যোগী হয়নি প্রশাসন।

মহাকরণ থেকে জানানো হয়, ওই নির্দেশ রাজ্য পুলিশের ডি জি-র দফতর, পুর ও পঞ্চায়েত দফতরে পাঠানো হয়েছে। সেখান থেকেই তা জেলা প্রশাসনের কাছে যাবে। তবে দলগুলি এই নির্দেশ কতটা মানবে, তা নিয়ে সংশয় আছে। না-মানলে শান্তির মাত্রা এতই নগণ্য যে, দলগুলির তাতে কিছু যাবে-আসবে না।

তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় গত শুক্রবারেই জানান, তাঁর দল ওই নির্দেশ মানবে না। এস ইউ সি-ও তৃণমূলের পথে চলবে। সি পি এম এবং কংগ্রেস আছে নির্বাচন কমিশনের ব্যাখ্যার অপেক্ষায়। সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস বলেন, “কমিশনকে আমাদের বক্তব্য জানিয়েছি। এটা তাদের বিবেচনামূলক। আমরা তাদের সিদ্ধান্তের অপেক্ষায় আছি।”

একমাত্র বি জে পি-ই দেওয়াল-লিখনে নিষেধাজ্ঞা মানবে বলে জানিয়েছে। ওই দলের রাজ্য সম্পাদক রাহুল সিংহ বলেন, “আমরা বরাবরই দেওয়াল-লিখনের বিপক্ষে। অতীতেও বলেছি, এখনও বলছি, কমিশনের আদেশ মেনে চলব।” বি জে পি ছোট ছোট সভা, পোস্টার-মিছিল করতে চায়। এতে দৃশ্যদূষণের

আশঙ্কা থাকবে না বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন রাহুলবাবু।

সরকার যে তাদের নির্দেশ রূপায়ণে বন্ধপরিষ্কার, স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব প্রসাদরঞ্জন রায় এ দিন তা স্পষ্ট করে দেন। তিনি বলেন, “আমরা রাজ্য পুলিশের ডি জি এবং কলকাতার পুলিশ কমিশনারের কাছে নির্দেশ পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছি। জেলা স্তরে পুলিশ সুপার ও কলকাতায় ডি সি-রা নির্দেশ রূপায়ণের দায়িত্বে থাকবেন।”

কী কী করতে হবে পুলিশকে?

স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব জানান, যে-সব দেওয়ালে লেখা হয়ে গিয়েছে, সংশ্লিষ্ট দলকে তা মুছে ফেলার নির্দেশ দেবে পুলিশ। দেওয়ালে নতুন করে যাতে লেখা না-হয়, সে-দিকে নজর রাখার দায়িত্বও পুলিশের। নির্দেশ না-মানলে পুরসভাকে দেওয়াল-লিখন মুছে ফেলতে বলা হবে। নতুন নির্দেশে বলা হয়েছে, শুধু বাড়ির দেওয়াল নয়, বাড়ির সীমানার মধ্যে থাকা গাছ, বেড়া, খুঁটি বা অন্য কোথাও কিছুই লেখা বা পোস্টার লাগানো যাবে না। বাড়ির মালিকেরও এই অনুমতি দেওয়ার অধিকার থাকছে না। নির্দেশ কতটা রূপায়িত হল, কমিশনের পর্যবেক্ষকেরা তা খতিয়ে দেখবেন। কাল, বুধবার ২০ জন পর্যবেক্ষক রাজ্যে আসছেন। সরকার তার আগেই ওই নির্দেশ রূপায়ণ করতে মরিয়া।

নির্দেশ পেয়ে কী করছে কলকাতা পুলিশ? সি পি বলেন, “সব থানার ও সি-দের এ দিনই নির্দেশের কথা জানানো হয়েছে। আশা করছি, দলগুলি আমাদের অনুরোধ মেনে নেবে। এ ব্যাপারে তাদের দায়িত্বও কম নয়।” দলগুলি সেই দায়িত্ব পালন করবে কি না, সন্দেহ থেকেই যাচ্ছে। দেওয়াল-লিখন বন্ধ করা পুরসভার অন্যতম দায়িত্ব। কিন্তু ডেপুটি মেয়রই যে দেওয়ালে

লেখার পক্ষে! ডেপুটি মেয়র, আর এস পি নেতা কল্যাণ মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেছেন, “দেওয়ালে লিখে প্রচার চালানোটা নির্বাচন প্রক্রিয়ার অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ। দীর্ঘকাল ধরে এটা চলছে।” কিন্তু এ ক্ষেত্রে পুরসভার ভূমিকা কী হবে? তিনি বলেন, “পুরসভার কাজ পরিষেবা দেওয়া। দেওয়াল মোছার কাজ পুরসভার এক্তিয়ারে পড়ে না। তবে সরকারের নির্দেশ পেলে তা অবশ্যই মানা হবে। যদিও আমাদের লোকবল, অর্থক্ষমতা সীমিত। সব দেওয়াল মোছার বা নজরদারি করার পরিকাঠামো নেই।” প্রয়োজনে তাঁরা রাজ্যের কাছে টাকা চাইতেও দ্বিধা করবেন না বলে জানান তিনি।

দলগুলি পুলিশের অনুরোধ না-মানলে কী হবে? স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব জানান, ছ’মাস পর্যন্ত জেল বা এক হাজার টাকা জরিমানা, প্রয়োজনে দু’টোই হবে। দেওয়ালে লেখা হলে কাকে (দলের কোন ব্যক্তিকে) ধরা হবে, কার শাস্তি হবে, তা ওই আইনে বলা নেই। তা স্পষ্ট নয় স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিবের বক্তব্যেও। তাতে বিভ্রান্তি ছড়াচ্ছে বলে মনে করেন স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতরের অফিসারদের একাংশ।

কলকাতায় দেওয়ালে না-লেখার আইন আছে ১৯৭৬ থেকে। কে কী ভাবে নির্দেশ কার্যকর করবে, মানুষ কোথায় অভিযোগ জানাবেন, সেই বিষয়ে এত দিন কোনও বিধিই তৈরি হয়নি। এ বার আইন বলবৎ করতে গিয়ে সেটা বুঝতে পারছেন স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতরের কর্তারা। পুলিশ কি দলগুলিকে দেওয়ালে লেখা থেকে বিরত করতে পারবে? সি পি বলেন, “দলগুলো নির্দেশ না-মানলে আমরা আইনত ব্যবস্থা নেব।” আসলে গত ৩০ বছরে এই আইন কার্যকর করতে পুলিশকে কখনও নির্দেশই দেয়নি রাজ্য সরকার।

ANADARAZAE DATEFIKA

# মহকুমাশাসক-সহ এ বার ১৯ জনকে শাস্তি কমিশনের

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: কলকাতা ও  
নয়াদিল্লি: পর্যবেক্ষকদের রিপোর্ট  
প্যায়ার পরে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারের  
বিরুদ্ধে কার্যত অসহযোগিতার  
অভিযোগ এনে বেশ কিছু অফিসারের  
বিরুদ্ধে শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার  
হুমকি দিয়েছিল নির্বাচন কমিশন।  
সেই হুমকি যে নিছক কথার কথা নয়,  
বৃহস্পতিবারেই তার প্রমাণ পেয়ে  
গিয়েছে রাজ্য প্রশাসন।

ভোটার তালিকা তৈরির কাজে  
গাফিলতি এবং পর্যবেক্ষকদের সঙ্গে  
অসহযোগিতা করায় কলমের এক  
খোঁচায় রাজ্যের ১৯ জন অফিসার ও  
কর্মীর বিরুদ্ধে শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা  
নেওয়ার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে নির্বাচন  
কমিশন। শাস্তিপ্রাপকদের মধ্যে  
মহকুমাশাসক পর্যায়ের অফিসারও  
আছেন। নির্বাচনী পর্যবেক্ষকদের  
প্রথম দফার সফরের পর থেকে এই  
নিয়ে রাজ্যের ২৪ জন অফিসার ও  
কর্মী কমিশনের কোপে পড়লেন।

এ বার শাস্তি কেবল কারণ  
দর্শানোর নোটিস আর বদলির মধ্যেই  
সীমাবদ্ধ থাকছে না। কয়েক জন কর্মী-  
অফিসারকে সাসপেন্ড করার নির্দেশও  
দিয়েছে নির্বাচন কমিশন। অবিলম্বে ওই  
নির্দেশ কার্যকর করতে বলা হয়েছে।  
দ্বিতীয় দফায় যে-১৯ জনের বিরুদ্ধে  
শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে, তাঁদের  
মধ্যে দু'জন এস ডি ও এবং চার জন বি  
ডি ও। হলদিয়ার এস ডি ও-কে কারণ  
দর্শানো এবং বদলির নোটিস দিতে  
বলা হয়েছে। কেবল বদলির নির্দেশ  
দেওয়া হয়েছে সল্টলেকের এস ডি ও-  
কে। কমিশনের নির্দেশের প্রতিলিপি  
এ দিনই রাজ্যের মুখ্যসচিবের কাছে

পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।  
নির্বাচন কমিশন যে-তিন জনকে  
সাসপেন্ড করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে,  
তাঁদের মধ্যে আছেন পশ্চিম  
মেদিনীপুরের নয়্যাগ্রামের বি ডি ও।  
কমিশনের অভিযোগ, তিনি ভোটার  
তালিকা সংশোধনের উদ্দেশ্যে শুনানির  
জন্য দিন নির্দিষ্ট করে ভোটারদের  
নোটিস দিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু নির্দিষ্ট দিনে  
প্রচুর মানুষ সেখানে হাজির হওয়ায় বি  
ডি ও শুনানি না-করেই অফিস বন্ধ  
করে পালিয়ে যান। এবং ওই দিনে  
শুনানির জন্য যাঁদের নোটিস  
দিয়েছিলেন, তাঁদের সবার নাম তিনি  
ভোটার তালিকা থেকে বাদ দিয়ে দেন।

বর্ধমানের ক্ষীরপুর স্কুলের প্রধান  
শিক্ষককেও সাসপেন্ড করার নির্দেশ  
দিয়েছে নির্বাচন কমিশন। তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে  
অভিযোগ, তিনি ভোটার তালিকায়  
নাম তোলার জন্য ভূয়ো বার্থ  
সার্টিফিকেট দিয়েছিলেন। ভোটার  
তালিকা তৈরির কাজে গাফিলতির  
জন্য বর্ধমানের মহকুমাশাসকের  
অফিসের মুখ্য করণিককেও সাসপেন্ড  
করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে কমিশন।

পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুরের কেশপুর ও  
পিংলার বি ডি ও-দের একই সঙ্গে  
বদলি ও কারণ দর্শানোর নোটিস  
ধরাতে বলেছে নির্বাচন কমিশন।  
তাঁদের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ, মৃত ও  
স্থানান্তরিত ভোটারদের চিহ্নিত করার  
পরেও তাঁরা ওই সব ভোটারের নাম  
তালিকা থেকে বাদ দেননি। মেদিনীপুর  
সদর, কোচবিহার জেলার তুফানগঞ্জ-১  
ব্লকের বি ডি ও, তুফানগঞ্জ-১ বি ডি ও  
অফিসের ফিশারিজ এক্সটেনশন  
এর পর আটের পাতায়

## এ বার শাস্তি ১৯ জনের

প্রথম পাতার পর

অফিসার এবং অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির  
পরিদর্শককেও বদলি এবং কারণ  
দর্শানোর নোটিস ধরাতে বলা হয়েছে।  
হলদিয়ার মহকুমাশাসক এবং বি ডি  
ও-রাও এই তালিকায় রয়েছেন।

যে-ছ জনকে কারণ দর্শানোর  
নোটিস ধরানো হয়েছে, তাঁদের সবাই  
পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুর জেলার এক্সটেনশন  
অফিসার, লোয়ার ডিভিশন ক্লার্ক ও  
পঞ্চায়েত কর্মী। আর যাঁদের শুধু  
বদলির নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে,  
কমিশনের মতে, তাঁদের মধ্যে  
সল্টলেকের মহকুমাশাসকের কাজ  
সন্তোষজনক নয়। একই অভিযোগে  
বদলি করা হয়েছে দক্ষিণ দিনাজপুরের  
কুমারগঞ্জের বি ডি ও-কে।

এ দিকে, রাজ্যে ভোটকেন্দ্রের  
২০০ মিটারের মধ্যে রাজনৈতিক  
দলের অফিস থাকলে কী করা হবে,  
তা নিয়ে ডাকা মুখ্য নির্বাচনী  
অফিসারের বৈঠক কার্যত ব্যর্থ  
হয়েছে। মুখ্য নির্বাচনী অফিসার  
দেবাশিস সেন বলেন, এই বিষয়ে  
বৈঠকে কোনও সর্বসম্মত সিদ্ধান্ত  
হয়নি। তাই সব দলকেই ২১  
ফেব্রুয়ারির মধ্যে লিখিত ভাবে  
মতামত জানাতে বলা হয়েছে। তিনি  
জানান, রাজ্যে ৩৩০টি ভোটকেন্দ্রের  
২০০ মিটারের মধ্যে রাজনৈতিক  
দলের অফিস আছে।

সর্বদলীয় বৈঠক সেরে কংগ্রেসের  
পক্ষে মানস ভূঁইয়া বলেন, “আমরা  
বলেছি, একান্ত ভাবেই ভোটকেন্দ্র  
সরানো না-গেলে রাজ্য ও জেলা  
স্তরের দলীয় অফিস বাদ দিয়ে বাকি  
সব স্তরের দলীয় অফিস নির্বাচন  
ঘোষণার দিন থেকেই বন্ধ রাখতে  
হবে। পাশাপাশি হুগলির আরামবাগ,  
পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুর, বাঁকুড়া, বর্ধমান,  
বীরভূমে ব্যাপক হারে আগ্নেয়াস্ত্র  
আসছে। রাজ্য সরকারের পুলিশ তা  
উদ্ধার করার চেষ্টাই করছে না।”

সি পি এমের রবীন দেব বলেন,  
“আমরা জানিয়ে দিয়েছি,  
ভোটকেন্দ্রের ২০০ মিটারের মধ্যে  
থাকলেও রাজ্য ও জেলা স্তরের  
দলীয় অফিস কোনও মতেই বন্ধ করা  
যাবে না। অবশ্য তার নীচের পর্যায়ের  
দলীয় অফিস বন্ধ রাখতে আমাদের  
কোনও আপত্তি নেই। তবে ওই সব  
অফিসও বন্ধ রাখা যেতে পারে  
ভোটের ৪৮ ঘণ্টা আগে থেকে। তার  
চেয়ে বেশি সময় ধরে অফিসগুলি  
বন্ধ রাখা সম্ভব নয়।”

# 1 lakh bogus voters in Nadia and still counting

OUR BUREAU

**Feb. 1:** Nearly a lakh "bogus" voters have been detected in Nadia alone.

Members of the 19-strong team of observers, now on the second leg of their mission to weed out such voters, arrived in their assigned destinations today. And that they have a mammoth task on hand became evident from one district.

After a meeting with Nadia observer Amitabh Rajan, district magistrate Rajesh Pandey said by February 15, when the final electoral roll would be published, the number of dead, shifted or Bangladeshi voters is expected to go past the one-lakh mark.

"We have deleted 90,000 names from the voter lists already — the highest in the state so far," Pandey said. Nadia has about 27 lakh voters.

About 3.5 lakh dead/shifted voters have been identified across the state so far.

The 90,000 bogus voters in Nadia were identified following an inquiry initiated by Election Commission adviser K.J. Rao last month.

Rajan reached Krishnagar this morning and met district officials to review the progress of the electoral roll revision.

"I will begin from where Mr Rao left off," he said. Like Rao, Rajan said he will go door



Nadia observer Amitabh Rajan (right) with district magistrate Rajesh Pandey. Picture by Palash Debnath

to door to ascertain the validity of complaints filed by political parties.

But, unlike Rao, who never disclosed his destination to the media, Rajan bared his plans. He handed to journalists his schedule for the next seven days.

The CPM reacted sharply. "This is not done. EC (Election Commission) officials are not supposed to inform others about their movement. But some observers are doing just that. We never made public the complaints filed by our party," said Rabin Deb, the government's chief whip.

Rao, who is overseeing the roll revision in West Midnapore this time, held a series of meetings with officials and parties. Accompanied by district magistrate D. Nariyala and Midnapore Sadar block development officer (BDO) Mohammad Kamruddin, Rao visited various pockets of Midnapore town with a list of complaints submitted to him by the Opposition parties.

Around 4.30 pm, he went to the police lines looking for voters who had been transferred.

CPM councillor Sipra Bhusan was heard requesting Rao repeatedly not to immediately

delete the names of persons not found. "There may be family members who may not have shifted," she told Rao, who underlined about six names.

Rao also went to the Midnapore municipality to look into the death registers and the office of the food and supplies department to check out ration card records.

In Burdwan, observer Rabindranath Das met the district officials.

In Calcutta, chief electoral officer Debasish Sen said the observers for Malda, East Midnapore, Bankura and Nadia were replaced at the last moment as those earlier scheduled could not turn up because of personal reasons.

All 19 observers will submit their reports to the Election Commission on their return to Delhi. The EC will meet them on February 10 to discuss their findings.

The government has transferred the subdivisional officers of Diamond Harbour and Balurghat and suspended two Nadia schoolteachers following EC recommendations.

## EC in Bengal

Observers deserve full freedom

Jyoti Basu's appeal to the rank and file of the CPI-M to cooperate with officials of the Election Commission while they oversee the revision of electoral rolls must be seen in the context of what happened during the parliamentary election. At that time, EC officials had been asked to do their duty, which was to ensure that false voting was eliminated and genuine voters exercised their franchise. That touched a raw nerve in the CPI-M and the Left Front chairman had openly exhorted party's cadres to prevent officials from committing any "excesses" and should these be committed, to catch the officials by the scruff of their necks and drive them out of the polling arena — in other words, take the law in their own hands. Biman Bose, who is known to shoot off his mouth with provocative pronouncements, was present at the Brigade Parade Ground rally where the former chief minister sang a different tune but was not seen to be endorsing the appeal. What is still not guaranteed is that the CPI-M rank and file will not raise a storm if EC officials make embarrassing discoveries in the electoral rolls and are compelled to take action that Alimuddin Street finds unwelcome. Will Biman Bose then be inclined to accept the EC's decisions gracefully — or will he begin to smell another conspiracy?

Early reports of voters' lists in some districts, particularly in the north, are far from encouraging for the Marxists. Thousands of names of fake voters — those either missing or dead — have been detected. There are a larger number of bogus ration cards issued in border districts based on which voting rights have been secured. To that must be added the task of preventing "outsiders" from jamming poll booths — which on the last occasion Subhas Chakraborty had described as a "right". The CPI-M is not given to acknowledging mistakes but the contradictions on this and other questions have become all too glaring. It has no option as far as the EC scrutiny is concerned. But the very fact that Basu had to make an appeal was revealing. The ruling party is best advised to cooperate. When Anil Biswas declares in typically arrogant tones that he is "not worried", one can only hope that is the signal to allow the 19 observers to perform with full freedom.