

“The Truth of Truth” DARPAN OF INDIA

❖ QUOTES ❖

“materialism leads us to lose awareness of our inner life, which is bad enough; but to be hypnotized by our own feelings and sensations and forget about others and the world around us is worse.”

—The Upanishads

The Close of an Era

The departure of K. Annamalai from the top leadership role in the Bharatiya Janata Party's Tamil Nadu unit has triggered widespread political discussion across the state and beyond. For many supporters, Annamalai represented a fresh, energetic face capable of challenging entrenched political narratives. For others within political circles, his exit may reflect a broader strategic recalibration by the party as it prepares for future electoral battles. The leadership change comes after several years in which Annamalai emerged as one of the most visible and outspoken political figures in Tamil Nadu. A former Indian Police Service officer who entered politics with a reputation for integrity and administrative experience, he quickly became a prominent voice for the BJP in a state traditionally dominated by the Dravidian political establishment. A Leader Who Changed the Conversation When Annamalai took charge of the BJP's Tamil Nadu unit, the party faced the difficult task of expanding its influence in a political landscape largely controlled by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Through aggressive campaigning, extensive grassroots outreach, and a highly active social media presence, Annamalai succeeded in increasing the visibility of the BJP among younger voters and urban middle-class communities. His direct style of communication and willingness to confront political opponents earned him both admirers and critics. Political analysts argue that regardless of electoral outcomes, Annamalai succeeded in making the BJP a more prominent participant in Tamil Nadu's political discourse. Issues ranging from governance and corruption to state-centre relations became central themes of his campaigns. Why the Change? While party leaders have described the transition as part of an organizational restructuring, speculation continues regarding the strategic considerations behind the move. Some observers believe the BJP may be seeking a broader coalition-oriented approach ahead of future elections. Others suggest the party wants to balance aggressive political messaging with efforts to expand its appeal among regional communities and traditional voter groups. Leadership transitions are not uncommon in major political parties, particularly when they are attempting to adapt to changing electoral realities. In this context, the move could represent less a rejection of Annamalai's leadership and more an effort to deploy his political skills in a different capacity. Supporters See a Valuable Asset Among BJP supporters, many view Annamalai as one of the party's strongest assets in southern India. His ability to attract media attention, mobilize volunteers, and engage directly with voters has often been cited as a major factor behind the BJP's growing visibility in the state. Several political commentators note that leaders with strong public recognition do not necessarily lose influence after stepping down from organizational positions. In many cases, such leaders transition into broader national roles, election campaigns, or policy responsibilities. Supporters argue that Annamalai's popularity and political profile ensure he will remain an influential figure regardless of the position he holds within the party structure.

Consumer Journey AI Revolution at the Checkout: How Artificial Intelligence Redefin the Future of Shopping

The way people shop is undergoing a dramatic transformation, and at the center of this change is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Once viewed as a futuristic technology confined to research labs and tech giants, AI is rapidly becoming an integral part of everyday retail experiences, reshaping how consumers discover, compare, purchase, and receive products. From online marketplaces that anticipate customer preferences to physical stores equipped with intelligent checkout systems, AI is revolutionizing commerce on an unprecedented scale. Industry experts believe that the coming decade could witness the most significant changes in retail since the rise of e-commerce itself. One of AI's most visible impacts is its ability to create highly personalized shopping experiences. Modern algorithms analyze browsing habits, purchase histories, and customer preferences to recommend products that are most likely to interest individual shoppers. Rather than navigating thousands of options, consumers are increasingly presented with curated selections tailored to their specific needs and tastes. Retailers argue that this not only improves customer satisfaction but also helps shoppers save time and make more informed purchasing decisions. As AI systems become more sophisticated, recommendations are expected to evolve beyond simple product suggestions and provide personalized styling advice, meal planning assistance, and even home-design guidance. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are becoming a common feature across retail platforms. Available around the clock, these digital assistants answer customer questions, provide product information, track deliveries, and assist with returns. Unlike traditional customer service systems, advanced AI assistants can understand conversational language and respond with increasing accuracy. Many retailers are already reporting reduced waiting times and improved customer engagement through AI-driven support systems. Experts predict that future AI assistants could function as personal shopping advisors, helping consumers compare prices, evaluate product quality, and identify the best deals across multiple platforms. Artificial intelligence is also reshaping brick-and-mortar retail. Smart stores equipped with sensors, cameras, and machine-learning systems are making shopping faster and more convenient. In some outlets, customers can pick up items and leave without standing in checkout lines. AI systems automatically identify products and process payments electronically, creating a seamless shopping experience. Retail analysts believe that such innovations could significantly reduce operational costs while improving efficiency and customer satisfaction. Beyond customer-facing applications, AI is helping retailers manage supply chains more ef-

fectively. Predictive analytics enables businesses to forecast demand, optimize inventory levels, and reduce waste. By analyzing weather patterns, seasonal trends, local events, and historical purchasing data, AI can help retailers ensure that popular products remain in stock while minimizing excess inventory. This improved efficiency benefits both businesses and consumers by reducing shortages and stabilizing prices. While large corporations have led AI adoption, technological advancements are making powerful AI tools increasingly accessible to smaller retailers. Affordable software solutions now allow local businesses to automate routine

generation of shopping experiences will be built. Sir — The e-commerce revolution shifted shoppers from stores to screens, sparing them the ordeal of long queues and overly attentive salespersons. But Artificial Intelligence is poised to transform the shopping experience even more fundamentally. Reliance Retail's new fashion chain, Azorte, doubles up as an AI laboratory, featuring smart trial rooms where customers can browse and select outfits digitally. Its AI-powered scanning technology analyses a shopper's height, body shape, and skin tone before recommending outfits. Importantly, each of these choices and interactions is

years in power. As a member of Parliament, Banerjee was often seen as projecting authority. His close association with controversial political figures further contributed to this perception. History repeatedly demonstrates that in a democracy the ultimate authority rests with the people rather than those who wield power. No leader, however influential, is immune from public judgement. West Bengal has long been associated with a culture of political violence. Yet the recent attacks on and public humiliation of the TMC's Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee expose serious lapses in the state's law-and-order machinery. The editorial, "Shameful", rightly observed that disaffection cannot be allowed to take the form of lumenism. If elected representatives can be subjected to such threats and attacks, one can only imagine the insecurity faced by ordinary citizens. Such brazen acts of mob violence and organised intimidation must be dealt with firmly. The first generation of AI wearables arrived with the kind of Silicon Valley swagger that usually precedes a collapse. These devices promised to replace smartphones, understand human intent, and usher users into a post-app, post-smartphone future. Instead, many became cautionary tales. The Humane AI Pin was criticised for overheating and underdelivering. The Rabbit R1 became internet meme material within days of launch. Consumers, meanwhile, were left wondering whether AI wearables were solving real-world problems or simply inventing new ones. India's top creative industry bodies — including the Motion Picture Association (MPA), Film Federation of India (FFI), Indian Music Industry (IMI), Producers Guild of India (PGI), Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation and Indian Singers and Musicians Rights Association — have raised concerns over proposed changes to copyright laws in India's upcoming AI policy. At a series of roundtables held in Mumbai, New Delhi and Hyderabad, representatives from film, music, publishing and broadcasting industries urged the government to not dilute copyright protections in favour of AI companies. The discussions come amid a proposal by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to allow AI firms access to copyrighted content for training at government-fixed rates. Industry leaders opposed this move, warning it could undermine creators' rights and revenues. Instead, they called for AI regulations to be built on three key principles: consent, voluntary licensing, and strong enforcement. A whitepaper by Koan Advisory and Creative First highlighted that Indian filmmakers are already using AI tools responsibly, without compromising creativity. Speakers at the event stressed that AI and copyright are not in conflict, but weakening copyright could harm jobs.



tasks, improve customer outreach, and compete more effectively in digital marketplaces. For many entrepreneurs, AI offers an opportunity to enhance productivity without significantly increasing costs. Despite its advantages, AI's growing influence in retail has raised important questions about privacy, data security, and employment. Consumer advocates warn that retailers must be transparent about how customer data is collected and used. Meanwhile, labor groups have expressed concerns that automation could reduce demand for certain retail jobs. Industry leaders argue that while some roles may change, new opportunities will emerge in technology management, data analysis, and AI oversight. Looking Ahead As AI technologies continue to evolve, the future of shopping is likely to become increasingly intelligent, personalized, and efficient. Retailers that successfully integrate AI into their operations may gain a significant competitive advantage, while consumers stand to benefit from greater convenience and improved service. The challenge for businesses, policymakers, and technology developers will be ensuring that innovation is balanced with transparency, fairness, and consumer trust. What is clear, however, is that Artificial Intelligence is no longer a distant possibility for the retail sector—it is rapidly becoming the foundation upon which the next

getting stored as data. Does that mean that shoppers would rather prefer being surveilled by an AI stylist to a nagging salesperson who is just trying to earn a commission? Sir — It is unfortunate that political violence has, once again, reared its ugly head in West Bengal after the Bharatiya Janata Party assumed power in the state ("Rage spills over", May 31). Such violence damages the social fabric, undermines democratic values, and creates an atmosphere inimical to economic growth. It cannot be dismissed as routine post-poll unrest. The attempt to settle political scores through violence reflects a disturbing degeneration of political culture. In a democracy, all parties must have the freedom and the space to carry out their activities. It would be disingenuous to assume that the BJP had no role in the attacks on the Trinamool Congress leaders, Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee. It would be naive to accept the explanation that these incidents were merely spontaneous expressions of public anger. The BJP, which won the assembly election on the appeal of Hindutva, must remember that power is meant to serve the public, not to suppress political opponents. The attack on Abhishek Banerjee by a mob, though unacceptable, was perhaps a manifestation of the anger and the frustration that had accumulated among sections of the public during the TMC's 15

From Unchallenged Dominance to the Growing Dissent: Is Mamata Banerjee Facing Her Toughest Political Test Yet?

Opposition Pressure and Leadership Questions Fuel a New Phase of Political Uncertainty in Bengal

After more than fifteen years at the helm of West Bengal politics, Mamata Banerjee finds herself confronting what many observers describe as one of the most challenging periods of her political career. Once regarded as the undisputed center of power within the ruling All India Trinamool Congress, Mamata now faces a combination of internal dissent, opposition attacks, governance challenges, and growing debates over the future direction of the party. While political predictions of an imminent collapse may be exaggerated, recent developments have exposed cracks that were rarely visible during the party's years of overwhelming dominance. For over a decade and a half, the Trinamool Congress maintained a remarkably centralized political structure. Mamata Banerjee's personal popularity, grassroots network, and image as a fighter against powerful opponents helped the party win repeated electoral victories. From defeating the decades-long Left Front government in 2011 to securing successive assembly victories, Trinamool appeared politically invincible. The party's organizational machinery remained tightly controlled, and internal disagreements rarely surfaced in public. However, political success often brings new ambitions, competing power centers, and debates over succession. Those factors have become increasingly difficult to contain. In recent months, discussions about ideological direction, leadership style, and organizational control have become more visible. A section of leaders has questioned the concentration of decision-making within a limited circle of influential figures. Others have expressed concerns over the party's future leadership structure, particularly regarding the growing role of younger leaders and the evolving balance of power within the organization. The emergence of alternative political narratives from former insiders and dissatisfied leaders has further intensified speculation about factional rivalries. Political analysts argue that while disagreements are common in large parties, the significance lies in the fact that such debates are now occurring in public rather than behind closed doors. The opposition, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party, has sought to capitalize on signs of unrest within the ruling camp. BJP leaders have repeatedly claimed that Trinamool's internal conflicts reflect deeper structural problems. They argue that public disagreements among senior figures indicate weakening discipline and uncertainty regarding future leadership. Opposition parties have also intensified criticism over

issues ranging from governance and law-and-order concerns to allegations of corruption and administrative inefficiency. While Trinamool dismisses many of these accusations as politically motivated, the persistence of such attacks has kept the ruling party on the defensive. One of the most sensitive issues confronting the party is the question of succession. Although Mamata Banerjee remains the party's most popular leader and its principal electoral asset, discussions about the next generation of leadership have become increasingly prominent. Supporters of different power centers within the party have often projected competing visions for Trinamool's future. Some advocate continuity under established leadership structures, while others seek organizational reforms and broader participation in decision-making. The resulting debate has occasionally generated tensions that opponents have eagerly highlighted. The political landscape has also become more complex due to broader governance challenges. Economic pressures, employment concerns, infrastructure demands, and public expectations continue to grow. Citizens increasingly expect swift administrative responses and visible improvements in public services. As anti-incumbency naturally accumulates after long periods in power, even minor controversies can generate outsized political consequences. Political observers note that long-serving governments often face a difficult balancing act: preserving stability while simultaneously convincing voters that they still represent change. Despite the challenges, writing off Mamata Banerjee would be premature. Throughout her career, she has repeatedly survived political crises that critics believed would end her dominance. Her ability to connect with grassroots supporters, mobilize party workers, and reposition herself during moments of adversity remains one of her greatest political strengths. Many within Trinamool continue to view her as the only leader capable of uniting competing factions and maintaining the party's statewide appeal. Even some critics acknowledge that Mamata's political resilience has been underestimated before. Whether the current turbulence develops into a major political crisis or merely represents another phase of internal adjustment remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that West Bengal politics is entering a period of heightened scrutiny and strategic maneuvering. The coming months may determine whether Trinamool Congress emerges more unified under Mamata Banerjee's leadership

or faces deeper internal realignments that reshape the state's political landscape. For now, the party that once appeared unshakable is confronting questions it can no longer ignore—and the answers may define the next chapter of West Bengal's political history. In the sweltering political heat of June 2026, just a month after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) delivered a landslide victory in the

Chief Minister, the power vacuum has emboldened dissenters. Mamata Banerjee, the legendary street fighter who built the TMC from scratch, faces her sternest test yet, and this time, the threat is from within. Her 41% vote share in a relatively free election underscores that her personal appeal remains intact, but institutional decay threatens to erode even that. The coming weeks will decide whether

second-generation leadership, suggest this dilemma could prove fatal if it goes unresolved. Mamata must weigh short-term unity against long-term organisational revival.

Right now, survival is a two-front war fought in the corridors of Kolkata and the halls of New Delhi. On paper, 20 loyalists remain in the state assembly, but they look less like a vanguard and more like political hostages. With 58 rebels rallying behind a new leader, the mutineers have comfortably crossed the legal threshold to escape the anti-defection axe. The party hierarchy is crying foul, alleging forgery of signatures and demanding investigations. But everyone knows courtrooms cannot fix a broken house. Without a massive, ego-free outreach from Mamata herself, the bleeding will not stop. The warning lights are already flashing, as several of her lawmakers have already been spotted rubbing shoulders at administrative meetings hosted by the new BJP government. If the mood in Kolkata is grim, the atmosphere in New Delhi is downright skeletal. When Mamata staged a recent protest, the optics were devastating. Out of nearly 40 parliamentarians, only a tiny circle of the old guard, including Derek O'Brien, Dola Sen, and Kalyan Banerjee, bothered to show up. When heavyweights like Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and Sukhendu Sekhar Roy start venting their resentment in public, you know the rot has reached the foundation. If the rebels successfully claim they are the "real" party, a federal exodus is inevitable. They have a ready-made blueprint in the recent, brutal engineering of the Shiv Sena and NCP splits, where the factions with raw numbers simply walked away with the party names and symbols. Whether this ends in a quiet surrender to the BJP or the total erasure of the party identity, the stakes are existential. If Mamata cannot plug the leaks immediately, her grand national dream will dissolve before the monsoon ends. Mamata Banerjee's legacy - as the woman who ended Left Front's 34-year rule and resisted BJP's advances - stands imperilled. Old guards lack the ground-level stamina for prolonged battles, and years of centralised control have distanced her from cadres. Yet, her 41% vote share in 2026 shows that many voters backed the TMC for Mamata herself, not individual MLAs or factions. A lifelong agitator since her 1984 Jaddavpur victory (barring a brief 1989-91 hiatus), Mamata does not concede defeat easily. She has brushed aside the loss, claiming moral victory. However.



West Bengal Assembly elections by securing around 208 seats to the Trinamool Congress's (TMC) roughly 80, Mamata Banerjee's party finds itself on the precipice of disintegration. What was unimaginable before the May results has unfolded with startling speed, as 58 Trinamool MLAs have thrown their weight behind expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition, openly defying Mamata's preference for veteran Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay.

The rebels, while professing loyalty to Mamata as a guiding figure, have effectively sidelined her nephew Abhishek Banerjee. In a desperate countermove, the official Trinamool faction dissolved all frontal organisations, leaving only Mamata as the foundational anchor. This is not mere post-defeat sulking, but structural rupture. The TMC, which rode to power in 2011 on the "Maa, Maati, Manush" slogan and held the state for 15 years, has seen its organisational muscle atrophy amid allegations of centralised, corporate-style management. The crisis mirrors recent splits in the Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in Maharashtra, where the question of control over party symbols became a legal tussle. With the BJP's Suwendu Adhikari now installed as Bengal's

the TMC survives as a coherent force or fragments into irrelevance, a fate that would redefine not just Bengal but opposition dynamics across the entire nation. The epicentre of discontent lies with Abhishek Banerjee, the party's national general secretary. Old guards and newer entrants alike attribute the TMC's rout, from 215 seats in 2021 to around 80 now, to his style of functioning, which allegedly transformed a grassroots outfit into one steered by a professional election management firm like I-PAC. Post-poll, this resentment boiled over. The rebels' swift announcement of Ritabrata Banerjee as LoP, within minutes of official moves, signalled rejection of Abhishek's oversight. Removing him could theoretically quell the rebellion, but the probability remains low. Abhishek's ascent since 2014 has been intertwined with Mamata's decisions, who granted him control over key organisational levers. Such a move risks alienating a faction she nurtured, potentially fracturing family and loyalist networks. However, retaining him perpetuates the revolt. The dissolution of frontal wings indicates a reset attempt, but without addressing the core grievance - perceived dynastic corporate control - the murmurs will persist. Historical parallels, like regional parties losing cohesion over