



MAHANAGAR METRO

VOICE OF THE CITY, PULSE OF THE NATION

Rs 3,000 for women, Uniform Civil Code in 6 months if BJP wins Bengal: Amit Shah

New Delhi.(Agency)

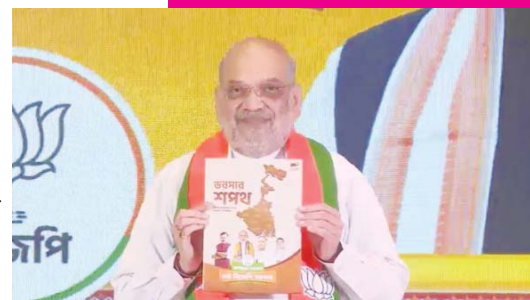
Unveiling the BJP's West Bengal manifesto, Home Minister Amit Shah termed Mamata Banerjee's 15-year rule a "period of darkness", alleging widespread fear among people and a growing demand for change.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday unveiled the BJP's election manifesto for West Bengal, promising a monthly financial assistance of Rs 3,000 for women and implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) within six months if the party is voted to power. Launching the "Sankalp Patra" at an event in Kolkata, Shah said the document reflects commitment for "every section" of Bengal's society and aims to restore public confidence. He described the past 15 years under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as a "period of darkness", claiming people now feel fearful and are seeking change.

"This manifesto is a path to bring every section of Bengal out of despair. It will show a new way out for farmers surrounded by various kinds of fears. This manifesto will also place before the people of Bengal the roadmap for the developed India envisioned by Prime Minister Modi. The people are frightened and disillusioned. The people want change from the heart. Today we are working as the main opposition party in the Bengal Assembly," the Home Minister said.

The BJP's manifesto outlines a strict policy against illegal

infiltration, with Shah reiterating a "zero tolerance" approach. "Detect, delete and deport will be our policy when we form the government," he said. The BJP leader also announced that Dearness Allowance (DA) will be ensured for all government employees and pensioners if the party wins the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal. Among key other promises, the party pledged to roll out the



7th Pay Commission within 45 days of forming the government. "Dearness Allowance (DA) will be ensured for all government employees and pensioners, and the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission will be implemented within just 45 days. The BJP government will transfer Rs 3,000 into the bank account of every mother between the 1st and the 5th of every month. We will implement all BJP schemes, including

Ayushman Bharat," he said. Positioning the manifesto as a "pledge of trust", Shah said the BJP aims to revive Bengal's cultural identity and create a state "where people live without fear and with pride". The party has set an ambitious timeline, linking its vision to the period between Poila Baisakh (April 15) and Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary (May 9), which Shah said symbolises a renewed push to reclaim Bengal's lost glory.

Wild west and constitutional cowboys: Fireworks at Pawan Khera's bail hearing

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Telangana High Court on Thursday reserved its order on a transit anticipatory bail plea filed by Congress leader Pawan Khera, triggering a sharp courtroom exchange over allegations of political vendetta, misuse of law, and jurisdiction. The plea came days after Assam Police registered a case in Guwahati against Khera on charges including forgery and criminal conspiracy, linked to his remarks about Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma.

Khera had approached the High Court seeking protection from arrest, citing his Hyderabad residence and his wife's roots in Telangana. He urged the court to grant pre-arrest bail, stating he is a law-abiding citizen with no criminal antecedents and is willing to cooperate with the investigation. The controversy stems from a press conference on April 5, where Khera alleged that the Chief Minister's wife held multiple passports and undisclosed foreign assets. The allegations were dismissed by the Sarma family as "false, fabricated and malicious". Appearing for Khera, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi argued that the case was politically motivated and the charges were excessive for what he described as a press statement. He told the court that invoking multiple offences over alleged defamatory remarks amounted to harassment.

"Are we living in the wild west where, for a complaint like this, you have to arrest me? In the FIR, every imaginable offence is listed. The allegation is that I held a press conference and I made defamatory statements against you."



Short news

Can Vijay Breach DMK Bastion In Villivakkam? TVK's Aadhav Arjuna Faces A Tough Task

Chennai.(Agency)

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) General Secretary (Elections) Aadhav Arjuna is already on the move early in the morning in Chennai's Villivakkam assembly constituency, walking through narrow lanes, stopping to chat with residents, and even joining locals in light moments of play, in a bid to build a direct grassroots connect. By evening, around 6 PM every day, the poll strategist shifts to an intensive door-to-door campaign. As he walks into the streets, people gather, waiting to greet him - many blowing whistles, the party's election symbol, while others crowd around for selfies, turning his campaign trail into a lively mobilisation. Actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK has fielded Arjuna in Chennai's Villivakkam - a constituency long dominated by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which has won eight of the 11 elections here. Speaking to , Arjuna mounted a sharp attack on the DMK government led by Chief Minister MK Stalin, alleging neglect of basic infrastructure.

A Day At Mamata Banerjee's Rallies And 'Joy Bangla' Chants: Reporter's Diary

New Delhi.(Agency)

A sea of supporters waits patiently as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's chopper makes its way to a nearby helipad. On the ground, the election heat beats the mercury and 'Joy Bangla' chants rent the air, invoking Bengali pride to garner support for a chief minister who portrays herself as 'Banglar nijer meye' ('Bengal's own daughter'). The chants soon turn into slogans for Banerjee and her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, the second in command in the party.

As the sound of Banerjee's chopper draws closer, party caps are distributed among the supporters. Women with drums and bells announce the arrival of their leader. In the background, the 'Fighter Didi' track - a song asserting that Banerjee is fighting for everyone - plays out and women dance.

Notably, the 'Khela Hobe' (Game on) tune that dominated the previous election cycle is conspicuously absent this time.

The moment Banerjee steps onto the stage, she takes complete command of the platform. She introduces all the candidates standing alongside her to the crowd. Then she begins her speech amid 'Joy Bangla' chants. She adds a few Hindi words occasionally in her predominantly Bengali speech, likely with the national media in mind.

Beyond the usual political discourse, a mention of fish drops midway. She reiterates a claim that the Trinamool has long sought to weaponise against the BJP; that if the BJP comes to power in Bengal, it would ban the sale.

Army boosts air-ground combat edge with Prachand sortie, Apache firing

From indigenous strength to precision strike power, the Army showcases its evolving battlefield edge. But what do these helicopter demonstrations reveal about India's readiness for modern, high-threat warfare scenarios?

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's push to strengthen battlefield firepower gathered pace as the Army demonstrated enhanced close air support capabilities through a Prachand sortie in Karnataka and Apache firing trials in Rajasthan. Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi flew a sortie on the indigenous Light Combat Helicopter Prachand at HAL in Karnataka on April 9, signalling a focus on integrating homegrown platforms into frontline operations.

This was followed by a key operational demonstration on April 10 at the Pokhran Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan, where the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter

carried out its first field firing, successfully engaging targets with Hellfire missiles and other onboard weapons.

APACHE, PRACHAND SHOWCASE PRECISION AND COORDINATION

The demonstrations offered a glimpse into how attack helicopters operate in close coordination with ground troops, even in high-threat environments involving small arms fire, shoulder-fired missiles and drones.

Both platforms showed rapid target acquisition and precision strike capability, aimed at directly supporting manoeuvre operations on the battlefield.

Advanced sensors, fire control systems and



real-time data links enabled faster decision-making, ensuring battlefield intelligence was quickly converted into action.

FOCUS ON SPEED, LETHALITY AND BATTLEFIELD RESPONSE

The Apache underlined its role as a force

multiplier, enhancing the reach, lethality and responsiveness of ground forces during combat scenarios.

Meanwhile, Prachand reflected India's growing indigenous strength in combat aviation, reinforcing the Army's push for self-reliance in critical defence platforms.

INTEGRATION KEY TO FUTURE WARFARE

The exercises underline the Army's focus on integrating air and land capabilities to boost battlefield effectiveness and sustain operational momentum. With evolving threats and increasingly complex combat environments, such coordination between aerial platforms and ground forces is seen as central to modern warfare strategy.

Development or Destruction? The Ugly Truth Behind the Soil Scam

Gujarat's Fortress and the Public Pulse: Will a Wind of Change Blow or Will the 'Saffron' Prevail Again?

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

New Delhi/Mumbai: Gujarat's politics currently stands at a crossroads where past election results have become history, and the upcoming elections are carving out new equations for the future. Political parties that operate under the assumption that "the people of Gujarat are naive" need to be cautious. This is the 21st-century Gujarat—social media-savvy and highly aware. While the ruling party has adopted a 'No-Repeat Theory,' discrediting veteran leaders to field fresh faces, a critical question remains: Can merely changing faces wash away the deep-seated patterns of governance and the stains of corruption?

Key Points: Public Queries and Party Struggles

New Faces vs. Chronic Issues:

The BJP has overhauled its strategy to counter anti-incumbency. By sidelining heavyweights and giving opportunities to new blood, they aim to refresh their image. However, will the voters accept this system, which many view as "old wine in a new bottle"? Today's voter is no longer swayed by 'names' but demands 'work' and 'transparency.'

* **Corruption: Will the Ballot Box Provide the Answer? **

From the recurring 'paper leak'



scandals to the corruption permeating local administration, the common man is being squeezed from all sides. According to our ground-zero reporting, there is a simmering resentment among the public. The real test is whether this silent anger will manifest as a strike against the EVMs on polling day.

The Opposition's Existence: A Viable Alternative or a Split Vote?

For the Congress, this is a battle for survival. Meanwhile, the entry of a third party has turned the contest into a triangular fight. If the opposition votes are split, it could directly benefit the ruling party. However, if the public has truly resolved for 'Parivartan' (change), even the most calculated political mathematics could fail.

Editorial Perspective: Social Media – The New Battlefield

In this era, misleading the public is no longer easy. Even a youth sitting in the remotest village is asking

tough questions via digital platforms. Facts and ground realities are now clashing with the propaganda of 'WhatsApp University.' In this election, issues like 'the reality of development' and 'inflation' are likely to outweigh traditional caste-based politics.

Conclusion: The People are Supreme

The wise people of Gujarat are currently silent, and this silence might just be the proverbial calm before the storm. Whether it is leaders blinded by the intoxication of power or opposition figures failing to connect with the masses—this election will serve as a 'litmus test' for everyone.

The Final Question: Will new names be able to break old alliances? Will the public demand an account of corruption? The answers lie within the ballot boxes, but one thing is certain—this time, something new is brewing in Gujarat!

Digital Conspiracy: Investigating the Truth

By Pawan Makan | Group Editor

Ahmedabad/New Delhi: A sophisticated nationwide network is allegedly using AI-generated deepfake videos to defame Jain monks and extort money from followers, an investigation by Mahanagar Metro has revealed. The gang reportedly uses edited visuals and deepfake technology to create obscene fake videos featuring revered monks. These clips are then used for blackmail, with large amounts of money demanded in the name of "settlement." If demands are not met, the videos are allegedly circulated through fake social media accounts to create outrage and confusion. The report also raises serious concerns over the role of certain irresponsible media portals that amplify such unverified content without proper fact-checking, undermining the ethics of journalism for traffic and views.

On the issue, Group Editor Pawan Makan said the attack is not merely on an individual monk but on centuries-old faith, culture, and social trust. He added that the publication remains committed to exposing those behind the conspiracy.

1. When will strict action be taken against such digital extortion gangs?
2. Why is cyber investigation slow despite the availability of digital evidence?
3. When will action be initiated against platforms spreading unverified fake videos?

Short news

Car crashes into divider on Dwarka Expressway, driver injured

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A man was injured after the car he was driving crashed into a divider at Dhanwapur flyover on Dwarka Expressway on Wednesday night. The accident occurred around 9pm when the vehicle was travelling from Delhi towards Gurgaon. Police said the car veered off course near the flyover and hit the divider.

Passers-by pulled the injured driver out of the vehicle and took him to a nearby hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. An emergency response vehicle team reached the spot after receiving information, but the driver had already been shifted to the hospital.

Police said the identity of the driver is yet to be established, and no complaint has been received so far. CCTV footage from the area is being examined to ascertain the sequence



of events. The damaged car was later removed from the road. In another incident, a case was registered following a complaint by a passenger injured in a head-on collision between two cars on NH8 near an HP petrol pump.

Police said the accident took place around 9pm on April 1 when Anu Narwal, a resident of Sonapat, was travelling in a Hyundai Aura, driven by his friend Kapil, from Elan Mall in Sector 80 towards Manesar. A car coming from a service road, allegedly at high speed, collided head-on with their vehicle, injuring Narwal. He was initially taken to a hospital in Rampura Chowk and later shifted to a hospital in Rohtak.

Police said both drivers had initially declined legal action on the night of the accident. After Narwal was traced and his statement recorded, a case was registered on April 8 at Kherki Daula police station under sections 281 (rash driving), 125(a) (act endangering life) and 324(4) (mischief) of the BNS. Police said further investigation is underway to establish the sequence of events and determine liability in the crash.

'Harshit was trained swimmer': Mother of Amity student questions injury marks on hand, back & legs

Noida.(Agency)

The family of Harshit Bhatt, a 23-year-old Amity University student who drowned in a water-filled excavation pit in Sector 94 on Wednesday, has questioned how a trained swimmer who aspired to become a coaching professional could drown in a construction pit metres from his campus.

Police said the autopsy report confirmed "accidental drowning". They also said they had detained the three friends accompanying Harshit for questioning.

Harshit, a resident of Indirapuram, had appeared for his sixth-semester BSc physical education examination, his final papers, on Wednesday morning. After the exam ended around 1 pm, he bought food, gathered with three friends, and the group made their way towards the now-stalled excavation site for a proposed Noida Habitat and Convention Centre behind the Supernova building, apparently for a post-exam picnic.

He entered the water at 3.45 pm, moved deeper into the pit, and began to drown. A friend attempted to rescue him but turned back. According to police, they made a call to Dial 112 at 4.06 pm and an unit arrived at 4.20 pm. They retrieved Harshit with divers, and administered CPR before fire brigade and SDRF teams reached the spot. Harshit was declared dead at the district hospital later.

A medical panel, which conducted the autopsy under video surveillance, found mud-like particles in Harshit's stomach and mouth, consistent with inhalation of contaminated water. Minor injury marks of approximately 0.5 mm were observed on his back, arms and legs, which police attributed to friction sustained during rescue efforts.

Viscera samples have been preserved to determine whether Harshit had consumed alcohol, even as medical reports of all three friends present at the scene confirmed they had consumed alcohol. Harshit's mother, Deepmala, rejected the police theory of death by drowning. She described her son as "disciplined and physically trained swimmer, focused on a career in coaching". She claimed the injury marks she saw at the mortuary told a different story. "When I saw my son in the mortuary, there were V-shaped marks on his back and dark injury marks on his hands and legs. It looked like he was attacked with a pointed object. I believe my son was murdered. I want justice," she said. She added that she recognised two of the three friends who were with Harshit but did not know the third.

Harshit's father, Lalit Chandra, who serves with the technical wing of the Indian Army and is posted in Ladakh, reached Noida on Thursday afternoon. The family took the body to Ghaziabad, where last rites were performed.

Additional DCP Manisha Singh said all three friends were taken into custody for questioning. Further action would follow once the family files a formal written complaint, he said.

Low wages and job insecurity: Why contractual workers out on streets in Manesar

GURGAON.(Agency)

Contractual workers, who form the backbone of manufacturing and garment units, have taken to the streets amid a deepening cost-of-living crisis. Hired for 7-11 months through labour contractors or third-party agencies, these workers receive only the govt-mandated minimum wage and make up most of the shop-floor workforce.

Companies rely on them to avoid direct responsibility, often shifting blame to contractors whenever disputes arise. Under labour laws, a worker completing one year of continuous service becomes entitled to benefits enjoyed by permanent employees, including gratuity, leave, insurance coverage, notice-period protection and annual increments. But contractual workers rarely reach that threshold. They face job insecurity, fixed minimum wages without increments, and payment only for days actually worked. Many also alleged underpayment and abrupt termination for raising grievances.

With companies distancing themselves and contractors in full control, workers said they remain vulnerable, underpaid and unheard.

The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970, defines a contractual worker as one employed through a contractor and not on the company's direct rolls. In Haryana's industrial belt, such workers make up 80-90% of the workforce. Permanent employees, by contrast, are a small group in mid- and senior-level roles, usually with engineering, MBA or technical qualifications. Contractual workers are largely unskilled or ITI-trained.

Most are paid minimum wages that are far lower than permanent employees' salaries. By hiring through contractors, companies avoid DA (dearness allowance)-linked increments, performance incentives, allowances and higher bonuses, creating a stark dual wage system within the same factory. Permanent workers receive long-term

benefits such as gratuity, retrenchment compensation, leave encashment and pension. "By rotating contractual workers every 7-11 months, companies avoid building these liabilities. Tenure is kept deliberately short so workers never



qualify," said labour researcher Rekha Sehgal.

Outsourcing labour also eliminates recruitment and training costs. Hiring, paperwork, recordkeeping and workforce replacement are entirely handled by contractors, giving companies complete flexibility to scale up or down based on production cycles.

Avoiding legal obligations is another motivation. Since contractual workers are technically not company employees, firms bypass compliance with standing orders, paid leave, canteen subsidy and maintenance of wage records. Contractors bear legal responsibility, keeping companies insulated. Despite legal restrictions on deploying contract labour for core production, many units routinely place them on assembly lines, paint shops, packaging, quality checks and, in the garment sector, almost the entire production chain.

Workers' groups said the protests stem from basic legal and economic demands, higher minimum wages, an 8-hour workday, double-rate overtime and abolition of the contract labour system. "Workers are also fighting exploitation such as black-marketing of LPG, non-payment of overtime and non-implementation of minimum wages," said Santosh Kumar of Mazdoor Adhikar Sangarsh Samiti.

1 car park per unit must: Haryana tweaks affordable housing policy

Gurgaon.(Agency)

In a major shift that is likely to affect upcoming affordable housing projects, Haryana govt has amended its Affordable Housing Policy 2013, making one car parking space mandatory for every unit and revising allotment rates across cities.

The amendment, issued by department of town and country planning on April 8, introduces stricter norms to tackle long-standing concerns over inadequate parking in high-density affordable housing colonies. Under the revised clause, developers must now provide one equivalent car space (ECS) per unit. The cost of parking has been fixed at 10% of the flat price. Parking slots must also be clearly marked at the time of building plan approval to ensure greater transparency for buyers. Officials said any parking

space beyond the mandatory allocation may be earmarked for visitor parking or two-wheelers, allowing some flexibility in layout planning while preserving



minimum standards. The govt has also revised maximum allotment rates under the policy. In Gurgaon, the ceiling has been raised to Rs 5,575 per sq ft on a carpet area basis, along with an additional charge of Rs 1,300 per sq ft for balcony

space, capped at Rs 1.3 lakh per flat. Earlier, affordable housing rates in the city were capped at Rs 5,000 per sq ft (carpet area) plus Rs 1,200 per sq ft for balcony areas. In Faridabad and Sohna, the rate has been fixed at Rs 5,450 per sq ft. Other high- and medium-potential towns will have a cap of Rs 5,050 per sq ft, while low-potential towns will have a ceiling of Rs 4,250 per sq ft.

The revised rates will apply to all projects where allotments have not yet been made. In cases where applications have already been invited, developers will be permitted to recover the differential amount from successful applicants. Those unwilling to continue at the revised rates will be entitled to a full refund without deductions, and developers must issue public notices.

Haryana notifies 35% minimum wage hike, faces backlash from industries

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A day after announcing a steep 35% increase in minimum wages, Haryana govt on Thursday issued a notification bringing the revised pay structure into effect. District administrations directed the labour department to ensure immediate and effective implementation of the revised structure across all industrial units. Officials said enforcement teams will begin inspections to verify compliance, especially in manufacturing clusters where contractual workers make up a large share of the workforce.

Deputy commissioner Ajay Kumar said directions have been issued to the labour department officials for effective implementation of increase in the minimum wage in Gurgaon so that workers receive full benefit of the decision and labour laws are strictly enforced. "Haryana govt has

issued a notification for the increase in minimum wage rates to be given to workers, and this wage hike will come into effect from April 1, 2026," said the



deputy commissioner. He urged all industrial units and organisations in the city to cooperate in implementing the govt's decision to raise minimum wages for workers on a priority basis. "In such a

scenario, protecting the rights of workers and providing them fair remuneration is shared responsibility of the govt and the industrial sector," said the DC. He added that the wage increase is an important step towards improving workers' standard of living, ensuring economic security, and strengthening social balance.

He also appealed to industrial units and associations to adopt the public welfare measure in a positive spirit and implement it effectively in their establishments. Urging workers to resume duties, Kumar said, "All workers should adopt a positive approach, return to work at their establishments, and cooperate in carrying forward production activities smoothly."

He added that the govt and administration are fully committed to protecting workers' interests.

MCG hands over operation

Upkeep of water supply infra to agencies for 2 years

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Gurgaon: MCG has decided to outsource the operation and maintenance of the city's water supply network across multiple wards for the next two years. The contracts, covering the running, repairing and maintaining of boosting stations, tubewells, rising mains, distribution pipelines and other allied water supply infrastructure across wards, is estimated to be Rs 38 crore.

MCG officials said the move is aimed at streamlining maintenance work and promptly addressing routine complaints related to water supply infrastructure. "We have now decided to bring uniformity and float tenders for the operation and maintenance of water supply networks across the city for two years. Earlier these used to be short-term tenders. The objective is to ensure that routine complaints related to water supply networks are addressed promptly," said executive engineer Sandeep Sihag, who heads division 4A and B covering ward numbers from 19 to 26. The works have been divided across multiple wards. Maintenance of water supply network in wards 11, 14, 15 and 18 has been estimated at Rs 9.3 crore, while wards 1,

12 and 13 account for another Rs 7.9 crore. Works in wards 9, 10, 16 and 17 are estimated at Rs 6.9 crore while wards 20, 21 and 22 under division 4A will see maintenance work amounting to Rs 5.9

clubbed under a Rs 3.6 crore maintenance contract.

While residents welcomed the move to issue longer contracts, they said lack of manpower deployed by agencies is



crore. Another Rs 3.8 crore covers the maintenance of boosting stations and water supply systems under division 3B for the financial years 2026-28. In addition, wards 24, 25 and 26 have been

responsible for gaps in maintenance work. "If MCG has now decided to float tenders for two years, it is certainly a positive step. However, it must ensure the agencies hired have adequate manpower.

When machinery or motors at any of our four boosting stations become faulty, the agency often takes days to repair them," said Pawan Yadav, president of the Sushant Lok 2 and 3 residents' welfare association. Delays often occur because a single worker is tasked with handling multiple facilities or boosting stations, he said.

"Typically, they deploy only one person to handle all the boosting stations. That person repairs one motor or piece of machinery first and then moves on to the others, which delays the process. Since this work is time-sensitive, such delays cause significant inconvenience," Yadav said. Residents have also questioned whether the penalty clauses in the contracts are strong enough to hold agencies accountable for delays.

"A major concern is the condition mentioned in the new contracts. If MCG issues a notice to an agency asking them to respond within 15 days for failing to repair machinery at boosting stations or to fix leakages in water pipelines, the contractor may simply complete the repair on the 14th day, effectively rendering the notice meaningless," said Lalit Suraj Bhola, a resident of Sector 9A.

Inside 'godman' Kharat's network

130 bank accounts opened with spurious documents, Rs 63 crore moved

Mumbai. (Agency)

It was when he received a call from Ahilyanagar police earlier this month, says a Mumbai-based hotelier, that he came to know that more than Rs 2.43 crore had been routed through four bank accounts in his and his wife's names — accounts he says he never opened, in a credit society he and his family had never seen or visited.

He believes documents he had shared for "darshan booking" with arrested 'godman' Ashokkumar Eknath Kharat had been misused to open these accounts. "We visited Kharat as we thought he was a spiritual healer," says the hotelier.

Investigators believe he is just one of many people whose accounts were similarly used to "route" money, with the probe into Kharat — which began with charges of sexual assault, cheating, extortion and under the anti-superstition Act — expanding to his finances. Apart from 13 police cases, he faces a case of money laundering

registered by the Enforcement Directorate.

Complaints along with bank records accessed by The Indian Express suggest that documents collected from followers, visitors and even victims may have been used to open more than 130 such bank accounts. Transactions in these exceeded Rs 63 crore between 2021 and 2024, with Kharat listed as a nominee in at least a hundred accounts and his mobile number appearing across many of them.

The pattern is the same across cases — people got in touch with Kharat, to visit him or "consult" him for "predictions"; were told to hand over documentation such as Aadhaar and PAN cards and photographs; bank accounts were opened using these documents; and funds deposited into them.

Incidentally, a majority of the accounts into which the money was received were opened in the name of the Jagdamba



Cooperative Credit Society and Samata Nagari Sahakari Pat Sanstha, Rahata, both linked to Kharat.

While Kharat served as chairman of the Jagdamba society till 2024 as per records, the Samata society is linked to his associate and co-accused Arvind Pandurang Bawke. A bulk of the money transactions happened during their tenure.

While more than a hundred suspect accounts have allegedly been traced to the Samata society, the number is around 32 in the case

of Jagdamba. Bawke is also under arrest over a cheating case in which Kharat and his wife are accused.

In some cases, multiple accounts were opened in the name of the same individuals, and several appear to have been opened within a short period.

Ahilyanagar SP Somnath Garge said: "So far statements of 20 account holders have been recorded and they have said that accounts were opened without their knowledge and consent. Now we are doing a forensic examination of these accounts." A woman who has alleged sexual assault and forced miscarriage by Kharat is believed to have told investigators that her papers, along with those of her family members, were used for documentation linked to a credit society. She said she was made to sign documents related to the society despite resistance. Another complainant has filed a case linked to a land dispute. Corporate

filings show that Kharat is a director in Shree Vyankatesh Farmers Producer Company Limited, incorporated in December 2021. In March 2024, the company was empanelled as a State Level Agency for the procurement of agricultural produce under the MSP system through agencies such as NAFED. A farmer in Shirdi has alleged non-payment following procurement carried out through the company. Investigators are examining whether financial flows reflected in some of the bank accounts are linked to transactions connected to the company. Another firm, Bright Sparks Infra Private Limited, was incorporated in 2024 with the same individuals as appearing across the alleged network, including Bawke. Asked about this, Bawke told The Indian Express before his arrest that the company hoped to get government contracts, and that documentation and investment were handled by Kharat.

Short news

High voter turnout in Assam assembly polls excites both BJP, Congress

GUWAHATI. (Agency)

The ruling BJP and the Congress in Assam are upbeat after the "unprecedented" voter turnout on a rain-soaked Thursday. Polling to the 126 assembly seats was, by and large, peaceful. By 8 pm, the voter turnout was 85.51%, compared to 82.42% in 2021 and 84.72% in 2016. The Election Commission said the final poll percentage would be compiled and disseminated on Friday after receipt of all reports. In 2016, the NDA wrested power by dislodging the 15-year-old Congress government. The voter turnout in 2011 stood at 75.92%. The weather remained hazy, followed by rain in different parts of the state in the morning. However, that could not dampen the spirit of the people. They went out in large numbers and cast their votes.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who cast his vote after offering prayers, along with his family members, at the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, said, "Today, for the first time, our people have come out in unprecedented numbers — voting shoulder to shoulder, matching and even surpassing our opponents in turnout."

Inked, but yet to be 'linked': Tribal voters trek 5 km to lone polling booth in Kozhikode



KOZHIKODE. (Agency)

Paloor is home to Kozhikode district's only polling booth dedicated for the tribal community. Yet, for its 402 voters, access to this symFor the 402 registered voters in Paloor, casting a vote is an endurance test. The polling station lies over 5 km downhill, accessible only by narrow, uneven paths.

For many, especia

"Now, more children are studying and even going outside to places like Vadakara and Kozhikode city for higher education."

This progress, however, contrasts sharply with the lack of basic facilities. "There is still no proper transport system," says Vimala T K, an anganwadi helper in the area. "People struggle every day. Reaching hospitals, schools, or even markets is quite a task."

The lack of connectivity has also fuelled migration. Many adults have begun moving to cities and even abroad in search of stable livelihoods, leaving behind an ageing population that continues to grapple with daily hardships.

"What is the use of voting?" asks Santhosh, a daily wagger from the community. "Every election, politicians visit and make tall promises. But our suffering remains the same. Nothing much really changes for us."

'Inaction against noise pollution from mosque': HC warns of contempt action

The bench also issued a stern oral warning, stating that failure to enforce court orders would invite contempt proceedings against errant police officers.

Lucknow. (Agency)

The Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the Mumbai Police to respond to a plea alleging inaction against early morning noise pollution from a mosque in Kandivali (East), even as loudspeaker use remains restricted between 10 pm and 6 am.

A division bench of Justices Ajay S Gadkari and Kamal R Khata observed that if the petitioner's allegation of "blatant lies" by authorities was found to be true, it would constitute a serious breach of the Noise Pollution Rules, 2000.

The bench also issued a stern oral warning, stating that failure to enforce court orders would invite contempt proceedings against errant police officers.

The court was hearing a petition filed by



advocate Reena Richard, a resident of Thakur Village, who alleged repeated violations by a mosque near her residence in Kandivali (East). She said multiple complaints to the Samta Nagar police station regarding loudspeaker use during early morning hours had not led to consistent

enforcement.

According to Richard, authorities had earlier assured compliance and even apologised before the court for inaction, with criminal cases initiated against violators. However, she alleged that permissions for loudspeaker use were again being granted from 2024, despite the locality qualifying as a silence zone. She further claimed that government prosecutors were incorrectly stating that the area was not a silence zone, even though a hospital maternity ward is within 50 metres of the mosque, along with a school and a college nearby. Taking note of the allegations, the bench said, "if the contention of the petitioner is correct, then it is a matter of seriousness", and directed the police to file an affidavit within two weeks.

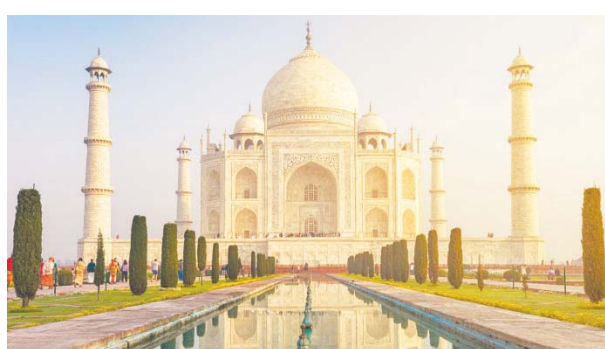
UP to build Rs 5,142-crore 'Greater Agra' with 10 river-themed townships. Here's the plan

To be developed on the lines of Greater Noida, the Greater Agra Project is aimed at decongesting NCR and also keeping the expansion of Agra rooted in 'cultural consciousness'.

Lucknow. (Agency)

Set to be developed on the model of Greater Noida, the Greater Agra project will position Agra beyond its traditional identity as a tourism hub centered around the Taj Mahal, and instead aims to become an alternative growth centre—offering space, infrastructure, and connectivity without the congestion.

Spread over 450 hectares on the outskirts of Agra, the new urban cluster will be developed by the Agra Development Authority (ADA) under the Chief Minister Urban Expansion Scheme. The Rs 5,142-crore project will have 10 townships — all named after the rivers — with residential and commercial areas, institutional and public utility spaces, healthcare centres, community spaces, hotels, banks, fire stations, and police



outposts. Officials say Greater Agra has been designed not just to expand Agra, but also to reduce pressure on Noida, Gurugram and Delhi.

"Since Agra is getting exhausted, the idea of the project is to extend Agra on the lines of Greater Noida. This Greater Agra would be next to the Agra's Ring Road and will be connected to both the Yamuna

Expressway and Lucknow-Agra Expressway," M Arunmozhi, IAS, VC of Agra Development Authority, tells.

Located in Raipur and Rehan kalan villages, the site sits close to a 100 metre-wide Inner Ring Road and is well connected to National Highway-19, Fatehabad Road, and the Yamuna Expressway. Its proximity to the Yamuna River and the Kuberpur railway station is expected to support both mobility and trade.

Around 4,700 plots have been planned across residential, group housing, commercial, and mixed-use categories, with a capacity to house nearly 1.5 lakh people. "The idea is to create self-contained neighbourhoods—where schools, hospitals, banks, community centres and emergency services are built into the layout rather than added later," an official says.

'Cruelty proved against wife, not husband': Allahabad HC quashes dowry harassment case against man, parents

HC says continuance of the criminal proceedings against the applicants are nothing but "abuse of process of law"

Lucknow. (Agency)

The Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court on Wednesday quashed the criminal proceedings against a man and his parents in a case of dowry harassment and assault filed by his wife's brother on grounds that they are currently divorced and to continue criminal prosecution amounts to abuse of the process of law. As one of the grounds, the court also cited a family court's observation in the couple's divorce suit that cruelty has been proved against the wife and not against the husband.

As mentioned in the high court's order, the wife's brother had lodged a complaint



case at the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court of Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district in 2015 while the family court in Gurugram had ruled in favour of the husband in its judgment in 2021 in the divorce suit filed by him.

A single bench of Justice Brij Raj Singh, in its judgment on April 8, stated, "Considering all the facts and circumstances; observations made by the family court in the divorce suit; cross-examination of the wife; further the complaint has been filed after one year and nine months and cruelty has not been proved against the husband, rather the same has been proved against the wife, continuance of the criminal proceedings against the applicants are nothing but abuse of process of law and they deserved to be quashed."

Stating that they were innocent and falsely implicated, the husband's parents had approached the high court seeking relief

by setting aside the CJM, Bahraich order dated August 14, 2015 regarding filing of a case on charges of mental or physical cruelty of a married woman by the husband and relatives, including dowry harassment, assault, criminal intimidation and under Dowry Prohibition Act. The case was filed by the wife's brother against the husband and parents. They filed a criminal revision application in ADJ court challenging the CJM's order, but it was dismissed on March 8, 2017.

The counsel for the petitioners submitted that Amit Khanna was married to Shilpa on March 9, 2002 in New Delhi and they have never lived with Amit's parents in Bahraich.

Police failed to curb obscene content, offensive messages on SM: Andhra Pradesh HC

Noting that the inaction of authorities had emboldened offenders, the court observed that those posting abusive content were becoming increasingly aggressive because police were asleep.

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has strongly criticised the Police Department for failing to curb obscene content and objectionable messages on social media, as well as on flex banners.

Hearing a petition filed by former YSRC social media incharge Sajjala Bhargava Reddy, who sought cancellation of a Look Out Circular (LOC) issued against him by immigration authorities, on Thursday, Justice Battu Devanand expressed serious concern over the increasing trend of abusive and provocative posts, stating that such things reflect a lack of effective policing in the State.

Referring to a controversial flex banner displayed in Vijayawada that read "We are waiting for the destruction you will carry out in 2029", the court questioned who exactly was being threatened, whether it was the State or its people.

The court observed that such messages were being openly displayed due to the inability of police to act decisively. It remarked that the continued emergence of such objectionable content on social media indicates that offenders had little fear of law enforcement.

The court asked the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and police whether individuals would dare to post such objectionable content on social media if a proper investigation was conducted and chargesheets were promptly filed in cases.

Noting that the inaction of authorities had emboldened offenders, the court observed that those posting abusive content were becoming increasingly aggressive because police were asleep.

Police should act firmly to ensure that violators fear legal consequences: HC

"Law enforcement agencies should act firmly to ensure that violators fear legal consequences. Strict action should be taken to suppress those responsible for posting offensive content on social media," the court observed.

While acknowledging that political parties may have ideological differences and engage in criticism, the court questioned the right of individuals to target family members of the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, or other ministers. It asserted that no one has the right to damage another person's reputation.

Effective pill for online ills

Over the last few months, several states have sent a clear message long overdue: in today's age, child safety can no longer be treated as an afterthought. Calls for stronger restrictions on minors' social media use are already being voiced citing mental health, academic performance and overall well-being.

From Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to Goa and Punjab, state governments have begun recognising the seriousness of challenges children face online, and the fact that it is no longer a scattered concern but a national problem that demands urgent attention. The concern is not remote to my state, Odisha, either. This is not a sudden overreaction or a passing political trend, but rather the consequence of years of mounting harm and toxicity, and the ineffectiveness of platform safeguards. Even this year's Economic Survey framed social media addiction as a health challenge in which compulsive use among young Indians is leading to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, reduced concentration and poorer academic performance. Among the things children are exposed to on social media platforms are sexualised material, influencer-driven content, unrealistic lifestyles and manipulative trends. Added to this is the rising threat of bullying, predatory contact and generative artificial intelligence-enabled harms that overwhelm young users with misleading and often harmful material. It is for this reason that state-level conversations on social media regulation have largely framed the public health lens. While platforms are making efforts to improve a child's experience on social media through measures such as teen accounts and parental tools, such efforts are clearly not enough.

As parliamentarians, we should read this carefully. When state governments with varied political dispensations move in the same direction, it signals that a public concern has crossed a threshold and policymakers are losing patience. The question, therefore, is not merely whether banning social media for children is a sustainable approach. Banning technology is not the solution, but the status quo also needs to change.

The bigger question is whether the existing platform-led model of child safety online remains defensible at all. Are we starved for workable solutions? While platforms have had years to remodel these spaces meaningfully safer for users, the harms have only exacerbated.

Now, with the mainstreaming of gen-AI, the culture of platforms seems to be becoming even more exploitative and difficult to govern. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that governments reach for bans and regulatory restrictions, which could be considered the easiest tools available when no one has offered a better alternative.

The next phase of this conversation must be about platform accountability in its most achievable form. For that, we first need to acknowledge that social media platforms function as systems of public consequence. It would not be an understatement to say that they actively shape what we see, how we think and what kinds of social behaviour are normalised. Second, since the question of harm is no longer restricted to content alone and has become more about design and culture, our accountability mechanisms must keep that in mind. For that, platforms accessed by children must move away from design architectures that involve meaningful friction, including age-appropriate time limits, safer late-night defaults, reduced virality features for younger users, stronger break prompts and greater restraint around design choices that are built to prolong use.

Muhammad Iqbal's rich legacy at stake

Reducing a towering mind to a political label is an act unworthy of a university

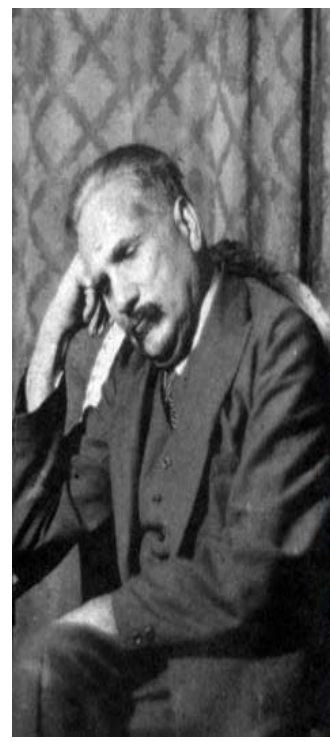
JAGAN Nath Azad, a scholar of rare distinction, must be turning in his grave. It was at the University of Jammu that he wrote eleven books on Muhammad Iqbal, including the authoritative five-volume biography, Roodad-e-Iqbal, and a translation of his magnum opus Javed Nama. Scholars described Azad, a professor at the university, as "Iqbal Academy incarnate".

It is indeed tragic that a university which once hosted this finest post-Partition exponent of Iqbaliyat — the specialised field of research on the poetry and philosophy of Iqbal — should now seek to erase Sir Muhammad Iqbal from its curriculum. At Azad's request, the Iqbal Chair was established at the University of the Punjab in Pakistan during Gen Zia-ul-Haq's reign. In contrast, the rich legacy of his research seems no longer relevant to the university that he had made his own. It is as if the institution is choosing to forget one of its finest sons to assert a new, narrower identity. The irony deepens when one looks across the Pir Panjal. At the University of Kashmir, the central library — established in 1948 with the founding of the original University of Jammu and Kashmir — bears the name Allama Iqbal Library. It is a living monument to the shared intellectual heritage of the region. Iqbal is not a peripheral name there; he is a major figure of study, his poetry and philosophy integral to courses in Urdu, Persian, philosophy and political science. Students in Kashmir engage with Bang-e-Dara, Bal-e-Jibril and Zarb-e-Kalim as part of their academic upbringing.

The contrast could not be starker. One campus honours the poet with a library that is the heartbeat of higher education; the other proposes to consign him to oblivion. This divergence is not accidental. It mirrors a deeper, more painful truth: the two halves of what was once a single university — and a single cultural universe — have grown worlds apart. This is something far more fundamental: an intellectual and emotional parting of ways. The practical split in 1969 has evolved into an institutional embodiment of separation, where once-overlapping academic traditions now diverge sharply.

The regions of Jammu and Kashmir have always been as different as chalk and cheese. But the distinctions have rarely been institutionalised in academia. These differences, long acknowledged, were once bridged by shared institutions and a common literary canon. Today, they are being etched deeper into the academic fabric. This institutionalisation of erasure is new and dangerous.

By looking to excise Iqbal, the University of Jammu is not merely pruning a syllabus; it is severing a thread that once connected the two regions through the unifying power of academics and progressive thought. Iqbal was never a narrow sectarian figure. His early poetry sang of



Hindustan — "Sare Jahan Se Achha" — and his philosophical vision, though later focused on Islamic renaissance, remained rooted in the universalist traditions of Indian civilisation. To treat him as an untouchable because of his later association with the idea of Pakistan is to reduce a towering mind to a political label — an act unworthy of a university.

The fallout of this intellectual break goes beyond academia. In the post-Article 370 era, Jammu and Kashmir is grappling with the challenge of integrating two distinct regions while respecting their unique aspirations. Education was meant to be the bridge — nurturing critical thinking, preserving composite heritage and fostering mutual understanding among students who will shape J&K's future. Instead, this move risks deepening the fault lines. When one campus treats Iqbal as essential reading and the other as dispensable, when one library is named after him and the other proposes to delete his name, the message to students is unmistakable: the "other" side's icons are not your icons. The shared past is optional. The cultural distance, already vast, is being made unbridgeable, ensuring that future generations grow up with even less common

ground than at present. Such steps are regressive precisely because they are polarising in a region that desperately needs healing. Universities are not battlegrounds for ideological purity tests; they are repositories of civilisation's accumulated wisdom. Removing thinkers because their ideas do not fit a contemporary political narrative is the antithesis of academic freedom. The University of Jammu must reconsider its move. It owes this to its own legacy, and to the thousands of students who deserve an education untainted by political expediency. Iqbal belongs to the subcontinent's shared literary and philosophical heritage. He cannot be erased from Jammu's university curriculum without erasing a part of Jammu's own intellectual history — a history that once embraced Iqbal's birthplace as its twin and Kashmir as its counterpart. The two universities that once shared a roof and a library now stand as symbols of how far apart the regions have drifted. Let not one more act of erasure of intellectual and cultural heritage be allowed to widen that chasm. The poet who dreamed of a spiritual awakening for Asia — and who carried Kashmir in his blood while breathing the air of Jammu — deserves better. And so do the students of both Jammu as well as Kashmir.

Nuclear milestone: Kalpakkam reactor's criticality raises hopes

The indigenous PFBR promises a tangible pathway towards energy self-reliance. So far, only Russia has operationalised commercial FBRs at scale

IN a big boost to India's nuclear ambitions, the indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu has attained criticality, marking the start of a controlled, self-sustaining nuclear fission chain reaction. The reactor has thus crossed the most crucial threshold before power generation. It's a strategic milestone in the country's long-envisioned three-stage nuclear programme. Fast breeder reactors (FBRs) have a key role to play in meeting India's energy needs. The nation's nuclear roadmap — conceptualised under pioneers like Homi J Bhabha — rests on a sequential strategy: pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs), followed by FBRs and ultimately thorium-based systems. While PHWRs form the backbone of the current capacity, they rely on limited uranium resources. FBRs, by contrast, are designed to "breed" more fuel than they consume, converting uranium-238 into plutonium-239 and, eventually, enabling the production of uranium-

233 from thorium.

This makes the second stage indispensable. Without FBRs, the transition to the third stage — full utilisation



of India's vast thorium reserves — would remain aspirational. The Kalpakkam reactor promises a tangible pathway towards energy self-reliance. So far,

only Russia has operationalised commercial FBRs at scale; the technology is complex, capital-intensive and fraught with safety and economic concerns in countries like France and the US. However, the celebrations must be tempered with realism. The PFBR project has faced significant delays, underlining the engineering and regulatory challenges inherent in such advanced systems. Moreover, public apprehension about nuclear safety — heightened globally after incidents like the 2011 Fukushima disaster — continues to slow down project execution in India. Addressing these concerns through transparency and robust safety frameworks will be as critical as technological success. Ultimately, the PFBR's criticality is a defining step because it reaffirms India's long-term energy vision: leveraging its unique thorium advantage to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. The task ahead is clear — scale up, build public trust and ensure sustainable energy security.

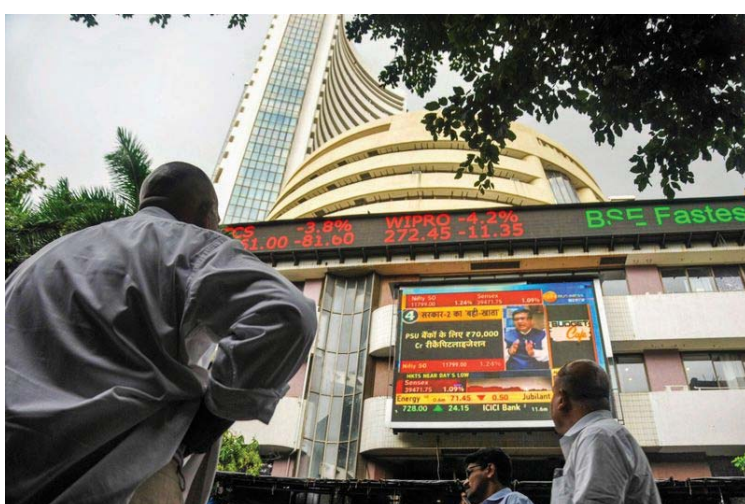
The purpose of platforms and public utilities

Public enterprises are set up to improve public welfare, not returns for investors

A JURY in Los Angeles has found major social media platforms (Meta's Facebook and Instagram and Google's YouTube) in California legally liable for harm to a young user's mental health. They were negligent in the design of their platforms and were responsible for creating addictive features (like infinite scroll, autoplay and algorithmic recommendations) that encouraged compulsive use. The court awarded \$6 million in damages to the plaintiff. The companies intend to appeal. Their case is they are speech platforms. They say the justice system should go after the people misusing the platforms, not the owners. They imply that 'platforms,' treated as public utilities, allow people to misuse them — to abuse others, buy pornography, spread fake news, or entertain themselves, etc. It's up to the users to use the platforms responsibly. Last month, the non-executive chairman of the board of HDFC Bank resigned. He said he did so because the values guiding the bank's management were not aligned with his own. He had misgivings about the bank misrepresenting risks in the products it sold. HDFC Bank is the second most valuable corporation in the Indian stock market, following Reliance Enterprises. The bank's stock price fell 8-9% in a single session following his resignation, and continued to decline, erasing about \$16 billion in its stock value before stabilising. The SEBI head reacted sharply.

He said the chairman's 'vague statements' had harmed investor confidence. The implication was that the duty of the chairman and the board — even if they are

'independent' directors — is only to protect the interests of investors. These cases highlight fundamental issues of public governance. What is the purpose of a public platform or utility? What principles should govern its management? Should utilities that serve the public be measured by how much wealth they produce for stock



market investors or by the public welfare they create?

Public utilities are necessary for providing services equitably for the essential needs of all citizens, ensuring their health and secure livelihoods. These include clean water, nutritious food, shelter, security, health, energy, information, education and financial services (banking, loans when required for livelihood purposes, and insurance). These are the fundamental rights of all

citizens in any decent society. It is the State's duty to ensure that all its citizens are provided these services.

An enterprise is set up for a purpose. The primary purpose of any business enterprise in the private sector, whether it is unlisted or listed on the stock exchange, is to produce financial returns for its owners and investors.

It has no obligation to provide its products and services to customers who cannot pay enough. Whereas the purpose of enterprises in the public sector is to provide services to all citizens, and especially those who cannot pay enough. Their purpose is to provide public welfare, not profits for the government as an investor. Therefore, the performance of financial institutions in the public and private sectors must not be compared by their performance in stock markets. Public enterprises are set up to improve public welfare, not returns for investors. By this measure, the State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation have contributed more to society than HDFC Bank, for example. Values provide principles for judging the methods institutions use. Efficiency, ethics and equity are essential principles for boards and managers of all organisations in both public and private sectors.

All organisations must use their resources efficiently. Their managers must be ethical too, and not award themselves high salaries and perks, on the specious grounds that they believe they have earned their salaries by their out-sized contributions to society by increasing the wealth of investors. The business of a private enterprise may be only business. The business of a

public enterprise is to increase public welfare.

The only equity financial investors understand — and that corporate boards endorse — is stock market equity. They are not required to uphold equity of the societal kind. Independent directors are expected to stand up for the rights of small investors against the demands of promoters and majority owners. Their enterprise's goal is to produce wealth for its shareholders. They must not bring their personal conscience into the board room and ask the board and management tough questions about societal equity. Public sector enterprises must be efficient, no doubt. But privatising a public enterprise to make it more efficient is throwing out the baby with the bath water. Privatisation of economies has gone too far with the victory of US-style capitalism over socialism, and the surge of financial globalisation, since the 1990s. India has privatised its education and health sectors too much, too soon. China, Vietnam and Nordic countries have stayed on their 'socialist' courses. They rank much higher than India on the human development scale. China has let entrepreneurial spirits loose in business sectors. It has created world-scale, and -class enterprises in many sectors. Nevertheless, the state has retained tight control of its financial sector, and technology sector too, to an extent that ideologically liberal western economists find intolerable.

At the same time, western governments are struggling to find solutions to regulate US tech enterprises and their wealthy owners who are destroying the social fabric and harming youth by addicting them to their services.

India must not regress to the pre-1991 era. Nor can it remain wedded to post-1991 neo-liberal economics. Even the US is searching for a new way. India must find its own way forward, untied from 'Washington' economists and US tech firms.

The charming hill town of Mount Abu

The charming hill town of Mount Abu An oasis amidst the dusty arid landscape of Rajasthan, Mount Abu is the state's only hill station. Perched at an altitude of 4000 feet above sea level, it is surrounded by verdant forests and watered by the serene Nakki

A day by the lake

Believed to have been dug out by gods using their nails, the sacred Nakki Lake is the perfect place for an early morning outing or a late evening excursion. Go on a boat ride, bargain at the lakeside market or simply carry your own picnic basket for a fun-filled

Inside India's finest temples

Built between the 11th and 13th centuries, the Dilwara Temples are located about two-and-a-half-kms away from the bustling town of Mount Abu. A sacred pilgrimage spot for the Jain community, they are one of the finest examples of Indian temple

See a beautiful sunset

Best visited at dusk, Sunset Point offers a spectacular sight of the colour-changing skyline against the Aravali Hills. Grab your camera and walk up the

cobblestone pathways along Nakki Lake for about a km to reach this picturesque spot.

Indulge in street shopping

With its mix of street shops and handicraft emporiums, Mount Abu offers eclectic shopping experiences. Popular picks include



the Nakki Lake market for bargains, the handicraft hub Rajasthali Emporium, Khadi Bhandar for textiles, the Chacha

Experience the wilderness

Rich in floral bio-diversity and home to a variety of birds and animals, the Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary stretches up to 19 kms in length and 6 kms in breadth. The altitude varies from 300 m to 1722 m at Guru Shikhar, the highest peak in Rajasthan. The

A trip back in time

Providing interesting glimpses of the Mewar architecture, the Achalgarh Fort transports you to the 15th century with its intricately-carved buildings and temples. Take in the majestic views of Mount Abu's skyline, picturesque sunsets and the

Offering prayers in a cave

Located three kms away from Mount



Abu, the Adhar Devi Temple is constructed out of a large rock and is dedicated to goddess Durga. Once you finish climbing 365 steep steps and crawl your way into the inner shrine, you can feast your eyes on

Eating out in the hill town

From small eateries that serve delicious street food to fine dining multi-cuisine restaurants, Mount Abu has something for every kind of food lover. Some popular joints here are Café Shikibo, Mulberry Tree Restaurant and Daawat Restaurant.

Go hiking on Rajasthan's highest peak

Adrenaline addicts can go for an adventurous trek to the Guru Shikhar Mountain which is Rajasthan's highest peak. Standing tall at a height of 5000 feet above the sea level, the peak is also home to the temple of

Mystical Bali

Surrounded by the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, Bali is one of 17500 islands in the Indonesian archipelago. Blessed with spectacular mountains, green rice terraces, enchanting temples and a vibrant culture—Bali stands alone in its lushness and

Balinese temples

The stunning island of Bali has often been called the famed island of the gods. Rooted in a colourful and deeply spiritual culture, it's also known as the island of a thousand temples. You'll find sea temples, directional temples and shrines spread

Pura Tanah Lot

One of Bali's most important and venerated sea temples, the sea-draped temple of Tanah Lot rises out of the surf. Perched on a rocky outcrop amidst waves that crash along the dark temple walls, Tanah Lot is among Bali's most picturesque temples. The temple

Uluwatu

Famous for its spectacular sunsets and the evening kecak dance, the Pura Luhur Uluwatu is perched majestically on the edge of a steep cliff that towers above the legendary surf breaks of southern Bali. The evening dance at the temple uses no

Stroll through the rice paddies

Whether you're on a bike, in a land rover, riding a rickshaw or on horseback, Bali's rice paddies and quaint villages are a must-visit. Stroll through picturesque rice terraces at Jatiluwih or make a day trip to the fascinating Tenganan village for a peek at Ubud

The heart of Bali's culture definitely beats in Ubud. Perched on the gentle slopes leading to the central mountains, Ubud is the best place to become fully immersed in Balinese culture. The town is surrounded by most of the attractions that bring people

Bali Guling in Ibu Oka

Babi guling, or suckling pig, has made a name for itself as Bali's culinary drawcard. Many roadside warungs serve the dish, but Ibu Oka in Ubud has garnered some serious praise for its delectable hogs. Just land up there, order a plate and find a place amongst

Surfing in Bali

There is something for every skill level in this surfer's paradise. Bali gets the full force of southern ocean and the islands have some great surfing beaches, with beach breaks for beginners and huge barrels for the professionals. So enrol for a surf trip with the

Padang Padang Beach

Bali's Padang Padang Beach is a famous surf point with great waves and a white sandy stretch. Julia Robert's movie Eat, Pray, Love has two scenes filmed on the Padang Padang beach.

Nusa Dua Beach

Imagine tall palm trees, wild mangroves, fragrant orchids amidst a clear blue ocean and the rolling golden sand—that's how the Nusa Dua Beach can be best described. With low currents and waves, the

crystal-clear is great for both snorkelling and

Mount Batur

The unforgettable hike to Mount

Batur gives

visitors the rare opportunity to witness a spectacular sunrise from the summit of an active volcano. As you admire the mist hovering over Lake Batur, the 2 am wake up call to trek to this location will be a

Lake Bratan

One of the most picturesque paths in Bali begins in the southern part of the island, snakes up through the lush highlands and ends at the otherworldly Lake Bratan. The lake is home to the unbelievably photogenic temple, Pura Ulun

Indulge in local favourites

While Bali has got its fair share of high-end restaurants and beach clubs, don't miss tucking into mouth-watering local favourites like babi guling (spit-roasted pig), ayam betutu (slow-cooked spiced chicken in banana leaves) and sate lilit (spiced mince on

Balinese dance rituals

Balinese dances are part of ancient traditions, and a form of religious and artistic expression. Dynamic, angular and intensely expressive, the dancers narrate stories through finger, hand and body gestures as well as head and eye movements.

Barong masks

Two mythical beings are ever-present in Bali—in dance rituals, ancient legends, travel advertisements and postcards. One is Barong, resembling a lion with its long mane, and the other is the witch Rangda with matted hair and large tusks. Traditional

Mystical Bali

With smiles as warm as the sun that hits their shores, the Balinese are possibly the kindest people you will ever come across. As you stumble upon the exquisite little offerings left all over the island, you'll realise that Bali is the most visitor-friendly island in

Mystical Bali



Short news

Water troughs, ponds being filled up for wildlife in Kovai forests

COIMBATORE.(Agency)

As the summer intensifies the staff of the Coimbatore Forest Division are filling water troughs to ensure adequate water availability for wildlife so that thirsty animals don't venture into human habitations.

According to District Forest Officer (DFO) N Vengatesh Prabhu, "We have 58 water troughs across seven forest ranges in the Coimbatore Forest Division, of which 14 are solar-powered. Every four days, we fill water in 44 troughs using vehicles. As percolation ponds have dried up due to lack of rainfall over the past six months, we are also replenishing them."

The division has a variety of wild animals, including tiger, leopard, elephants, gaur, spotted deer, sambar deer, sloth bear, roaming over 700 square kilometers.

"We are closely monitoring the situation to prevent negative human-animal interactions. So far, there have been no major incidents of wild elephants straying out of forests, but we expect such movement to begin in May. Apart from water requirements for the wildlife, it will also help our staff to douse fire in case of forest fires," Prabhu said.

The DFO who took charge in the third week of February has introduced the M-STrIPES app to track patrolling in the Coimbatore division. The app has been in use in the Sathyamangalam (Erode district) and Gudalur (Nilgiris) forest divisions.

"We can monitor how many kilometers and the places the field staff covered during foot patrol as we get GPS locations through the app once in 14 days. After monitoring this, we will strengthen the foot patrolling further wherever it is lacking," explained Prabhu.

Rs 179 crore K-100 waterway in Bengaluru turns cesspool, residents flag stench, mosquito menace

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and now Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), which went about chest-thumping over its Rs 179-crore K-100 waterway-cum-walkway project from Shantala Silks in Majestic to Koramangala in BTM assembly constituency, has instead delivered the longest cesspool, courtesy BWSSB.

Residents along the project route, covering 12km, are complaining about a stench and mosquito menace. The waterway project, that involved treated water flowing through, was to open in January 2025, but it's already April 2026.

Bhaskar Babu, a wholesale flower dealer who has his shop adjacent to the waterway near BTS Road in Wilson Garden, said, "A bad smell emanates most of the time and mosquitoes starts buzzing early evening, and till the closing hours of the shop, we have to tolerate nasty bites."

A Salma, a resident of Vinayak Nagar which is adjacent to the waterway, said there are aged persons at home with comorbidities, and the family is worried about infection, allergy, and mosquito-borne diseases. "The water channel has sewage flowing through. There is also garbage menace, with people throwing in waste and filth. The authorities must clean up the channel and arrest sewage inflow on priority." Engineers from the Stormwater Drain Department of GBA said an inspection was held on Thursday, and officials from Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) have asked GBA to give permission to cut open a white-topped road in SR Nagar to fix sewage flowing into the waterway.

Maha court rejects bail plea of prime accused in New India Bank fraud case

Mumbai.(Agency)

A sessions court on Friday rejected the bail application of Hitesh Mehta, former general manager and head of accounts of New India Cooperative Bank, in the Rs 122 crore fraud case.

Mehta was arrested in February last year by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Mumbai Police after the bank's chief executive officer, Devarshi Shishir Kumar Ghosh, filed a complaint against him.

In his bail plea, Mehta denied the charges levelled against him, saying he was in prolonged custody and deserved bail. While rejecting the plea, judge Vikram R. Jagdale said in his order that 'incarceration for long duration cannot be the ground to grant bail because one cannot lose sight of the fact that in cases of economic offences, it takes time to commence and conclude the trial, especially when there are many accused and witnesses.'

The court also said the applicant is the prime accused in the offence.

According to the prosecution case, Mehta, 57, allegedly withdrew cash from the bank's Prabhadevi and Goregaon branches, siphoning funds since the Covid-19 pandemic. He reportedly confessed to the crime during police questioning.

The fraud came to light last year when a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) audit team visited the bank and detected loopholes in the accounting process.

98K five-kg LPG cylinders given to industrial workers; Surat leads: Gujarat govt

On Thursday, The Indian Express reported how the LPG crisis due to the war in West Asia had forced around 40 percent of the migrant workforce in Surat to leave.

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

EVEN AS the Gujarat government has tweaked guidelines for bulk non-domestic LPG supply—allowing certain industries to get LPG up to 70 per cent of their consumption, it issued a total of 98,883 LPG cylinders of five-kilogram each to industrial workers, which is the highest in the country, claimed the state government on Thursday.

Of these 98,883 cylinders, Surat got the highest of 26,183 five-kg cylinders, followed by Ahmedabad (19,930), Kutch (7,771), Bharuch (6,723) and Rajkot (6,525).

On Thursday, The Indian Express reported how the LPG crisis due to the war in West Asia had forced around 40 percent of the migrant workforce in Surat to leave.



The state food and civil supplies department had announced the amendments to make LPG gas supply smoother and more efficient.

As per the decision taken by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, units in certain industrial sectors, such as pharma, food, polymers, agriculture,

packaging, paint, steel, ceramic, glass and aerosol, will be able to get bulk non-domestic LPG up to 70 per cent of their consumption level before March 2026. The total supply limit for this entire industrial sector has been fixed at 0.2 TMT/day. "Some conditions have also been prescribed for allocation under this new system. Priority will be given to units where the use of LPG is essential in the production process and natural gas is not a viable alternative," the state government added.

All industrial units willing to avail this facility will have to get mandatory registration with the Public Sector Oil Marketing Company (OMC). In addition, the concerned units must have applied for PNG connection with the city gas distribution or CGD companies. In cases where LPG is an integral part of the production process, they will be exempted from this condition.

RG Kar case: Calcutta HC allows fresh CBI questioning of Sanjoy Roy, says 'may possess more information'

HC says that the probe agency may use advanced technology and modern methods in investigation

Kolkata.(Agency)

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation to interrogate Sanjoy Roy, the sole convict in connection with the RG Kar rape and murder case.

A division bench comprising Justice Rajasekhara Mantha and Justice Rai Chattopadhyay directed the CBI to question Roy again, adding that the agency can also interrogate other suspects if necessary.

The bench instructed the CBI to present its response based on two additional affidavits filed by the victim's parents. The next hearing in the case is scheduled for May 12, when the CBI will submit its report. The lawyer of the petitioner's parents, Jayanta Narayan Chattopadhyay, claimed that the family has gathered information on several aspects that were not adequately examined by the CBI and the state police.



He stated that a forensic expert's opinion suggests that multiple individuals may have been present at the time of the incident.

He further stated that additional affidavits have been submitted regarding DNA sample collection and analysis, as well as the consideration of audio evidence. The lawyer also alleged that the statements of certain individuals last seen with the victim were not recorded.

Justice Rajasekhara Mantha observed that the court believes that the sole accused may possess more information, therefore in the interest of the investigation, the CBI should not hesitate to interrogate Roy again. The court noted that the investigating agency may use advanced technology and modern methods in the probe. Representing the CBI, Deputy Solicitor General Rajdeep Majumdar informed the court that a medical board has been constituted to provide expert opinion on the case. The report will be submitted on the next hearing date.

In March this year, the division bench of Justice Debangshu Basak and Justice MD Shabbir Rashidi had released all the cases related to the rape and murder.

A writ petition was filed by the victim doctor's family alleging lapses in the CBI probe, seeking a fresh investigation and court-monitored scrutiny.

Bengal's Electoral Battle: Mamata's Stern Challenge to Modi Amid Campaign Blitz

Mahanagar Metro Beuro

Kolkata: The Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has reportedly led to the deletion of nearly 91 lakh voter names, triggering sharp political reactions ahead of the Assembly elections. Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, however, asserted that despite the large-scale deletions, her party would still secure a decisive victory. Addressing a massive rally at Haroa Circus Ground in Minakhan, Basirhat, Mamata accused the BJP and the Election Commission of acting in collusion to strike off voter names. She said that even after the removal of nearly 91 lakh

names, TMC candidates would continue to win across the state. Referring to the issue in sharp political terms, she remarked that democracy had been reduced to a "Chaitra Clearance Sale," adding that the dignity of the electoral process had been hurt.

"Every Action Has a Reaction" Mamata expressed full confidence that the Trinamool Congress would return to power with a strong mandate. Citing the principle of action and reaction, she said the people would respond to what she termed electoral injustice through their votes. According to available figures, more than 27 lakh names were

removed from the draft list, adding to earlier deletions and taking the total close to 91 lakhs. Those affected still have the option to challenge the deletions through online or offline appeals.

Sundarbans Development Push During the campaign, the Chief Minister announced that the Sundarbans would be developed under a dedicated administrative framework and could be carved out as a separate district among the newly proposed ones. She also spoke of a comprehensive Master Plan aimed at the region's holistic growth and infrastructure expansion. On Thursday, Mamata participated in multi-

Even After SIR Deletions, We Will Win: Mamata



- Mamata: 'Chaitra Clearance Sale' jibe over democracy
- 27 lakh names removed from draft list, nearly 91 lakh affected
- Sundarbans to get major development Master Plan

Kolkata: The Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) has reportedly led to the deletion of nearly 91 lakh voter names.

ple campaign events, including rallies in Minakhan, Palta, Panihati and Baguihati, before ending the day with a large roadshow in Baranagar joined by thousands of supporters.

Alleged sexual harassment, forced conversions: Statements of Nashik IT firm's HR manager recorded

There were allegations that some of the victims in the case had complained to the HR manager but no action was taken. "We issued her a notice to join the probe at a later date," an officer said.

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Nashik City police investigating nine FIRs registered in connection with alleged sexual harassment and religious conversion cases at a Nashik based IT company on Thursday recorded the statement of an HR manager at the company who lives in Pune. There were allegations that some of the victims in the case had complained to the HR manager but no action was taken. "We issued her a notice to join the probe at a later date," an officer said.

The first FIR was registered in March last week where a woman alleged that a colleague at the IT company maintained sexual relations by promising marriage.

During the probe the police registered eight more FIRs related to sexual harassment and religious conversion and arrested six persons working at the IT firm.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra

Fadnavis on Thursday said, "The developments in Nashik technology company is a very serious issue. The police have brought the incident to light. Such incident in a technology company where employees were subjected to religious conversion, sexual harassment is very shocking. I will praise the police for taking quick action and exposing the incident which needs to be strongly condemned and pursued to its logical end. Those guilty should be given stringent punishment."

Fadnavis made these statements during an event at Beed district. Responding to media persons' questions about the Nashik incident, he said, "In Maharashtra there is no place for such incidents. It will not be tolerated."

According to sources in the CMO, "The police in Nashik arrested at least seven individuals following complaints of religious coercion and harassment to



women in an IT company." The crack down was conducted by the Nashik City Police Commissioner based on intelligence inputs. Those arrested were identified as Asif Ansari, Shafi Sheikh, Shah Rukh Qureshi, Raza Memon, Tausif Attar, Danish Sheikh, along with a woman whose identity has not yet been disclosed. Sources said, "Based on the complaints it seems the group was targeting Hindu employees with an intention to convert

them into Islam. They tried to influence such employees financially." At least eight women and a man have come forward to complain against the group operating in the company. The nature of the complaint includes influencing them to eat beef and mock Hindu gods and goddesses. In some cases there are charges of sexual assault. Hardliner BJP cabinet minister Nitesh Rane termed the incident "corporate jihad". He said, "We have undertaken strong action against love and land jihad. Now, if it has percolated to the corporate sector, we will deal with it strongly. Nobody has the right to force religious conversion. Any body indulging in such activities will be subjected to punishment under the law. I would like to question the company also. When ten to 15 women employees came forward to complain against harassment, what was the HR department.

Electricity On Exchanges Is Getting Cheaper Despite Rising Demand, Here's Why

The exchange price is no longer a crude reflection of scarcity; it is becoming a real-time indicator of an efficient power market, as per experts.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Even as India's electricity demand inched up in FY 2025-26, power prices on the exchange fell sharply. Data from the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) shows record traded volumes of 141 billion units during the year, even as real-time market prices dropped 14-16 per cent year-on-year. On the surface, the data looks counter-intuitive. But a broader look at supply conditions, renewables growth, market mechanics and trading behaviour explains the paradox.

Volumes surged across segments, particularly in the Real-Time and Green markets. This was despite prices softening significantly. In Q4 FY26 alone, IEX posted a 24.3 per cent YoY jump in traded electricity volumes.

Why Prices Are Softening

Supply Growth Outpaces Demand Growth: Demand in FY26 was only up 1.1 per cent, a modest rise by historical standards. At the



same time, India added a massive 55.29 GW of non-fossil capacity in FY26 -- led by solar and wind -- the largest annual jump on record. Renewables now contribute about 29 per cent of total generation and half of installed capacity.

As Indian Energy Exchange reaches a record 141 billion units in FY26, the drop in power prices despite rising demand is not a paradox, it signals a structural shift in how India's power market is evolving.

A key driver is the rapid addition of renewable energy, particularly solar, which is bringing in large volumes of low-cost power. At the same time, improved grid management and stronger transmission networks are ensuring that this power is distributed more efficiently across regions. The growing depth and liquidity on power exchanges are also enabling more competitive and transparent price discovery.

Put simply, the market is becoming more responsive, and supply is aligning better with real-time demand, reducing price spikes," said Kunal Maheshwari, Chief Growth Officer, Softlink Global. Better Thermal Generation Back-Up: While renewables drive down marginal costs, coal-based plants have also improved robustness: Improved coal stocks and logistics have reduced unplanned outages. Thermal plants are operating with more predictable dispatch -

which tempers price spikes in the spot market.

"The increasing involvement of distribution companies (DISCOMs) in the spot market shows that organizations have started to adopt more advanced methods for their purchasing needs.

Buyers use competitive exchange pricing instead of locking themselves into long-term agreements, which require them to pay high prices. The IEX platform provides better market access and price transparency, which helps traders discover prices and prevents tariff increases," said Piyush Jhunjhunwala, Founder & CEO, Stockify.

Jhunjhunwala added, "India's power market has progressed toward increased market control and better operational efficiency. The country achieves stable costs for rising energy needs because multiple power sources and government policies, and digital trading systems work together to meet growing energy requirements."

DDA razes Sainik Farm houses to secure green cover on govt land

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Development Authority carried out a demolition drive in the Sainik Farm area on Thursday. The operation was carried out with the assistance of Delhi Police and the presence of forest officials.

According to DDA, the drive was conducted to secure government land and enhance the green area of the biodiversity park by removing unauthorised constructions within the boundary at Tilpath Valley Biodiversity Park.

"Demolition activities were undertaken on land falling under Khasra Nos. 580 in Village Maidangarhi under Tilpath Valley Biodiversity Park," the DDA said. Around 70% of the affected area (about 83 acres) was recovered and about 12 acres of land, comprising 23 farmhouses, were demolished.

Approximately 3 acres of land, involving 7 farmhouses, could not be cleared due to active judicial stay orders issued by the High Court. The DDA said that the action is a part of ongoing efforts to protect ecological assets, safeguard government land, and expand the green cover of Tilpath Valley Biodiversity Park.

According to the Resident Welfare Association, the drive targeted two residential plots located on Western Avenue.

'Illegal act'
Hardeep Singh Bhalla, president of residents' welfare body said, "This is an illegal action. They came around 5 am and carried out the drive despite us having High Court stay order."



Army clears Col Shrikant Prasad Purohit for Brigadier rank after 17-year legal battle

From arrest to acquittal and now promotion, Col Purohit's long legal battle takes a decisive turn. But how did a stalled career move back on track after years in limbo?

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a major development, the Indian Army has cleared Colonel Shrikant Prasad Purohit for promotion to the rank of Brigadier, marking a turning point in one of its most complex and prolonged legal cases. The decision comes weeks after the Armed Forces Tribunal intervened to halt his scheduled retirement on March 31, 2026, allowing his pending promotion case to be reviewed.

The move caps a 17-year journey that saw the officer go from being an accused in a high-profile blast case to being cleared and reinstated in the system.

CAREER STALLED SINCE 2008 ARREST

Purohit's career progression had remained effectively frozen since 2008 following his arrest in connection with the Malegaon blast case. Although he

was granted bail by the Supreme Court in 2017 and later returned to active service, his seniority and promotion prospects remained stuck in legal uncertainty for years.

ACQUITTAL TURNS THE TIDE



The turning point came on July 31, 2025, when a Special NIA Court in Maharashtra acquitted Purohit of all charges, citing lack of evidence and contradictions in the prosecution's case. Following the acquittal, he was promoted to the rank of full Colonel in

September 2025, restoring part of his career progression.

TRIBUNAL INTERVENTION HALTS RETIREMENT

On March 16, 2026, a Bench led by Justice Rajendra Menon ruled that Purohit had a prima facie case to be considered for benefits and promotions at par with his juniors.

The tribunal ordered that his retirement be kept in abeyance until his statutory complaint on promotion was resolved, effectively keeping his service active.

Sources indicate that the Army's clearance for his promotion to Brigadier acknowledges the years lost during his incarceration and trial.

If his career had not been interrupted, officers from his batch would have already moved into senior leadership roles. Some observers say he could have reached the rank of Major General under normal circumstances.

DMRC to procure 90 cars for 15 driverless trains on magenta line

New Delhi.(Agency)

With the aim of expanding its driverless network, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is planning to procure 90 standard-gauge metro cars, to be deployed as 15 trains of six coaches each, for the Inderlok-Indraprastha corridor under Phase IV. Bids have been invited for the design, manufacture, supply, testing, and commissioning of these cars for the Magenta Line extension. The project is expected to be completed in 204 weeks, according to a tender document. The project is part-funded through a loan agreement signed between the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the

Government of India in March 2025, while maintenance costs will be borne separately by DMRC, it added.

According to the document, the selected bidder will also be responsible for comprehensive maintenance of the 90 cars for 35 years. This includes depot machinery and plant, special tools, jigs and fixtures, as well as testing and diagnostic equipment. Training of DMRC personnel is also part of the contract.

The Inderlok-Indraprastha stretch under Phase IV is planned as an extension of the Magenta Line. A further extension from Ramakrishna Ashram Marg to Indraprastha via Central Vista is proposed under Phase V. At present, the Magenta Line runs between Botanical Garden and Janakpuri West.



Delhi Vidhan Sabha, sites in vicinity get fake bomb threat email, probe on

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Vidhan Sabha and other establishments in the vicinity on Thursday received a bomb-related threat email. The sender mentioned a possible blast would take place near the Assembly, the Secretariat, a school, and a metro station. The police and other authorities were informed about it, following which local police, along with the bomb disposal squad (BDS) and dog squad, conducted a thorough and systematic check of the locations. During the checking, no suspicious object or activity was found.



An investigation has been initiated. Its content is being checked, and police are trying to ascertain the source of the threat email.

It happened days after the premises of the Delhi Legislative Assembly witnessed a security breach. Sarabjeet Singh, 37, was arrested on Monday in the incident after he drove inside the Assembly. He crashed through gate number 2, which is a VIP gate, and left the premises after leaving a bouquet and a garland inside the car of the Speaker. Two police personnel were suspended based on prima facie findings.

Earlier, the Assembly had received a similar hoax bomb threat mail just hours before Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was scheduled to present Delhi's annual budget.

21-year-old found in water-filled pit in Sector 94; autopsy indicates drowning, viscera preserved as police await complaint from family

New Delhi.(Agency)

A 21-year-old university student was found dead in a water-filled pit at an abandoned construction site in Noida, police said, adding that the autopsy indicated drowning, even as his family alleged foul play in the incident. The incident took place on Wednesday afternoon, while the family raised allegations on Thursday.

The deceased, Harshit Bhatt, a final-year Bachelor of Physical Education student at a private university and a resident of Indrapuram in Ghaziabad, had gone to Sector 94 under Sector 126 police station limits with friends to celebrate the end of their examinations.

According to DCP Saad Miyan Khan, Bhatt entered a nearby water-filled pit to bathe during the outing and suddenly drowned. One of his friends alerted Dial-112,



following which police and PRV teams rushed to the spot. With the help of local divers, he was pulled out and taken to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Police said sand and water were found in his lungs, confirming drowning as the cause of death, though viscera has been preserved for further examination. Officials added that

other students who entered the water to rescue him were safely pulled out and are stable.

However, Bhatt's mother alleged that there were black marks on his body, raising suspicion over the circumstances of his death. Police said no formal complaint has been received from the family so far, but action will be taken if one is lodged. Sources said Bhatt had gone with friends after exams and may have ventured into deeper water. His companions attempted to rescue him but failed.

The incident has once again highlighted safety concerns at abandoned construction sites. It comes months after a similar tragedy in Noida, when a man died after his car plunged into a water-filled pit, raising questions over compliance with safety norms.

Sensex gains 800 points: 3 reasons why stock market is rising

New Delhi.(Agency)

Stock markets opened in the green on Friday, with both the Sensex and Nifty rising nearly 1% in early trade, supported by better global cues and buying across key sectors. The S&P BSE Sensex climbed 687.99 points to 77,319.64, while the NSE Nifty50 added 211.60 points to 23,986.70 as of 9:58 am.

The gains come after a volatile previous session on April 9, when markets had fallen sharply due to profit booking and selling in financial stocks. The Sensex had dropped 931.25 points, while the Nifty declined 222.25 points to close at 23,775.10.

GLOBAL CUES SUPPORT SENTIMENT

Global markets remained supportive, helping lift sentiment in India. Asian markets traded higher, with indices such as Nikkei and Kospi rising up to 1-2%. However, investors remained cautious as they continued to track developments around the US-Iran ceasefire and rising tensions involving Israel and Lebanon.

Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said the market will closely track upcoming developments in global tensions. "The market will wait to see the outcome of the peace talks between US and Iran scheduled for Saturday. The outcome of the peace talks will determine the trend in crude prices, which, in turn, will dictate market trends."

He added, "If the talks lead to de-escalation in the conflict and drive crude price down, the markets, particularly markets like India which are energy import-dependent, will bounce back. The reverse will happen if the peace talks fail and crude spikes further."

OIL PRICES STAY BELOW \$100

Crude oil prices remained below the key \$100 per barrel mark, which supported the rally in Indian markets. As of around 8:25 am, Brent crude was trading at \$96.16 per barrel, up 0.25%, while WTI crude was at \$97.81, slightly down by 0.06%.

Lower oil prices are positive for India as they reduce pressure on inflation and help improve the outlook for companies.

Ola Electric shares continue to rise, up 6%

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Ola Electric Mobility Ltd extended their rally on the Bombay Stock Exchange, climbing around 6% on Friday as strong momentum in the stock continued for yet another session.

At 9:44 am, the stock was trading at Rs 38.71, up Rs 2.37 or 6.52%. Yesterday, the stock closed nearly 20% higher. The latest move builds on gains seen in recent sessions, with the stock rebounding sharply from earlier lows and outperforming the broader market.

MOMENTUM DRIVEN BY MULTIPLE TRIGGERS

The rally is being supported by a mix of positive developments around the company's business and technology roadmap. Progress on its in-house battery technology, particularly lithium iron phosphate cells, has improved sentiment as it signals potential cost efficiencies and better control over supply chains.

At the same time, improving demand indicators, including recent sales momentum, have added to investor confidence. The company's ongoing investments in manufacturing capacity and its gigafactory plans have further strengthened the long-term growth narrative, drawing renewed interest in the stock.

RECOVERY GATHERS PACE, BUT CAUTION REMAINS

The sharp gains also reflect a recovery after a period of sustained weakness, with buying interest returning at lower levels. The current upmove suggests the rally is not limited to a single session but part of a broader rebound. Even so, concerns around profitability and execution persist in a competitive electric vehicle market.

Tata Sons IPO push gathers pace as trustees back listing

New Delhi.(Agency)

The push to list Tata Sons is gathering momentum within Tata Trusts, as more trustees come out in favour of an IPO, bringing the long-simmering debate into the open and sharpening differences at the top of the group. The shift marks a change in stance for the promoter body, which has traditionally preferred to keep the holding company unlisted, and signals a visible split within the Trusts. The turning point came when Venu Srinivasan publicly supported listing Tata Sons, becoming one of the first trustees to do so. His stance has since been echoed by Vijay Singh, The Indian Express reported, with the trustee arguing that the group's future growth would benefit from access to public capital and greater transparency. He was quoted as saying, "The view over the last few years has been that Tata Sons should continue as it is, but its expansion and the new capital and technology intensive businesses do demand an urgent re-look."

This growing backing within Tata Trusts signals a clear shift. What was once a closed-door discussion is now an active push from within the group's own promoter ranks. A report by Business Today describes the situation as an intensifying battle over the proposed IPO. The pro-listing camp is effectively challenging the stance of Noel Tata, who is understood to favour keeping Tata Sons unlisted, highlighting a broader divide over control versus capital access.

RBI DECISION REMAINS KEY

Even as internal support builds, regulatory uncertainty continues to loom. The Reserve Bank of India had classified Tata Sons as an upper-layer NBFC, which carries a requirement to list.

Infosys, TCS, HCLTech: Why IT stocks are down despite market rally

The fall in IT stocks comes even as the Sensex and Nifty moved higher, showing that the weakness is limited to the sector amid concerns around growth and demand.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and HCLTech came under pressure in trade, dragging the broader IT pack lower even as benchmark indices rallied sharply.

At 10:52 am, Tech Mahindra was down 1.83% at Rs 1,434.70, HCLTech fell 2.51% to Rs 1,428.40, Tata Consultancy Services declined 2.97% to Rs 2,510.90, and Infosys dropped 3.14% to Rs 1,289.65 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The fall in IT stocks comes even as the Sensex and Nifty moved higher, showing that the weakness is limited to the sector amid concerns around growth and demand. The immediate trigger for the sell-off has been the market's reaction to TCS's Q4 earnings. While the numbers themselves were not weak, the

commentary around demand remained cautious. The company flagged uneven client spending and a slower pace of recovery, reinforcing the view that the sector is going through a soft patch rather than a quick rebound. That signal has spilled over to peers. Investors tend to treat TCS as a bellwether for the sector, and its outlook is often read as a proxy for the broader IT services industry. As a result, even companies yet to report results have seen selling pressure build up. At the same time, concerns around artificial intelligence have returned to the forefront. Rapid advances in AI capabilities, especially in coding and automation, are raising fresh questions about the future of traditional IT services.

The fear is not immediate disruption, but a gradual shift where clients rely less on

issue of weak global demand. Clients in key markets such as the US and Europe continue to remain cautious, cutting discretionary spending and delaying technology projects. This has led to slower deal conversions and limited visibility on strong growth in the near term. Even where growth exists, it is increasingly modest, which is prompting a re-rating of the sector. The timing of the decline also reflects broader nervousness ahead of earnings from other major IT firms. Investors are waiting for guidance from Infosys and HCLTech, particularly on demand trends, deal pipelines and the potential impact of AI.



large outsourcing contracts and more on automated solutions, which could impact revenue growth and pricing power over time. Overlaying these concerns is the

TCS shares down 3%: Why the IT giant's stock fell despite strong Q4 result?

TCS shares down: The stock was trading at around Rs 2,515.00, down 2.81% as of 10:15 am. It was also among the top losers on both the Nifty50 and the IT index.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) fell nearly 3% on Friday, even after the company reported strong March quarter results, as concerns over long-term growth and weak client spending weighed on investor sentiment. The stock was trading at around Rs 2,515.00, down 2.81% as of 10:15 am. It was also among the top losers on both the Nifty 50 and the IT index.

This came even as the broader market traded higher, showing a clear divergence between IT stocks and the rest of the market.

Q4 RESULTS STRONG, BUT NOT ENOUGH

TCS reported a solid performance for Q4 FY26. Revenue rose 5.4% quarter-on-

quarter to Rs 70,698 crore, beating estimates. Net profit jumped 29% to Rs 13,718 crore.



Margins remained stable, and the company reported strong deal wins worth \$12 billion.

Despite these positives, the results did not fully convince investors about the

company's growth outlook.

FULL-YEAR REVENUE DECLINE WORRIES MARKETS

The biggest concern came from the company's full-year performance. TCS reported a 2.4% drop in its full-year dollar revenue, marking its first annual decline since listing.

Analysts said this signals continued caution among global clients, especially in technology spending. Dolat Capital said that while there was some improvement during the quarter, the full-year decline shows that demand remains weak.

Jefferies also said the results did not show clear signs of a strong recovery in demand, which could lead to further underperformance in the stock.

Sun Pharma shares fall over 4% amid acquisition concerns

Sun Pharma shares fell over 3.5%, as investor concerns over a potential mega acquisition outweighed optimism, bringing focus on debt, integration risks and the deal's long-term payoff.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd declined sharply in trade on the Bombay Stock Exchange, as investor sentiment turned cautious following reports of a potential large acquisition.

At 11:01 am, the stock was trading at Rs 1,646.50, down 4.13%.

The stock came under pressure after a report by The Economic Times said the company is nearing a deal to acquire US-based drugmaker Organon & Co. in a transaction that could be valued at around \$12 billion.

CONCERNS OVER ACQUISITION SIZE

The proposed deal, if finalised, would be the largest acquisition by Sun Pharma and has raised concerns among investors over the potential impact on

the company's balance sheet. Market participants are wary of the scale of the transaction and the possibility of increased leverage, especially if the



acquisition is funded through significant borrowing. The size and complexity of integrating a global business like Organon have also added

to near-term uncertainty.

RISK-REWARD IN FOCUS

While acquisitions can support long-term growth by expanding product portfolios and global presence, they often trigger short-term volatility as markets assess execution risks and returns.

In this case, the sharper fall in the stock reflects growing concerns over whether the benefits of the deal will outweigh the financial and operational risks in the near term.

Investors will now watch for official confirmation from the company and further details on deal structure, funding and strategic rationale, which will be key to determining the stock's direction going forward.

Wipro shares rise as board considers buyback after three years

Wipro has informed exchanges that its board will evaluate a share buyback alongside its fourth-quarter results on April 16, bringing the focus back on shareholder returns.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shares of Wipro Ltd rose as much as 3% in early trade on the Bombay Stock Exchange after the company said its board will consider a share buyback proposal at its April 16 meeting.

The stock had initially surged on the buyback trigger but gave up most of its gains as weakness across IT stocks weighed on sentiment following Tata Consultancy Services results. At 9:52 am, the stock was trading at Rs 204.15, up Rs 1.25 or 0.62%.

BUYBACK PLANS LIFT SENTIMENT

Wipro has informed exchanges that its board will evaluate a share buyback alongside its fourth-quarter results on April 16, bringing the focus back on shareholder returns.

The announcement comes after a weak run for IT stocks and a decline in Wipro's share price this



year, making the buyback a clear sentiment booster. Market expectations suggest the buyback could be sizeable and may be offered at a premium to the current market price, which typically attracts investor interest.

WHAT IS A BUYBACK?

A buyback is when a company repurchases its own shares from shareholders, either through a tender route or the open market. By reducing the number of shares outstanding, it improves earnings per share and can support valuations.

In Wipro's case, the move signals management confidence at a time when growth visibility in the IT sector remains moderate. It also reflects the company's strategy of returning excess cash to shareholders, backed by a strong balance sheet.

Applying for TAN? Income Tax Dept replaces Form 49B with two new forms

Applying for a TAN is set to become a lot simpler. The Income Tax Department has replaced the old Form 49B with two new forms, aiming to make the process clearer and easier for different types of applicants. Let's have a look.

New Delhi.(Agency)

If you've ever dealt with tax compliance, you know how even a small form can feel confusing. The Income Tax Department seems to have taken note. In the latest update, it has replaced the old Form 49B with two new, simplified forms—making the process of applying for a TAN a bit more straightforward.

On April 10, 2026, the Income Tax Department posted on X, "Old form 49B has been replaced with new forms 134 and 135. Form 134 - TAN allotment application form for Government entities. Form 135 - TAN allotment application form for Non-Government entities including individuals, companies and firms."

TWO FORMS INSTEAD OF ONE Earlier, everyone, i.e., government bodies and private entities, used the same Form 49B to apply for a Tax Deduction and Collection Account Number (TAN). Now, that has changed.

Form 134 is meant only for government entities, while Form 135 will be used by everyone else, including individuals, companies, firms and LLPs. This split is expected to make things clearer, as each form now asks only for relevant details.

WHAT IS TAN AND WHO NEEDS IT?

A TAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric number required for anyone responsible for deducting or collecting tax at source. Without it, you cannot comply with TDS or TCS rules.

So, whether you are a business owner, a company, or even an individual deducting tax, you will need to apply for TAN using the appropriate form.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE NEW FORMS?

The updated forms bring in a few important tweaks that aim to improve transparency and tracking. For non-government

applicants, quoting PAN is now mandatory. This helps the tax department link PAN and TAN more effectively. Companies must provide their Corporate Identity Number (CIN), while LLPs need to mention their registration number.

change is in the date field. It has now been clearly labelled as "Date of Birth/Date of incorporation", leaving little room for confusion.

A SIMPLER STRUCTURE FOR EASIER FILING

The structure of both forms has also been cleaned up. Form 134, meant for government entities, is divided into two parts. The first part captures details such as office information, AIN, and contact details, along with information about the person responsible for tax matters. The second part is a simple declaration and verification section. Form 135 follows a similar logic but is tailored for non-government users. It starts with basic details like name and category—whether individual, firm or company—and then moves to personal and contact information like PAN, nationality, email and mobile number. It also ends with a declaration section.



For government entities, a new requirement has been added. They must now provide the Accounts Office Identification Number (AIN) along with the office name. Another small but important

5 hill stations in Maharashtra to get away to

Through the length of its state, Maharashtra encompasses a landscape ranging from the steeply rising Western Ghats, all the way down to the seashore of the Arabian Sea. Cradled within is carpeted green mountain walls, are the most stunning hill stations, each with a charm that's all their own. Take a break from the frenzied pace of the city and get away to these oases of calm.



Panchgani

Deriving its name from the surrounding five hills that envelop it, Panchgani offers a window to the past. Located just about 38 metres below Mahabaleshwar, at an altitude of 1334 metres, the approach to this beautiful hill station is replete with lovely views of the Krishna River to one side, and the plains on the other. A quintessentially residential area, it exudes a charm that harks to a time gone by. Whether in the old colonial architecture, the Parsi homes, and century-old boarding lodges. The best vantage point to take in the world below can be found at Table Land, a flat mountain peak overlooking the plains. To mix things up, head to the local bazaar where business moves along at an unhurried pace, setting a leisurely tone for your time spent here.

Keechakadara

As accounted in the Mahabharata, this is the place where Bheema killed Keechaka, the villain and threw him into the valley below. Taking its name from the incident, Keechakadara is also often referred to as Chikhaldara. Aside from its mythological roots, there's more to this beautiful hill station. Situated at an altitude of 1118 metres in the Vidarbha region, this is the only hill resort in the area, and has the added attraction of being the only coffee-growing area in Maharashtra. This is even a great place for wild life enthusiasts to do some spotting as panthers, bears, sambar, wild boar, and wild dogs thrive here and it is neighbored by the famous Melghat Tiger Project which has 82 tigers. Hurricane Point, Prospect Point, and Devi Point are all great vantage points to take in the views, and this is also a good starting point for excursions to Gavilgad and Narnala Fort.

Bhandardara

Also cradles within the Sahyadri Hills, Bhandardara, with its soaring mountain

ranges, plunging waterfalls and carpet of green, attracts tourists all through the year. For a short hour-long journey, this hill station offers city dwellers a drastically contrasting landscape and stunning surroundings. Bright green paddy fields and clear blue skies punctuated with a labyrinth of gurgling streams, provide all the essential ingredients for a weekend away from the madding crowds. There's enough to keep you busy through the days. Built in 1910, Wilson Dam



stands 150-metres-high and has a beautiful garden at the base. of Wilson Dam there is a garden endowed with thick greenery, streams and gigantic trees, the silently serene Arthur lake which mirrors the beauty of its surroundings in its blue waters, Mount Kalsubai, which is Maharashtra's highest peak at 1646 metres and draws in serious trekkers to its summit, the Agasti Risha Ashram which has been mentioned in the Ramayan and the ancient Ratangad Fort which offers panoramic views from its ramparts.

Matheran

Discovered back in 1850 by Hugh Malet, collector for the Thane district, Matheran sits atop the Sahyadris Mountain range and is another hot weekend getaway for city

slickers. This gorgeous and quaint hill station is best accessed via the slow-moving toy train which chugs along over a leisurely two-hour-long journey from the valley below. Sprawled across a lush green, undulating hilltop, Matheran sits at a height of about 800 metres with drastic, steep cliffs offering the most stunning views of the plains below. Make your way up to Hart Point at night, and take in the dreamy, twinkling lights of Mumbai far below, meander through the winding ways and feast your eyes on the British-Parsi architecture of the local homes, walk up to Charlotte Lake, and do a spot of shopping in the market where you'll find lots of leather goodies, hats and ofcourse the famous sweet-sticky chikki best eaten hot and fresh.

Mahabaleshwar

Translating to mean 'God of Great Power' in Sanskrit, Mahabaleshwar is a favourite hill destination with Maharashtrians. Once the summer capital of the Bombay Presidency during the British Raj, it offers visitors a perfect blend of modernity with old-world charm. Aside from being abound with natural beauty, there's lots you can do here to keep entertained. All parts of the hill station are accessible by car, so getting around is no problem, and if you're feeling adventurous, just climb onto a horse and get going. Make your way to Malcolm Peth, the bazaar at the heart of Mahabaleshwar, which has a good mix of hotels, shops and restaurants. Visit Mount Malcolm which was built in 1829 and once served as the Governor's residence, Moraji Castle which was home to Mahatma Gandhi back in 1945, and wind down at the Mahabaleshwar Club in the evening over drinks. During the day you can take the short drive up to Venna Lake and go boating or fishing, and proceed a little further down to Panchgani, and walk through the strawberry fields.

The essential Varanasi sightseeing guide

There are many legends associated with the ancient city of Varanasi or Kashi. It is believed that the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati lived here on the banks of the Ganga River. It was here that the rivers Varuna and Assi originated and locked a piece of land that flourished decidedly as a Hindu pilgrimage site, specifically as the holiest cremation spot to attain salvation. Till date, Manikarnika and Harishchand ghats see as many as 200 cremations a day. Beside the association of life and death on the ghats, Varanasi has a number of temples, the Buddhist pilgrimage Sarnath and the adjacent towns of Chunar and Ramnagar as veritable sight seeing spots. Though one can spend weeks exploring the temples on the ghats, here are the places you must visit.

Sarnath

The Buddhist pilgrimage, Sarnath lies 10 km from Varanasi, and is yet another attraction that appeals to people from all around the world. This is the place where Gautum Buddha first gave his sermons on Dharma. The main deer park complex and a number of other Buddhist temples can be seen here. The Mulgandha Kuti Vihar temple, the Archaeological Museum, the Dhamek Stupa, the Chaukhandi Stupa and ruins of monasteries are the key highlights here. Other modern structures like the Japanese & Korean temples have been added to the Sarnath topography in the last few decades. Go early so you can beat the rush of tourists through the day and enjoy the tranquil ambience of these Buddhist relics.

Kushti akhadars

The archaic gyms of Varanasi are still buzzing with activity in the mornings as youngsters come here to wrestle in the mid pits and work out with age-old weights. The wrestling rinks have mud that is brought from nearby villages and mixed with turmeric, curd and neem to infuse it with therapeutic properties.

Varanasi's ghats

The stepped banks (ghats) lie in a crescent shape along the Ganga River in Varanasi. These spring into action as early as 4 am and are buzzing with activity until late night. Hiring a boat to ride along the river is a good way to see all the action - morning ablutions, people praying the two burning ghats (photography not allowed even from the boat) and the bright umbrella dotted platforms where priests hold small ceremonies for pilgrims. Old havelis and palaces lie on the fringes of the river, ensuring a stunning landscape of unique architecture along the entire stretch. These are often used as backdrops for Bollywood movies or homes, since most of the royalty has abandoned these. The most spectacular spectacle at the ghats is the Ganga aarti that is held every evening between 6.15

and 7.15 pm on five ghats. Of these, the Dashashwamedh Ghat aarti is the oldest and the most famous one. Five to seven priests perform the daily ceremony with large fire lit lamps, bells and conchs, as hundreds converge towards the ghat in the evening.

Chunar Fort

Replete with legends, the Chunar Fort lies 37 km from Varanasi and is skirted by the Ganga on two sides. The fort was first constructed in 56 BC, and duly changed hands of ownership from the Afghan and Mughal rulers, to the British until 1947. The first Governor General of India, Warren Hastings also took shelter here when a rebellion broke out in 1781. His house can still be seen in the fort. The fort is often used as a backdrop for TV shows and Bollywood movies. Of these Chandrakanta, and the 2012 Bollywood movie, Gangs of Wasseypur are the most famous. Secret tunnels and hidden pathways are the highlights of this white bastion. It is not uncommon to find military presence here as this used to be a part of a training centre of the army.

Gauri Kedareshwar Temple

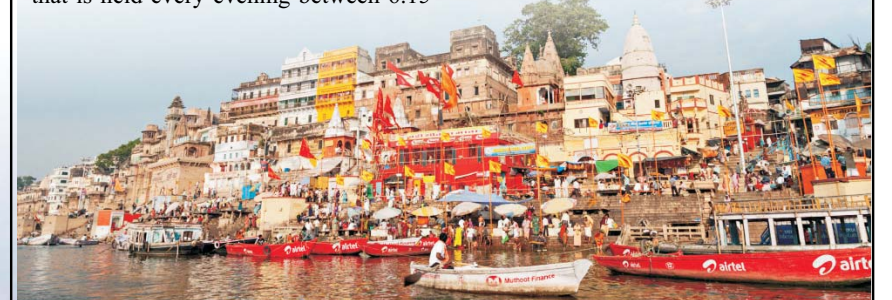
One of the busiest ghats on the Ganga, the Kedar Ghat can be identified by its red and white steps from a distance. Thousands come here each year to pay homage to the Gauri Kedareshwar temple. This can be reached via boat or through the narrow lanes of Bengali Tola. The temple is famous for a replica of the Kedarnath lingam of the Himalayan temple. The irregular humped shaped lingam in stone is encased within a copper railing. People only enter the temple after taking a bath in the Gauri Kund (pond) adjoining the river.

Durga Temple

The 18th century Durga temple lies south of the main city, away from the ghats. A narrow lane flanked by flower and puja paraphernalia vendors leads up to this ancient temple. Inside, the low roofed, bright red walled temple has a small sanctum with a vivid idol of the Devi riding a tiger, armed with a trident, discus and sword. Navratras are celebrated with great vigour in this temple.

Ramnagar

The massive red ramparts of the Ramnagar fort can be seen across Assi Ghat on the other side of the Ganga. The Mughal-style fort was built by Raja Balwant Singh in 1750. Though the fort is not an architectural wonder, it is the main draw at the city of Ramnagar. The small city is most famous for its depiction of Ramlila in the most authentic form. The fort has a small museum, which does not require much time. The other highlight here is the Durga temple, which is the venue of the grand aarti held on the last day of the Ramlila. This is the place where Lal Bahadur Shastri was born.



NEWS BOX

RR vs RCB Preview: Kohli, Sooryavanshi headline battle of generations in Guwahati



New Delhi. (Agency)

The Barsapara Stadium is set to host a battle of generations as defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru take on Rajasthan Royals in their fourth match of the Indian Premier League season on Friday, April 10.

RCB and RR are among the unbeaten sides in IPL 2026, and that run will be tested tonight unless rain intervenes in Guwahati. Unseasonal showers nearly washed out Rajasthan's previous game at this venue, with the match eventually reduced to an 11-over-a-side contest after excellent work from the groundstaff.

Rain is once again expected to play a role, with showers forecast around 8 pm. However, conditions are unlikely to be as severe as during RR's clash against Mumbai Indians.

Guwahati has proven to be a challenging venue for visiting teams. Last season, Jofra Archer rattled Chennai Super Kings with raw pace, and that trend has continued this year, with Rajasthan winning both their matches at their adopted home ground.

Friday presents a different challenge. Rajasthan face a confident RCB side that has dominated at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, routing both Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings.

This will be RCB's first away game of the season. Last year, their dominance was built on strong performances on the road, led by Virat Kohli, who averaged close to 100 in away fixtures.

RR vs RCB: BATTLE OF GENERATIONS

Rajasthan's biggest strength lies in their explosive opening pair of Yashasvi Jaiswal and teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. At just 15, Sooryavanshi adds a striking contrast to Jaiswal, who, despite being young himself, is the more experienced partner. The duo provided a flying start against Mumbai Indians in the previous game, setting the tone early. If they replicate that against the new-ball pair of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jacob Duffy, RCB could find themselves under pressure.

FIFA scams fans: World Cup ticket buyers accuse body of cheating

New Delhi. (Agency)

World football's governing body FIFA is facing mounting backlash from fans after quietly introducing new, higher-priced ticket categories for the 2026 World Cup - while also allegedly shifting the seating allocations of those who had already purchased tickets.

In what many supporters have described as a "bait-and-switch," FIFA added a new "front category" tier to its ticketing system this week, significantly raising prices for premium seats without any public announcement.

For the United States' opening match against Paraguay on June 12 in Inglewood, California, front category 1 tickets are now



being sold for as much as \$4,105. Just days earlier, the highest listed price for category 1 seats for the same game stood at \$2,735.

The changes were not limited to the top tier. A new "front category 2" bracket - priced between \$1,940 and \$2,330 - also appeared on FIFA's ticketing portal, marking another unannounced addition to the pricing structure. The revisions were first reported by The Athletic.

The 2026 World Cup, set to be held across 16 cities in the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, is already being billed as the most commercially expansive edition of the tournament. But the latest ticketing developments have sparked concerns over transparency and fairness.

FIFA's own documentation from September 9 had described category 1 tickets as "the highest-priced seats, located primarily in the lower tier," while category 2 seats were said to be positioned outside those areas. The emergence of "front" categories suggests that a portion of premium inventory may have been withheld initially - only to be released later at significantly higher prices.

Runs like Virat, chases like Dhoni: How LSG found 21-year-old finisher from Rajasthan

After Mukul Choudhary's epic finishing act stunned KKR, Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer revealed that it was performance analyst Shrinivas Chandrasekaran who first flagged the young Rajasthan wicketkeeper to the team management ahead of the auction.

LISBON. (Agency)

After the young Mukul Choudhary turned a lost cause into a heist in Kolkata, Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer revealed how a quiet call from the team's performance analyst set the wheels in motion for LSG to pick the unknown 21-year-old Rajasthan wicketkeeper in the IPL 2026 auction.

On a humid Thursday night at Eden Gardens, Choudhary's unbeaten 54 off 27 balls powered LSG to a last-ball, three-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in a chase of 182. But behind the finish that stunned Kolkata lay a scouting call that Langer said the franchise was fortunate to act on.

"Oh, we saw him earlier at a training camp a few months ago, the first time we picked him up. There's so much talent in this country. A big shout-out goes to Shrinivas, our data analyst, who said, 'Coach, we've got to get this kid.' So we did, and we were lucky to," Langer told Faf du Plessis in a broadcaster's interview after LSG's win.

Recognition at the junior level led to the 21-year-old Rajasthan wicketkeeper finding his way into the IPL auction, where LSG secured him for Rs 2.60 crore. On Thursday, that investment paid off most dramatically.

HOW MUKUL FLIPPED THE SCRIPT AT EDEN

At one stage, KKR were firmly in control with 42 runs to defend off 18 balls. Choudhary changed that equation in a matter of minutes. He took on Kartik Tyagi for two sixes, then rode his luck and timing against Cameron Green in a sequence that flipped the chase. A mis-hit fell safe, a swing missed, and then came the counterattack, 6, 4, 6 to drag LSG back. In the final over, he struck another six before slicing a slightly off-target delivery over cover to seal the chase on the last ball.

Langer said he was struck by Mukul's athleticism and awareness, noting that he



runs between the wickets like Virat Kohli and carries the game sense of someone far more experienced.

"What I love most about him is that he's a real athlete. The way he runs between the wickets is elite, like Virat. But the other thing is his game sense. We've had some practice games, and the way he talks about the game feels like he's played 300 matches already. He's got power, he's a great athlete, and he's got grace. As we both know, that's a pretty good combination."

"He's played a bit of cricket, not a heap though. But there are very few players like the Tim Davids and the Andre Russells. I'm not even going to compare him, but those kinds of players build careers around finishing games. That's how he's grown up playing. He's used to finishing games, he thinks about it, and he's only 22 years old. He's so young, but he's got that look in his eyes. He's hungry. His parents and family will be very proud of him today. When you first come in, you try so hard, and this will be a massive moment in his life and career," Langer added.

Badminton Asia

Shetty stuns 3rd seed to reach semis, keeps India's hope alive

India's medal hope in the Badminton Asia Championships remained alive as Ayush Shetty stunned third seed Jonatan Christie to reach the semi-finals of the competition. Shetty beat the Indonesian in straight games, in a match that lasted nearly one hour.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Ayush Shetty, India's lone representative in the men's singles draw at the Badminton Asia Championships 2026, stormed into the semi-finals with a stunning win over third seed Jonatan Christie on Thursday.

The 20-year-old, ranked World No. 25, defeated Christie in straight games in a 54-minute contest. After edging a tight opening game 23-21, Shetty took control in the second, sealing the quarter-final clash 21-17. This marks the second major upset for Shetty in the tournament. In the opening round, he knocked out World No. 7 and Hong Kong Open 2025 champion Li Shi Feng in straight games, winning 21-13, 21-16. He followed that up with a victory over Chi Yu Jen in the second round.

Shetty has long shown signs of breaking into the top tier of men's singles, and this result will significantly boost his confidence as he



edges closer to the world's top 20. The result comes as a welcome boost for Indian badminton fans, especially after early

exits for Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy earlier in the tournament. Lakshya bowed out in the opening round, losing in straight games 12-21, 19-21 to Hong Kong China's Lee Cheuk Yiu.

Prannoy, meanwhile, endured a far more frustrating exit. He went down to China's Weng Hongyang in straight games, 12-21, 19-21, in a match marred by controversy. The Indian shuttler later criticised the organisers, questioning the absence of the Hawk-Eye system on his court. Prannoy expressed his displeasure over several line calls on Court 2 at the Ningbo Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium, which he felt consistently went in favour of the Chinese players.

IPL 2026: How one advice from Rishabh Pant unlocked Mukul Choudhary's best vs KKR

IPL 2026: Mukul Choudhary's match-winning finish against KKR came down to one thing, clearing his mind and trusting his game after a timely word from Rishabh Pant. In a chase that looked done at 128/7, that small reset made all the difference.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Mukul Choudhary produced one of the standout finishes of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, revealing that a simple piece of advice from his captain Rishabh Pant played a key role in his match-winning knock for Lucknow Super Giants against Kolkata Knight Riders. The young finisher credited Pant for helping him clear his mind at a crucial stage in his development.

With LSG staring at defeat in a tricky chase of 182, Mukul turned the game on its head with a fearless display of power-hitting. Speaking after the match, he explained how Pant's words helped him stay calm and trust his instincts.

"The main thing is calmness. Over the last one or two years, earlier I used to rush a bit, but in the past few months, I've worked on this in practice, that I want to bat as long as possible. If I take the game till the end, I

believe I can win it for my team," Mukul said at the post-match press conference.

"Even in the last match, I played 4 to 5 balls, I didn't get out, but I wasn't timing it well. So I spoke to Rishabh bhai. He told me that I



was overthinking, thinking I will do this, I will do that. He said don't think so much. Just focus on your job, your process, what you've always done. If you overthink, you'll feel pressure. Watch the ball. When

you hit it, you hit it well. I believe in you, but you need to believe in yourself too," he added.

HOW MUKUL WON THE BATTLE VS KKR

Mukul's innings was built on calculated aggression and timing rather than blind hitting. He began the turnaround in the 17th over, taking on Vaibhav Arora with two crucial sixes that shifted momentum.

He followed it up with another attacking over against Kartik Tyagi, once again clearing the ropes twice to keep LSG in the contest. By then, the equation had started to tilt.

The decisive blow came in the 19th over against Cameron Green, where Mukul smashed two sixes and a boundary, effectively bringing the target within reach. Heading into the final over, he kept his composure intact and finished the job in style, launching two more sixes to seal the win and bring up a memorable half-century.

IPL 2026

Is Vaibhav Sooryavanshi destined for Rohit Sharma-Virat Kohli stardom?

New Delhi. (Agency)

Graeme Smith has backed Vaibhav Sooryavanshi as one of the most exciting prospects of IPL 2026, suggesting the teenage sensation could be on the path to stardom. The former South Africa captain even placed the youngster in conversations alongside established names like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, underlining the buzz around his early performances.

Sooryavanshi, just 15, has already become one of the standout stories of the season with his fearless approach at the top for Rajasthan Royals. Speaking in his blog, Smith



highlighted how the youngster has grabbed attention despite the presence of seasoned superstars in the tournament.

"As always, it's interesting to see how the old school superstars like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli perform, but I think this youngster for Rajasthan Royals, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, is the one to watch in the opening few weeks," Smith said.

"He has already shown his ability to power it right from ball one. As a young man, he could become a proper superstar over the course of the tournament and I'm really excited to see how he goes," he added.

The praise reflects the kind of impact Sooryavanshi has made in a very short span across formats. His fearless hitting and intent have stood out in IPL 2026, especially against top-quality bowling attacks, where he has shown no hesitation in taking the game on.

HOW HAS SOORYAVANSHI BEEN IN IPL 2026

Sooryavanshi's numbers already tell a compelling story. In his first three matches, he has scored 122 runs at an average of over 40, with a staggering strike rate close to 250.

What makes his performances even more remarkable is the manner in which those runs have come.

Candidates chess: Vaishali jumps to sole lead among women, Praggnanandhaa loses

New Delhi. (Agency)

R Vaishali continued her impressive run in the women's Candidates, moving into sole lead after holding Anna Muzychuk to a composed draw in Round 10, even as Javokhir Sindarov tightened his grip on the open section with a commanding win over R Praggnanandhaa on Thursday.

Vaishali, who has shown remarkable consistency throughout the tournament, took her tally to six points to edge ahead of the field in the women's standings. Facing Muzychuk, one of the most experienced players in the lineup, the Indian was solid throughout and never allowed the game to drift out of control. She equalised comfortably and ensured there were no late complications, continuing a run that had steadily gathered momentum at a crucial stage of the event.

Muzychuk now shares second place with China's Zhu Jiner, both on 5.5 points, keeping the title race finely balanced heading

into the final four rounds. The chasing pack is not far behind either. Bibisara Assaubayeva registered a key win over Zhu to move to five points, joining Kateryna Lagno and Aleksandra Goryachkina in a tightly packed group that remains very much in contention.

It was, however, a mixed day for the Indian contingent in the women's section, as Divya Deshmukh lost her chances in the endgame against Goryachkina and went down after a hard-fought battle. In the open section, Sindarov's march towards the title gathered further pace as he outplayed Praggnanandhaa to reach eight points, opening up a significant two-point lead at the top. The Uzbek has been the standout performer of the tournament and once again demonstrated his depth of preparation and control under pressure.

The game against Praggnanandhaa turned sharp early, with Sindarov opting for an

aggressive approach that involved a piece sacrifice to complicate matters. The Indian held his own for a while in the ensuing tactical battle, but a critical error proved



decisive. Praggnanandhaa lost his queen in exchange for two rooks and some pawns, an imbalance that tilted the position firmly in Sindarov's favour. From there, the Uzbek

showed excellent technique to convert the advantage without giving his opponent any real chances to recover. The victory was Sindarov's sixth of the tournament and his second over Praggnanandhaa, underlining his dominance in this event. With four rounds remaining, he now sits comfortably ahead of the field and firmly in control of the title race.

Anish Giri, on six points, is the only player still within touching distance, while the rest of the contenders appear to have fallen behind. Fabiano Caruana was held to a draw by Wei Yi, Hikaru Nakamura split the point with Giri, and Andrey Esipenko also drew his game against Matthias

Bluebaum, results that ensured the standings at the top remained unchanged apart from Sindarov extending his lead.



Kritika Kamra

Resumes Work After Marriage With Gaurav Kapur, Says 'Busy Days Ahead'



Actress Kritika Kamra, who got married just a month ago, has bounced back to work and said that she was always sure that she wouldn't take a long break pre and post-wedding. The 37-year-old actress is currently juggling promotional duties for her series Matka King while simultaneously shooting for her upcoming project. Despite the whirlwind of celebrations, Kritika and her husband, Gaurav Kapur, managed to squeeze in a quick 3 to 4 day getaway to Goa.

Speaking about getting back to work, Kritika said in a statement, "It was a beautiful and special time for me personally but I was always sure that I wouldn't take a long break pre and post-wedding."

However, the couple are now back to work. Gaurav too is keeping busy with the ongoing IPL season. She added: "Gaurav and I are both back to doing what we love with new energy. I'm really excited to share more about 'Matka King' and going back to set for my upcoming film that I've been training for. Busy days ahead but I wouldn't have it any other way."

Sources close to the actress reveal that Kritika has been diligently managing her time between promotional events for Matka King and her ongoing shoot, showcasing her dedication and passion for her craft.

Kritika and Gaurav got married on March 11 in an intimate wedding setting with their families and a close circle of friends in attendance. They had their registrar wedding at home. Talking about Kritika, she made her acting debut in 2007 with Yahan Ke Hum Sikandar. In 2009, she played a singer, Arohi in Kitani Mohabbat Hai opposite Karan. She was then seen in Pyaar Ka Bandhan, Kitani Mohabbat Hai 2, Kuch Toh Log Kahenge,

In 2015, Kritika played a reporter, Ananya Kashyap, opposite Rajeev Khandelwal, in Reporters. She was then seen as Princess Chandrakanta in Prem Ya Paheli - Chandrakanta. She made her film debut in 2018 with Mitron. In 2021, she played a college student Sana in the web series Tandav.

Ananya Panday

Poses With Shah Rukh Khan's Youngest Son AbRam, Photo Goes

Bollywood actress Ananya Panday, on Wednesday, gave fans a sneak peek into her everyday moments, further also sharing an adorable selfie with Shah Rukh Khan's youngest son AbRam. The young boy was seen striking a playful pose alongside Ananya. In the selfie, Ananya is seen pouting slightly while posing next to AbRam.

Sharing the carousel on her social media account, Ananya captioned it as, "Livin the sweet life (by the end of it it does become a riot and honey and lemon fan page huh)"



In one picture, the actress is seen sitting on the floor, rummaging through a luxury black handbag while her adorable pet dog watches on.

In another picture, she is seen waist-deep in the sea during sunset.

Ananya is also seen sharing a quirky frame where she stands wearing glasses and a

sweater, holding her pet dog's paw with love. The actress also shared a picture of a delicious looking Food plate, filled with sliced mango and sticky rice. In the next picture, Ananya looks over her shoulder while carrying a statement black handbag.

More pictures in the carousel also include playful selfies with her pet puppy, cuddly moments lounging on a couch with her dogs, and an early morning tea session with her fur babies.

On the professional front, Ananya Bollywood debut with the movie Student of the year in 2019. The actress then went on to feature in movies like Pati Patni Aur Woh, Gehraiyaan, CTRL and others. Recently, Ananya was in Thailand to wrap up the second season of her upcoming series Call Me Bae.

Kajol Wishes 'Classy Gal' Jaya Bachchan On Her 78th Birthday, Shares Veteran Actor's Happy Photo



As a veteran actress Jaya Bachchan turned a year older on Thursday, Kajol used social media to wish the actor and politician on her special day. Kajol took to the Stories section of her official Instagram handle and uploaded a rare photo of the two ladies.

Wishing Jaya Bachchan with a lot of hugs and kisses, the 'Maa' actress penned on the photo-sharing app, "Happy birthday to this classy gal! Hugs and kisses, (red heart emoji) #JayaBachchan(sic)". The candid still posted by Kajol is most likely from last year's Durga Puja celebrations hosted by the 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' actress and her family.

The photograph showed both Jaya Bachchan and Kajol dressed in stunning sarees. They were seen smiling in a candid still in which Kajol lovingly held the veteran actress's hand. The bond between the two actresses is highly palpable in the photo.

It must be noted that Kajol and Jaya Bachchan share a great rapport and are often seen greeting one another with utmost warmth whenever they appear in public together.

They are frequently seen together during Durga Puja festivities in Mumbai. For those who do not know, Kajol and Jaya Bachchan shared the screen space in Karan Johar's blockbuster "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham".

Backed by Yash Johar, the drama enjoys an ensemble cast with Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, and Kareena Kapoor in significant roles, along with Rani Mukerji making a guest appearance.

One of the most celebrated actresses of her time, Jaya Bachchan gained recognition with "Guddi" and went on to deliver some memorable roles in movies "Abhimaan", "Mili", and "Sholay", to name just a few. She took a break from acting after tying the knot with Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan. However, she made a comeback with some more powerful performances in "Fiza" and "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham".

Sahiba Bali Supports Samay Raina's Still Alive, Says She Attended Live Taping: 'Saw You Breaking But Still...'



Sahiba Bali has extended her support to Samay Raina after his latest special, Still Alive, has gone viral across social media platforms. She took to her Instagram Stories to pen a heartfelt note for him and revealed how the comedian tried to be positive even in his time of tragedy. She mentioned that she saw the live tapings of both the cancelled episode of India's Got Talent and Still Alive.

Sahiba Bali wrote, "Saw that cancelled episode live, saw you breaking but still singing and playing the guitar live, saw you perform Still Alive live. Seeing you make people understand that love always triumphs hate live." She also shared a photo of the comedian in which she made the Korean heart symbol. Samay's fans are appreciating his latest video for his candour and strength. The comedy special has gone viral across social media platforms. In Samay Raina's Still Alive, the comedian not only detailed the controversy but also delved deep into its aftermath. He opened up about the guilt he felt when his peers received death threats and legal notices.

Samay Raina Pens Note For Fans The comedian also took to Instagram and wrote for his fans, "Overwhelmed by the response to my new special- Still Alive. Thank you so much for giving me your time and love, I am beyond grateful. I love you, and I don't have any words right now except that I am just grateful to you for the love."

Samay Raina's latest video has reignited a social media debate, with some arguing that the backlash's severity was unjustified. They mentioned that a joke, especially one not targeted at a specific person, should not have led to multiple FIRs and that giving death threats and rape threats are bigger offences.

They argued that action should have been taken against those who destroyed private property and whipped out death threats and rape threats at their whim, especially for something as subjective as a joke.

NEWS BOX

Iran has won the war: Khamenei signals new phase in Strait of Hormuz control

Tehran. (Agency)

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei on Thursday declared that "Iran has emerged victorious in its conflict with the United States and Israel," describing the outcome as a "defining moment in the country's resistance."

"Today, and up to this moment, we can confidently say that the Iranian people have won the third epic battle of the sacred defense," Khamenei said in a statement released by his office.

He also asserted that Iran is demanding compensation for the damage caused by the United States and Israel during the conflict, reiterating Tehran's long-standing position that it will seek reparations or retaliate against enemy assets if its demands are not met.

Khamenei further indicated that Tehran is entering a "new stage" of asserting control over the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil transit route.

Separately, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, during which the two discussed the ceasefire agreement with the United States and the evolving situation in the Strait.

According to Iran's Foreign Ministry, Araghchi stressed that Washington must honour its commitment to end hostilities across all fronts, including Lebanon. He said safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz would depend on the United States adhering to its obligations under the agreement. Araghchi also thanked Russia for its support at the United Nations Security Council, particularly for vetoing what he described as a "one-sided and unreasonable" U.S.-proposed resolution aimed at reopening the Strait.

White House hits back at George Clooney over criticism of Donald Trump

Washington. (Agency)

The White House on Thursday sharply criticised Hollywood actor George Clooney after he condemned President Donald Trump's remarks threatening Iran, with Communications Director Steven Cheung calling the actor a "war criminal" in a sarcastic response.

"The only person committing war crimes is George Clooney for his awful movies and terrible acting ability," Cheung wrote on X, dismissing the actor's criticism.

The exchange follows escalating rhetoric around the U.S.-Iran situation. On Tuesday, Trump announced a two-week bilateral ceasefire with Iran and said Tehran had agreed to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Supreme National Security Council later indicated that talks with Washington would begin on Friday in Islamabad.

Ahead of the agreement, Trump had issued a stark warning, saying Iranian civilisation could "die" and threatening strikes on key infrastructure, including power plants, if a deal was not reached by the stated deadline.

Reacting to the remarks, Clooney said that any leader expressing a desire to end a civilisation should be considered a war criminal, triggering the White House's sharp rebuttal.

Iran to allow no more than 15 vessels a day to pass Strait of Hormuz with strict approval from Tehran

Tehran. (Agency)

Under the ceasefire agreement reached between the US and Iran, Tehran will allow no more than 15 vessels per day to traverse the Strait of Hormuz, and will require prior approval from the Islamic Republic, with an Iranian lawmaker telling Russian state media TASS, there will be no return to pre-war status.

"Under the current ceasefire, fewer than 15 ships per day are permitted to transit the Strait of Hormuz. This movement is strictly contingent upon Iran's approval and the enforcement of a specific protocol.

"This new regulatory framework, operating under the supervision of the IRGC, has been officially communicated to regional parties. There will be no return to the pre-war status quo," said the official.

In addition, the lawmaker noted that "the unfreezing of Iran's blocked assets is a critical executive guarantee that must be realised within this two-week timeframe," and further insisted that the end of the war must be formalised in a resolution of the UNSC, with failure to heed resulting in renewed hostilities.

"If the termination of the war is not codified into a UN Security Council resolution based on our stipulated terms, we are fully prepared to resume combat against the US and the Zionist (Israel) regime just as we have over the past 40 days, and with even greater intensity."

Furthermore, Tehran has demanded that during this two-week period of respite, "US cannot increase its troop presence," even as President Donald Trump declared that all American military assets – hardware and personnel – will continue to be stationed where they are, and will be in a constant state of readiness.

Reiterating the state stance of no-compromise and negotiations over uranium enrichment, the lawmaker said "Regarding uranium enrichment - we remain committed strictly to the text of the exchanged agreement and are actively holding to it."

What's behind Melania's sudden Epstein announcement?

When the White House said Melania Trump would make an announcement, nobody knew what it was about. A statement on America's biggest sex trafficker was the last thing anyone could think of.

World. (Agency)

All eyes were on the skies where the aircraft of Iranian officials was being escorted by Pakistan jets to ensure they land safely for ceasefire talks with the US when Melania announced, "I was never friends with Epstein". Boom.

Nobody saw that coming. At least not now. When White House said Melania Trump would make an announcement, nobody knew what it was about. Surprisingly, even Donald Trump wasn't aware.

An Epstein mention was the last thing anyone could think of. In her first direct statement on America's biggest sex trafficker in modern history, the US First Lady denied any relationship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. "I am not Epstein's victim," she said in a rare

and unexpected public statement. "To be clear, I never had relations with Epstein or his accomplice Maxwell. I have never been friends with Epstein. Donald and I were invited to the same parties as Epstein from time to time."

"Epstein did not introduce me to Donald Trump. I met my husband by chance." Melania did not stop here. She even mentioned that she was never on Epstein's infamous plane and never visited his private island. "I have never had any knowledge of Epstein's abuse of his victims. I was never involved in any capacity. I was not a participant, was never on Epstein's plane, and never visited his private island."

Melania, who married the now US President Donald Trump in 2005, insisted she had

only had casual contact with Epstein's accomplice and former girlfriend,

island and the emails seemed to be an attempt to deny some specific allegations.

But there was no recent buzz about Melania's link to Epstein. There were no fresh allegations. Then what was Melania reacting to?

EVEN TRUMP WAS UNAWARE

To everyone's surprise, Melania's husband and US President Donald Trump said he was not aware that she was giving an address. Speaking to MS Now, Trump claimed he had no prior awareness of her statement before she appeared publicly. He said he "didn't know anything about" the First Lady's statement before she went on camera, adding that "she didn't know (Epstein)" before abruptly ending the interview call.



Ghislaine Maxwell, and described an email she sent to Maxwell in 2002 as a "casual correspondence".

The conscious mention of the plane, the

Hate crimes against Sikhs surged by 3,700% in US in last 10 years: Report

World. (Agency)

Hate crimes against Sikhs in the United States have surged by 3,700% over the past decade, pointing to a sharp rise in targeted attacks even as overall incidents showed a decline in 2025.

Preliminary data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, cited by Axios, shows anti-Sikh hate crimes rose from just six cases in 2015 to 228 in 2025. The spike comes amid a broader rise in hate crimes over the last decade, with overall incidents increasing by 88% between 2015 and 2025.

Despite the long-term rise, overall hate crime incidents fell by 11% in 2025 compared to the previous year, suggesting a shift in patterns rather than a decline in targeted hostility.

Experts say certain communities are facing concentrated attacks even as total numbers fluctuate.

"Whoever is the target of a particular

sticky type of stereotype, particularly a fear-inducing one, you'll see that particular group spike," said hate crime expert Brian Levin.

SIKHS AMONG MOST TARGETED RELIGIOUS GROUPS



A 2025 report by the Sikh Coalition found that the community was the third most targeted religious group in 2024, behind Jews and Muslims.

The rise in reported incidents comes even though anti-Sikh hate crimes were only formally tracked as a

separate category in recent years.

OTHER COMMUNITIES ALSO SEE RISE

• The data points to significant increases across several groups over the past decade:

• Anti-trans: Up 395%, the largest increase among all categories, with incidents remaining far above historical averages.

• Anti-Latino: Up 239%, with 2025 recording a further 18% rise to a record 1,014 cases.

• Anti-Asian: Up 195%, reflecting a sustained upward trend.

• Anti-Jewish: Up 123% over the decade, though down 29% in the latest year after earlier spikes.

• Anti-Black: Up 66%.

• Anti-white: Up 51%.

• Anti-gay (male): Up 27%, the smallest increase among listed categories.

US confirms Rubio's visit to India after talks with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

Washington. (Agency)

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to visit New Delhi next month, it was announced here after his "productive meeting" with India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on a range of issues, including trade and the Quad.

Misri, who is on a three-day visit here, met Rubio at the White House. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relationships, especially trade, critical minerals, defence and the Quad.

"Welcome to the White House @VikramMisri! Productive meeting with @SecRubio that focused on our bilateral relationship, especially trade, critical minerals, defence and the Quad," US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, who was also present at the meeting, posted on X.

Secretary Rubio looks forward to visiting India next month, Gor said. Earlier, Misri held separate meetings

with US Deputy Secretary Christopher Landau and US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Allison Hooker.

"Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau met with Indian Foreign

Secretary Vikram Misri today in Washington. The leaders reaffirmed the close partnership between the two countries and shared news about the situation in the Persian Gulf and other global and regional priorities," Tommy Pigott, Principal Deputy Spokesman

for the Department of State, said in a statement. Hooker said she and Misri discussed how India and the US can work closer together on security, defence, and the economy. "We are finding practical ways to make both Americans and Indians safer and more prosperous, including through the Quad," she said.

The Indian embassy in the US said Hooker and Misri took stock of the India-US bilateral agenda since the Foreign Office Consultations held last December. The two diplomats also shared assessments on recent developments in West Asia, as well as regional issues of mutual interest.

US Vice President JD Vance is leading a delegation to Islamabad for talks with Iranian leaders after the warring sides agreed to a two-week Pakistan-brokered ceasefire.



Traffic curbs, schools, markets shut: Islamabad turns fortress for US-Iran talks

The upcoming

negotiations in

Islamabad come in the

wake of a two-week

ceasefire between the

US & Iran, announced

after a period of

intensifying conflict

triggered by the

February 28 killing of

Iran's Supreme Leader,

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Islamabad. (Agency)

Amid the fragile ceasefire in the Middle East, all eyes will be on Islamabad, which will host talks between the US & Iran from April 11.

The Pakistani capital has already turned into a fortress, with security forces patrolling key roads and government installations. Visuals from Islamabad show the city's Red Zone under tight security, with only limited civilian movements allowed in the area.

Roads across the Red Zone, which houses the Parliament, key government installations, luxury hotels, embassies and the offices of foreign organisations, have been blocked for civilian vehicles.

Armed police guards have set up several checkpoints across the city while authorities have implemented traffic diversions to ensure smooth movement of the visiting teams.

Authorities have also declared a holiday on Thursday and Friday in the national capital in a bid to minimise civilian movements ahead of the crucial talks. Many schools and

shops have been closed, with only limited activity seen in some areas.

The upcoming negotiations come in the wake of a two-week ceasefire between Tehran and Washington, announced after a period of intensifying conflict triggered by the



February 28 killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Facilitated through Pakistan's diplomatic intervention, the temporary truce has opened a narrow and fragile opportunity for both sides to engage in talks, which are

aimed at preventing further escalation.

Nevertheless, Al Jazeera has reported that the Iranian delegation is yet to leave for Pakistan due to the ongoing Israeli attacks on Lebanon, even as US Vice President JD Vance and his delegation have left Hungary for the upcoming talks.

PAKISTAN ASSURES US AMBASSADOR OF 'FOOLPROOF SECURITY'

According to a Gulf News report, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has assured the US Ambassador of "foolproof security" to the visiting American delegation.

His assurance comes even as a 30-member US advance team has arrived in Islamabad to review security arrangements, according to the publication.

However, doubts have been raised about Islamabad's ability to secure the crucial event, scheduled to take place at Hotel Serena, a prominent five-star property and a regular venue for high-level diplomatic engagements.