

Google CEO Pichai nears ~~billionaire~~ status

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai is on the cusp of achieving a rare milestone for a non-founder tech executive: a 10-figure fortune.

Since Pichai, 51, became CEO of Google in 2015, the stock has surged more than 400%, significantly outperforming the S&P 500 and Nasdaq over the same period. It hit a fresh record on Friday after the company's first-quarter earnings beat expectations, boosted by AI-driven growth in its cloud computing unit. It also introduced a dividend for the first time in its history.

That rally, alongside hefty stock awards that have

\$1 Billion: Rare Milestone For A Non-Founder Tech CEO

> Since **Sundar Pichai** (51) became CEO of **Google** in 2015, the stock has surged over **400%**, outperforming S&P 500 (**140%**) and Nasdaq (**280%**)

> Alphabet stock hit a new record after earnings beat expectations, boosted by **AI-driven** growth in cloud biz



> That rally, alongside hefty stock awards that have made Pichai one of the **world's highest-paid** execs, has boosted his fortune to

nearly \$1bn, according to Bloomberg

> While Alphabet has been criticised for its AI offerings and some investors have questioned its ability to **compete** with **ChatGPT-maker OpenAI**, last week's earnings provided reassurance that its spending is starting to pay off

> With a **\$2bn** net worth (Forbes), Apple CEO **Tim Cook** is another rare non-founder tech billionaire. Google co-founders **Larry Page & Sergey Brin**, who have a combined net worth of about **\$300bn**, are among the 10 richest people in the world

Pichai's Fortune



made him one of the world's highest-paid executives, has boosted Pichai's fortune

to nearly \$1 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Pichai was selected in 2015 by co-founder Larry Page to be Google's CEO, while

Page became CEO of newly-formed holding company Alphabet. Pichai took over that role as well in 2019 when Page and co-founder Sergey Brin — two of the 10 richest people in the world, according to Bloomberg's wealth index — stepped back from day-to-day management.

In his time as CEO, Pichai has overseen a major expansion of the company's product line with the addition of Google Assistant, Google Home, Google Pixel, Google Workspace and more. He was also an early adopter of AI, calling it a "once-in-a-generation opportunity". **BLOOMBERG**

Blinken meets Bibi to stave off Rafah op



A child stands behind barbed-wire in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip

US secretary of state Antony Blinken met with PM Netanyahu in Israel on Wednesday, his latest stop on a West Asia tour undertaken as President Biden tries to stop Israel from invading Rafah, a city in southern Gaza where Palestinians have sought shelter during the war.

Blinken and other top Biden administration aides are also calling for Hamas to agree to a deal to free some hostages taken in the Oct. 7 attacks in exchange for a six-week ceasefire and the release of some Palestinian prisoners. US officials say they hope a temporary ceasefire would lead to a permanent one. On Tuesday, Netanyahu said that he plans a major assault on Rafah "with or without" a deal.

The ceasefire talks have been stalled for months, and Israeli officials said Monday that they had agreed to lower their demands. They are now asking Hamas to free 33 civilians — women, older people and those who need urgent medical care — rather than 40.

The proposed deal was one

of the issues that Blinken discussed with President Isaac Herzog of Israel on Wednesday at a hotel in Tel Aviv.

Before the meeting with Herzog started, Blinken told the president and reporters that discussions must focus on both a ceasefire that "brings the hostages home" and on getting more aid into Gaza. "There is a proposal on the table, and as we've said, no delays, no excuses," Blinken said. Herzog said that the hostages' release should be a priority for the international community. After his talk with Herzog, Blinken met with a few family members of American hostages held in Gaza and then got into a motorcade to head to Jerusalem, where he entered a private meeting with Netanyahu. Blinken and other US officials say Hamas has a narrow window to take the deal since Netanyahu is pressing for the offensive in Rafah. When asked about Netanyahu's statements on Rafah, Blinken said that US efforts were focused on a hostage and ceasefire deal. NYT

Bomb hoax at 200 Delhi-NCR schools leads to panic, keeps cops on toes

Probe Into Email Threat Indicates Links To China, ISI

Raj Shekhar Jha & Abhay | TNN

New Delhi: Delhi-NCR witnessed an unprecedented situation Wednesday morning with at least 200 schools receiving an email warning them about a bomb on their premises, leading to widespread panic.

Responding to messages from schools, parents rushed to pick up their wards even as a massive exercise was launched by multiple agencies, including police, fire units and bomb and dog squads, to comb the premises.

Students were evacuated and a stretched police force

LENS ON HACKER GROUP, CURRENT AND EX-STUDENTS



Scene outside a Delhi school on Wednesday morning

> Cops first alerted about bomb threat by **DPS Dwarka at 6.10am**, followed by a flood of PCR calls from across Delhi

> Schools send SOS to parents; **fire dept, ambulances & bomb squads alerted**. Parents asked to pick up children

> **5 Gurgaon, 4 Noida and 3 Gzb schools also get same email**. 20 schools in Noida and Gzb as well as 5 in Gurgaon evacuated

> **MHA asks police for report after checks yield nothing**. Mails declared as hoax

> **Sender's name, Sawarim, seems to be taken from a 'nasheed'** (propaganda song) of terror group IS

> One line of probe focuses on current & ex-students. Lens also on a hacker group

SEE: P 2 & 3 | EDIT: COPS NEED SCHOOLING

searched every nook and corner of the schools. Even school bags were examined.

The mails had been received by around a dozen schools by 9am before the

number slowly rose, forcing virtually all schools to shut for the day. There was all-round relief when nothing was found at any school by noon.

Preliminary findings indi-

cate links leading to China and Pakistan's ISI, with a larger conspiracy for disruption of normal life suspected.

▶ Related report, P 2

Russian service, VPN & proxy servers used

The counter-intelligence unit of Delhi Police is handling the probe along with several other agencies, including Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre. Investigators suspect the real email address was suppressed in multiple layers of encryption and will use advanced "unmasking programmes" to identify the sender. Russian free email service, 'mail.ru' — it was recently targeted by Ukraine army's IT wing, leading to it being shut down — a virtual private network and proxy servers were used to send the emails, according to initial technical analysis. **P 2**

Tobacco crop failure in Indonesia, Brazil triggers Andhra price surge

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PRICES SET TO GO UP FURTHER

Vijayawada: Tobacco growers in Andhra Pradesh are set to reap the fallout of a substantial drop in crop output in key producing countries like Brazil, Zimbabwe and Indonesia because of weather extremes, such as drought and unseasonable rain.

Prices soared at local auctions to nearly all-time highs and are projected to climb further in the coming weeks. Currently, prices have reached Rs 280 to Rs 290 a kg and are anticipated to exceed Rs 300 a kg, representing a 30% increase from farmers' expectations.

The influx of local and small players offering competitive bids has spurred the sud-

➤ Trade analysts put **expected crop size at 160-170 million kg**

➤ **Production up 20%**, growers sowed a second time after crop damage in Dec's Michung cyclone

➤ **Prices in local auctions touch ₹280-290/kg**, against anticipated ₹220-230/kg, may continue to rise further



➤ **AP stocks fetching better prices than K'taka premium crop** due to dip in global production

➤ **Production in Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Brazil down 20-30%**, say reports

➤ **China's decision to restrict exports** may have also led to triggering of prices

den price surge in auctions. Despite concerns that they might face challenges due to production surpassing Indian Tobacco Board's target of 140m kg, farmers in Andhra are poised to benefit, with the

board anticipating total production to reach 160m-170m kg. Trade analysts attribute the rise in price to crop damage in Brazil and Zimbabwe.

▶ **Continued on P 11**

May temp likely to be 'above normal' in most parts: IMD

North India, Including Delhi-NCR, Likely To See 5-7 Heatwave Days

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New Delhi: In many states/UTs including Delhi, four of the remaining phases of parliamentary elections this month are likely to be held amid peak of hot weather with India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday predicting 'above normal' maximum (day) temperatures over "most parts of the country" and a significantly high number of heatwave days over the northern plains, central region, and adjoining areas of peninsular India in May.

Though there are certain exceptions such as northeast India, some parts of north-west and central India and adjoining areas of northeast peninsular India where 'normal' to 'below normal' maximum temperatures are likely, a vast area broadly coinciding with nearly 200 parliamentary seats which will vote over the next four phases (May 7, May 13, May 20 and May 25) is most likely to face intense hot weather.

A total of 295 seats will go to polls in the next four phases (third to sixth), whereas elections in the remaining 57 seats will be held in the seventh and last phase on June 1.

Releasing monthly temperature and rainfall outlook for the month of May, the IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said the number of heatwave days is likely to be 'above normal' by about 5-8 days over south Rajasthan, west Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Gujarat region.

It means these areas are likely to face 8 to 11 days of heatwaves as normally heatwaves prevail over the region for about three days in May.

Mohapatra said the heatwave days is likely to be 'above normal' by 2-4 days in the re-

SWELTERING OUTLOOK FOR THE MONTH

Normally, heatwave prevails over Northern Plains, central India and adjoining areas of peninsular India for about 3 days in May

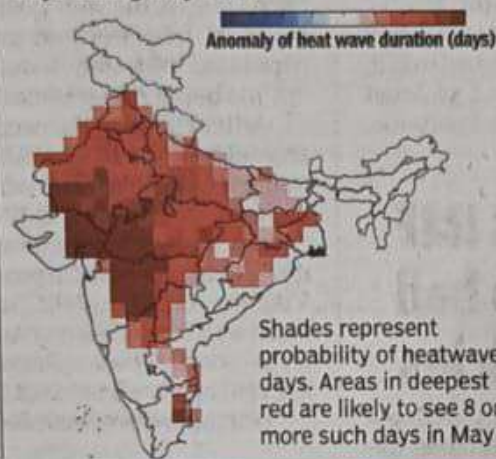
PREDICTION
Number of heatwave days is likely to be above normal by about

> 5-8 days over south Rajasthan, west Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Gujarat region

(It means these states may face 8 to 11 days of heatwave in May)

> 2-4 days over remaining parts of Rajasthan, east Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Chhattisgarh, interior Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, north interior Karnataka and Telangana and isolated pockets of north Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh (It means these states may face 5 to 7 days of heatwave in May)

Map of likely number of heatwave days during May 2024



What is the criterion for declaring heatwave?

Heatwave is considered if max temp of a weather station reaches at least 40°C or more for 'plains' and at least 30°C or more for 'hilly' regions

Based on Departure from Normal
Heatwave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C

Severe Heatwave: Departure from normal

is >6.4°C

Based on actual max temp
Heatwave: When actual max temp ≥ 45°C

Severe Heatwave: When actual max temp ≥ 47°C

(Heatwave is declared if above criteria met at least in two stations in a meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days)

Although there are some exceptions, where 'normal' to 'below normal' max temperatures are likely, a vast area coinciding with nearly 200 LS seats which will vote over the next 4 phases is likely to face intense hot weather

maining parts of Rajasthan, east Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, UP and some parts of Chhattisgarh, interior Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, north interior Karnataka and Telangana and isolated pockets of north TN, Andhra Pradesh.

This means these regions, including Delhi-NCR, are likely to face five to seven days of heatwave this month, making campaigns and elections tough in most of the areas as it may coincide with high day temperatures. Except Rajasthan and east Madhya Pradesh, elections remain to be held in

most of the high heat impact states.

Though north and central India could escape heatwave days in April due to five western disturbances (WDs), India faced two spells of heatwaves last month - from April 5 to 7 and April 15 to 30 - affecting mainly eastern India and southeast Peninsular.

The number of heat wave days in April was the highest during 2010-2024 (15 years) over Gangetic West Bengal and highest over Odisha during 2017-2024 (9 years). Records show that Odisha faced the longest spell of heatwaves during 15-30 April (16 days) after April 2016 when it

prevailed for 21 days.

Mohapatra attributed the prolonged heat wave in April in these two states to the absence of thunderstorms and a persisting anticyclone at lower levels over the west central Bay of Bengal and the adjoining eastern coasts of India.

On the rainfall front, IMD predicted the average precipitation over the country as a whole in May to be normal. "The normal to above-normal rainfall is likely over most parts of northwest India some parts of central, peninsular and northeast India. The below normal rainfall likely in remaining parts of the country," it said.

Maldives foreign min likely in India next wk in 1st high-level visit since Muizzu took office

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Maldives foreign minister Moosa Zameer is likely to visit India this month, TOI has learnt. Both sides are in touch diplomatically to finalise the dates for Zameer's visit but official sources suggested it could happen as early as next week.

If it happens, it will be the first high-level visit by either side since the Maldives' pro-China prez, Mohamed Muizzu, took office last year, defeating his India-friendly predecessor Ibrahim Solih. India's ties with the Indian Ocean neighbour have taken repeated hits since then with Muizzu working to limit defence and security cooperation with India, most notably by asking New Delhi to pull out troops operating Indian choppers in the archipelago and walking out of a bilateral agree-

ment that allowed Indian Navy to carry out hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters.

The visit will take place in the middle of the Indian parliamentary elections, making Zameer likely the last high-profile foreign dignitary India will host during PM Modi's second term. The visit will also come around the May 10 deadline that Male had set for India to withdraw its troops and replace them with civilians. India reluctantly acquiesced to the demand, keeping in mind the geopolitical importance of the country which is where most of the major Indian Ocean shipping routes pass through and where China has made a dramatic comeback since Muizzu took office.

Muizzu chose China for his first state visit in Jan, becoming the first democratically elected Maldivian prez to travel to the country before visiting India. He signed a number of agree-

ments with Beijing during his visit and another later for free defence assistance from China. The visit will follow the Maldives parliamentary elections that saw Muizzu's party winning a super majority in parliament.

Zameer may discuss with his counterpart S Jaishankar the possibility of a visit by Muizzu to India later this year. Maldivian officials had earlier claimed they had proposed a visit by Muizzu to India in Nov, shortly after his oath-taking.

He's also likely to seek leniency from India in the repayment of loans taken by successive Maldivian govts. Muizzu, who wants to "restore" ties with India on the basis of respect for sovereignty, had earlier urged debt relief measures from India for the repayment of "hefty" loans. The two countries are also likely to discuss ways to carry forward defence and security cooperation.