



# MAHANAGAR METRO

VOICE OF THE CITY, PULSE OF THE NATION

Govt calls special Parliament Session next week

## Congress says discuss first

The BJP has issued a three-line whip to its MPs to ensure full attendance during a special April 16-18 Parliament session, where amendments to fast-track the Women's Reservation Act are expected to be introduced.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government has called a special three-day session of Parliament from April 16 to 18, during which it is set to introduce a Constitutional Amendment Bill aimed at implementing the women's reservation law ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Ahead of the session, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has issued a three-line whip to its Members of Parliament in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, directing them to remain present throughout the proceedings. MPs have been instructed to strictly adhere to the whip, with no leave permitted during the three days.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a letter to floor leaders of both Houses, stressed the need to implement the women's reservation law, officially known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, in its "true spirit." He said it was imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections be conducted with the quota for women in place, urging all parties to come together to pass

the required amendments.

The law, passed in 2023, provides for 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. It also proposes increasing the total



number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, with 273 reserved for women. However, under the current provisions, implementation is tied to the completion of delimitation based on the 2027 Census, which could delay enforcement until 2034. The proposed amendments aim to advance

its rollout to 2029.

The move has drawn criticism from the opposition. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to the Prime Minister, alleging that the government is rushing the process for "political mileage" amid ongoing state elections. He reiterated the demand for an all-party meeting after April 29 to discuss the delimitation exercise linked to the amendments.

Kharge pointed out that while the bill was passed unanimously in 2023, the government did not implement it immediately despite claiming broad consensus. He also said that without clarity on delimitation and other key aspects, meaningful discussion on the amendments would not be possible. He further alleged that the government's claim of consulting political parties was "against the truth," noting that opposition parties have consistently demanded a wider consultation after the ongoing elections conclude. Kharge emphasised that such constitutional changes would impact both the Centre and the states and must involve all stakeholders.

## UCC dangerous, people will lose right to practise own faith: Mamata

Kolkata.(Agency)

Hitting out the BJP over its promise to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in West Bengal if voted to power, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday said that through the UCC, the party wants to impose its diktat on the people and restrict people from practising their faith.

Addressing a rally in Keshiary in Paschim Medinipur district, Banerjee said, "Their (BJP) manifesto is filled with lies. Implementing UCC means you will lose the right to practise your religion and faith. It will take away your culture, tradition and education. UCC means destruction of diversity. They want to make everything homogeneous. We will oppose this. UCC is dangerous."

She also slammed the BJP over the Delimitation Bill which has been cleared by the Union Cabinet to be tabled in Parliament.

"The Delimitation Bill will be introduced. Why is there such a hurry? Why during election time? They are planning to break Bengal into pieces. Then they will bring NRC in the future. If you don't want to go to detention camps and keep on getting the benefits of our social welfare schemes like Khadya Sathi, Laxmir Bhandar, Kanyashree, then cast your vote in favour of TMC. Consider me the candidate in all the 294 seats," she said.

Alleging that there are curbs on eating meat, fish and eggs in BJP-ruled states, she said, "Who gave them the right to impose their diktat on our dietary habits?"

Calling SIR a "scam" by the BJP to win the elections, Banerjee said, "Voter names are being indiscriminately deleted. Out of 90 lakh voters that have been deleted, 60 lakh are Hindus and 30 lakh are Muslims. People are still being made to stand in queues. SCs and STs are being tortured in every BJP-ruled state."

### Digital Conspiracy: Investigating the Truth

Alleged Honeytrap Smear Bid Targets Jain Monk Ahead of Surat Upashray Inauguration



By Pawan Makan | Group Editor  
Ahmedabad, Gujarat:

A fresh controversy has surfaced in Surat's Jain community after alleged attempts were made to defame a respected Jain monk just days before the inauguration of a new Jain upashray. According to community sources, edited videos and manipulated images are once again being circulated on social media to tarnish the monk's image and create unrest within the sangh. The matter is not entirely new. Similar fake videos had reportedly surfaced nearly one and a half years ago, when trustees and community members were allegedly threatened using doctored digital content. Internal scrutiny at that time had found the material to be edited and misleading. Now, the same content is said to have resurfaced in a new form ahead of the major religious event. The issue has taken a more disturbing turn with allegations that a sadhvi was also targeted through morphed images, causing severe mental distress and reportedly pushing her toward a suicide attempt, from which she was later rescued. Community members believe the monk's strong sermons against social evils and his growing influence may have unsettled vested interests. Concerns are also being raised over the misuse of AI and digital editing tools to spread misinformation and disrupt religious harmony. The Jain community has been urged to remain cautious, avoid believing unverified social media content, and stay united in protecting the dignity of religious institutions.

Editorial Note | Mahanagar Metro:

At a time when technology can be weaponized to damage reputations within minutes, society must respond with patience, verification, and unity. Religious institutions and spiritual leaders should never become soft targets of digital manipulation. The real test of a mature community lies in its ability to stand by truth, reject misinformation, and ensure that those misusing AI, fake videos, and social media are brought under the ambit of law. Mahanagar Metro believes that faith must be protected not through outrage, but through awareness, legal action, and collective wisdom.

## Karnataka Congress faces high command heat as minority push fuels internal revolt

Bengaluru.(Agency)

The Congress high command has asked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to act against state minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and two MLCs - K Abdul Jabbar and Naseer Ahmed - for alleged anti-party activities. Notably, all three leaders are considered close to the CM.

The Karnataka unit of the Congress has gone into damage control mode after a senior minister and two MLCs were accused of tacitly backing a rival candidate during the Davangere South bypoll on April 9.

The Congress high command has asked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to act against state minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan and two MLCs - K Abdul Jabbar and Naseer Ahmed - for alleged anti-party activities. Notably, all three leaders are considered close to the CM. While Jabbar resigned as the president of the Minority Welfare Board on Saturday, Ahmed has now been asked to step down as Siddaramaiah's

political secretary. The Chief Minister is also likely to drop Khan from the state cabinet to contain the damage, say party



sources. Reports from the state intelligence wing as well as AICC secretary Abhishek Dutt had

flagged alleged anti-party activities by Jabbar, Ahmed, and Khan in the run-up to the bypoll on April 9.

According to intelligence reports, the trio allegedly provided tacit support to Afsar Kodlipete, the SDPI candidate in Davangere South, by funding his election campaign. Party insiders believe that the SDPI could emerge as a major political challenger if it is strengthened. The three leaders had pushed for a Muslim candidate, Sadik Pailwan, as the constituency has a sizeable minority population. However, the party leadership chose Samarth Mallikarjun, son of state minister SS Mallikarjun, as its official candidate.

### Mahanagar Metro: Special Breaking

## Power Struggle Erupts Inside 'Kamalam'; Former Mayor Allegedly Pushed Out as Defections Trigger BJP Rift

### Defector push triggers rare revolt in Kamalam

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

Gandhinagar: A major internal flashpoint has reportedly emerged inside the BJP's Gujarat state headquarters, 'Kamalam', exposing growing resentment among long-time party workers over the increasing preference being given to leaders who recently switched from rival parties. According to political circles, anger over ticket distribution and the rewarding of defectors with positions and electoral opportunities spilled into open confrontation, with reports claiming that a former mayor was allegedly pushed out of the party office during the chaos. The incident has intensified the debate over whether the party's strategy of accommodating turncoats is now backfiring. Sources suggest that old cadre members, who have spent years building the organization at the grassroots, are openly questioning why newcomers are being handed "lollipops" in the form of tickets and key posts while loyal workers are being sidelined. The unrest is also being viewed as a clash between



the old guard and newly imported faces from parties such as Congress and AAP. In several districts, murmurs of rebellion have reportedly surfaced, with some workers said to be reluctant to campaign for "outsider" candidates. Political observers believe the BJP's expansion-through-defection model, often dubbed by critics as a "washing machine formula," may now be creating cracks within its own cadre-based structure. Senior-level factional pulls and internal rivalries are further adding fuel to the fire. The larger question now is whether this spark inside Kamalam could affect the party's electoral machinery in the upcoming local body battles across Gujarat. Editorially, the episode reflects a deeper issue in modern politics: when power management begins to outweigh cadre loyalty, even the strongest organizations can face visible fractures. For every movement in Gujarat's political corridors, keep reading Mahanagar Metro.

### Government on Wheels' initiative: PWD minister inspects roads with senior officials

The review was part of PWD's 'Government on Wheels' initiative, under which, officials from all departments travel together in a bus to inspect major roads and public spaces as one team.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Travelling across South Delhi in a bus along with senior officials, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh on Saturday inspected the city's key arterial roads as well as road works to review the government's preparedness ahead of monsoon.

The review was part of PWD's 'Government on Wheels' initiative, under which, officials from all departments travel together in a bus to inspect major roads and public spaces as one team. "When you come to these locations yourself, the situation becomes very clear. You can see what has improved, where work is slow, and



what could turn into a problem once heavy rain begins," said Singh during the visit.

The inspection covered Moolchand crossing, AIIMS crossing, Chattarpur Metro stretch, Nelson Mandela Marg, Munirka flyover, Vivekanand Marg, BJ Marg, as well as several underpasses that are known pressure points during the monsoon.

At multiple stops, Singh got down from the bus to examine drains, desilting work, and road conditions. In some areas, incomplete cleaning work and potential choke points were identified, with instructions given to address the issues within strict timelines.

## Short news

Van overturns on Dwarka  
eway, BTEch student on way to  
college injured

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A first-year BTEch student from Amity University was injured after a speeding van overturned on Dwarka Expressway. Arpita Vashisht, 18, a resident of Sangam Vihar in Delhi, suffered multiple injuries when the accident took place on the morning of April 9 while she was travelling to college in Pachgaon. She was later admitted to Fortis Hospital for treatment. In her complaint, Arpita stated that she boarded the white Maruti Eeco van (DL-3CC-O-1012) with her friends Bhagyashree, Jatin and Krishnanshu from Satsang Bhawan in Sangam Vihar at 8.30am. She alleged that as the van approached the U-turn towards the Dwarka Expressway near Rajiv Chowk, the driver, identified as Sunny, began rushing and swerving despite repeated requests from passengers to slow down. "The driver did not listen and continued to drive recklessly. Suddenly, he applied the brakes, the rear tyre burst and the vehicle overturned," she said. Arpita, who was in the rear seat, suffered injuries from the waist down. She was rushed to the hospital by her friend Jatin. Police said they received information after she was admitted to the hospital, following which an officer reached the facility. However, doctors declared her unfit for a statement at the time.

After doctors gave permission, her statement was recorded the next day. ASI Nishant, an investigating officer in the case, said there were five van occupants but only Arpita suffered injuries because she was in the rear seat. "The accident happened because of the tyre burst. We have already contacted the driver of the van and he will be arrested soon," he said. Talking to TOI, Arpita's mother said that her daughter is unable to move due to several injuries to her lower body and has a fractured leg. "She is in acute pain and is undergoing treatment," she said.

FIR against ex-GBU registrar,  
accounts officer for Rs 5-crore  
fee fraud

Noida.(Agency)

Gautam Buddha University (GBU) has filed an FIR against its former registrar, Vishwas Tripathi, and 11 others over an alleged fraud of more than Rs 5 crore, accusing them of siphoning off student fee payments and masking the diversion through fake UPI transactions in the university's software.

Officials said the money was collected from students as academic fees, shown as received in digital records, but never deposited in its official bank accounts.

The FIR, lodged at Ecotech-1 police station, names Tripathi, then registrar and drawing and disbursing officer, along with Neeraj Kumar, finance officer; Shilendra Kumar Sharma, accounts officer; Vijay Pratap Singh and another Kumar from the accounts section; and outsourced data-entry and office staffers Mukesh Pandey, Shiv Kumar Khatri, Shivam Chattha, Sandeep, Shyam, Naveen and Subhash Sharma.

According to the university's complaint, the suspected fraud surfaced when a routine reconciliation of accounts for 2024-25 started in April 2025. The review found that fee payments worth over Rs 5 crore had been entered in the university's software but were missing from GBU's bank accounts. The university has alleged that regular accounts section employees, acting in collusion with outsourced data-entry staff, embezzled the money deposited by students. To conceal this, fake UPI transaction IDs and receipts were allegedly generated and entered into the fee software, creating the appearance that payments had been properly processed even though the funds never reached the designated bank account. Tripathi, the complaint said, had served as the university's chief administrative officer since 2020 and, as registrar and DDO, had custody of public funds and direct control over staff in the accounts and finance departments. The university has accused him of failing to verify bank reconciliations against software entries, thereby allowing the alleged misappropriation to continue. It has also alleged that Tripathi had exclusive administrative and operational control over the CCTV system in and around the accounts office.

UP steps in, Ghaziabad cuts  
property tax rates by up to  
40%

Noida.(Agency)

Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation (GMC) on Saturday approved a 35-40% cut in property tax rates, ending a year-long standoff after UP govt stepped in with revised slabs. The decision, cleared by GMC's executive committee, reduces the maximum levy from Rs 4 to Rs 3.40 per sq ft and will take effect from April 15.

The rollback follows months of protests by residents and political friction within the civic body, with the issue gaining urgency ahead of next year's assembly elections. The state govt's intervention, communicated through a formal directive on Friday, broke the deadlock between elected representatives and officials over the extent of the hike introduced earlier this year.

Under the revised framework, property owners who have already paid tax at higher rates will be compensated through staggered adjustments. Officials said the excess amount will be offset over three years, with one-third of the surplus credited annually against future tax liabilities, forming the core of the relief package tied to the rollback.

The new rate structure varies by road width. Properties along roads wider than 24 metres will now be taxed at Rs 3.4 per sq ft, down from Rs 4. For those on 12-24 metre roads, the rate has been reduced to Rs 2.8 per sq ft from Rs 3.8 per sq ft. In areas with roads narrower than 12 metres, the levy has been cut to Rs 2.3 per sq ft from Rs 3.50. Before April 1, 2025, these rates were significantly lower, intensifying resistance when the revised slabs were introduced. The controversy over the tax hike had placed the BJP-led civic body in a difficult position. BJP holds the mayor's office, two assembly segments covering the municipal area and a majority in the 100-member house.

## Ggn taps corporates, startups to rehabilitate beggars

GURGAON.(Agency)

The district administration has asked startups, corporates, NGOs and institutions to help move people away from begging and into stable work through a structured rehabilitation programme under the Centre's SMILE scheme.

The district social welfare department has invited proposals from organisations to run the programme, which aims to train beneficiaries, connect them to self-help groups, help them access institutional finance and reintegrate them through work that generates income. Applications must be submitted by April 25, additional deputy commissioner Sonu Bhatt said.

Bhatt said the administration is looking for recognised NGOs, startups, Section 8 companies, institutions registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, or relevant state and UT laws, besides Panchayati Raj



institutions, urban local bodies and state or UT-funded institutions. Under the scheme, beneficiaries will be given demand-based skill training and linked to

central and state welfare programmes so they can shift to sustainable livelihoods. The trades identified include carpentry, tailoring, cooking, gardening, security

services, sanitation work and e-rickshaw driving. "The primary objective is to connect beneficiaries with sustainable livelihood options and prevent their return to begging," Bhatt said, adding that the model provides long-term rehabilitation, regular follow-up and continuous monitoring.

He said NGOs running shelter homes must have at least two years' experience and submit registration papers, memorandum of association, annual reports, income tax documents where applicable, and details of their management committee. Representation of people formerly engaged in begging will be mandatory. Organisations already receiving financial assistance under another scheme will not be eligible unless they first withdraw that support. Selected agencies can receive assistance for up to five years, subject to performance, and must provide 4,000 to 6,000 sqft of operational space, depending on the city category.

GMDA plans drain network to  
tackle floods on Old Delhi road

Gurgaon.(Agency)

GMDA has moved to address chronic waterlogging on Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road by planning a continuous surface drainage network along a 7.5km stretch between Mahavir Chowk and Kapashera border. The arterial road, about 30 metres wide, has long been prone to flooding during the monsoon due to gaps and damage in the existing drainage system. To tackle the issue, GMDA has floated a fresh tender to construct missing surface drains, repair damaged sections and build road gullies to improve stormwater discharge. The project is estimated to cost Rs 8.3 crore. However, commuters are unlikely to get immediate relief, as the project is expected to take at least 12 months to complete after the contract is awarded. This means the stretch will likely face similar problems during the upcoming monsoon season. The road connects several residential sectors and societies with key establishments, govt offices and the industrial hub of Udyog Vihar, making it one of the city's most important corridors. Despite this, inadequate drainage has repeatedly led to water accumulation, disrupting traffic and

damaging road conditions. Over the years, different agencies constructed drains in phases, resulting in a fragmented network with little continuity. In many places, drains are incomplete, damaged or blocked, preventing the effective flow of rainwater, an official said. "Under this project, we will construct missing surface



drains and repair damaged portions along Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road from Mahavir Chowk to Kapashera border. Several sections either lack drains or have broken stretches, disrupting stormwater flow. The aim is to complete these missing links and restore the drainage network into a continuous system," a senior GMDA

official said. Before execution, a detailed survey will be carried out, including mapping finished road levels, drainage invert levels and cross-drainage points, along with preparing longitudinal and cross-sections. A dedicated survey team will be deployed on the ground for three months to ensure accuracy in planning and design. The stretch is particularly vulnerable to waterlogging at several points, including the Kapashera border, Dundaheera, Hanuman Chowk and Atul Kataria Chowk. Areas near the HSPV office in Sector 14 and Gurgaon One society also frequently face flooding during heavy rain, often causing traffic jams and unsafe driving conditions. Although some drain sections were constructed earlier — by NCRTC during pre-construction work for the Delhi-Gurgaon-Alwar RRTS corridor and by MCG between Hanuman Chowk and Leg-1 — the network remains incomplete. Only limited stretches were built, leaving large gaps that disrupt water flow across the corridor. Due to the lack of a continuous drainage system, rainwater accumulates on the carriageway instead of being effectively channelled out.

Restrict power outages in Ggn urban areas to 2  
hours at a time, Vij tells discoms as summer sets in

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana power minister Anil Vij on Saturday directed discoms to ensure outages in urban areas do not exceed two hours at a time and four hours in rural areas. Failure to meet the instructions will attract strict punishment, he said, adding that superintending engineers will be held accountable and may be suspended in serious cases.

Vij was chairing a review meeting of senior energy department officials when he gave the directive. Frequent summer outages have been reported in Haryana, where power cuts often stretch for hours despite adequate supply at the grid level. Citing poor maintenance and faulty equipment as key reasons for disruptions

during peak load, Vij stressed the need for quick transformer replacement. "Maintenance staff must be equipped with proper tools, safety gear and transformer trolleys during repair work. All necessary safety equipment will be provided within two days," he said.

He also directed that new substations should not be set up in waterlogged areas; if unavoidable, they must be built at least 2 feet above expected water levels with mandatory NOCs. Substation maintenance and upgrades were discussed during the meeting and emphasis was laid on completing tree pruning near power lines before the monsoon to prevent storm-related disruptions. Vij said the aim is to position

Haryana as a leader in the energy sector while ensuring uninterrupted, quality power supply. He added that awards will be given to top-performing circles for implementing solar systems in govt buildings and the PM Surya Ghar scheme. On power theft, the minister ordered all pending cases to be presented in court within three months. He said 179 people have been arrested this year, with 39,529 FIRs registered in 2024-25 and 56,953 FIRs were registered in 2025-26. He further ordered action in cases where consumers with pending dues obtained new connections on the same property. Under Rule-8, officials responsible for overseeing the crime will face charges.

Udyog Vihar's missing footpaths: Where  
walkers merge with traffic daily

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Every evening after leaving work in Udyog Vihar Phase 3, 26-year-old Nishi Mathur begins what should be a short walk to the main road to find an auto home.

Instead, it turns into a stressful stretch through moving traffic, with no dedicated space for pedestrians. In the absence of a continuous footpath, she walks along the road edge, navigating narrow shoulders, unpaved patches and ramps.

Two-wheelers often use these edges to bypass traffic, sometimes brushing past her. Even a 400-500 metre walk to the main road becomes a daily exercise in caution. She is far from alone. Thousands of employees in Udyog Vihar — one of the city's largest industrial and office hubs — face the same ordeal every day.

"There is no proper space to walk. I have to move between cars, bikes and rickshaws. Sometimes I use the edge of the road or an unpaved patch, but even bikes come there. You keep dodging vehicles just to cross 400-500 metres to reach the main road," she said. Despite heavy daily footfall, pedestrian infrastructure remains inadequate, forcing people to share road space with fast-moving traffic. For a hub that houses nearly 2,500 factories and

offices, Udyog Vihar continues to be designed largely for vehicles, with little consideration for those on foot. Most stretches lack dedicated pedestrian facilities. Where footpaths exist, they are often encroached by vendors, blocked by parked vehicles or left in poor condition. In several areas, even road edges that could have served as walking space have been taken over for parking by employees of nearby factories and offices. The problem becomes more pronounced during peak hours, when office dispersal coincides with heavy traffic movement. "The situation worsens during the monsoon. Waterlogging and potholes leave no safe edge to walk on. Both vehicles and pedestrians are left struggling for space," said Arjun Lal, an IT professional working in Udyog Vihar Phase 4. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure is not only affecting those on foot but also slowing traffic movement. With no clear segregation, vehicles frequently halt or slow down to avoid pedestrians walking on the carriageway, adding to congestion.

Even during the day, particularly in the afternoon, large numbers of people can be seen walking along roads during lunch

breaks, highlighting the constant demand for safe walking spaces. "The issue is both road conditions and encroachments. Footpaths, where they exist, are either occupied or poorly maintained, and in many places, they don't exist at all. There is a need to build proper sidewalks, keep them free of encroachments, and create



designated vending spaces so that both pedestrians and vehicles can move smoothly," said Praveen Yadav, president of the Gurgaon Udyog Association. Experts point out that the lack of pedestrian space in Udyog Vihar is closely linked to unregulated on-street parking and outdated infrastructure planning. "Most internal roads in Udyog Vihar are narrow and were never designed

to handle the current volume of traffic and footfall. The biggest issue is that footpaths and road edges have effectively turned into parking spaces because industries and offices have not provided adequate parking within their premises. This is an old industrial area, and buildings need retrofitting to create in-

house parking solutions. Unless on-street parking is strictly removed, pedestrian infrastructure cannot improve. "At the same time, footpaths need to be redeveloped with proper planning, ensuring they remain obstruction-free and integrated with drainage and other services. Without coordinated planning and changes in building norms, simply constructing footpaths will not solve the problem," said Sarika Panda Bhatt, founder of Raahgiri Foundation. According to HSIIDC, on-street parking in Udyog Vihar is not permitted, and there is no system that allows individuals or offices to use road space for parking on their own. Only designated parking areas are permitted through a formal process with applicable charges.

MCG to hire agency  
to transport waste to  
Bandhwari landfill  
for 4 months

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG on Saturday initiated the process to hire a private agency for transporting waste from secondary collection points in zone 4 to Bandhwari landfill. The agency will be engaged for a period of four months at an estimated cost of Rs 2.5 crore. It will be responsible for lifting and transporting waste from key locations, including Beri Bagh, Khandsa village and Tulip Chowk. Officials said the move is aimed at streamlining waste management operations and ensuring timely clearance of garbage from densely populated areas. "The agency will be asked to transport at least 706 tonnes per day, amounting to a total of 84,720 to be transported in four months," said an MCG official privy to the matter. MCG has mandated the conditions that the contractor will collect all the waste from all secondary collection points as per the scheduled timetable. Moreover, vehicles used in transportation of waste should be GPS-enabled, and waste is not transported uncovered.

The contractor will also have to register on the SWM portal of the Haryana govt, and the quantity of waste transported every



day will have to be submitted on the portal along with GPS photos of the site every day. On the penalties, the civic body has decided that if on any day, any category of vehicle is found less than the specified number, then a penalty of Rs 2,000 per day per vehicle will be imposed. Moreover, if any secondary collection point is found uncleaned or waste is not lifted, then a penalty of Rs 2,000 per day per secondary collection point will be imposed on the contractor. MCG was recently forced to scrap its ongoing tender process to hire two private contractors for the doorstep waste collection of the entire city.

# Consumer panel asks Punjab govt to compensate, pay medical reimbursement of Rs 2.90 lakh to retired attorney

The Chandigarh consumer commission ordered the Punjab government to fully reimburse a retired attorney's cancer treatment costs, rejecting "arbitrary" payment limits as a deficiency in service.

**Chandigarh. (Agency)**  
The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Chandigarh, has directed the Punjab government authorities to pay the remaining medical reimbursement amount of Rs 2.90 lakh with compensation of Rs 20,000 to a retired deputy district attorney who underwent treatment for prostate cancer.

In its order, the commission partly allowed the complaint filed by Ajaib Singh, a resident of Sangrur, who had alleged deficiency in service after being reimbursed only a fraction of his medical expenses.

The complainant stated that he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2018 and underwent treatment at

Fortis Hospital, Mohali, incurring expenses of Rs 4.01 lakh. Despite submitting all bills and documents, the authorities sanctioned only Rs 1.11 lakh as reimbursement in January 2021.

The Punjab government's Director Prosecution and Litigation and Additional Secretary, in its defence, argued that the reimbursement was granted strictly as per the Punjab Services (Medical Attendance) Rules, 1940, which limit payments to rates fixed by the government. It also contended that the complainant had submitted an undertaking agreeing to accept reimbursement as per prescribed rates. However, the commission observed that there was

no evidence to show that the detailed terms, conditions, or package rates were ever properly explained or communicated to the complainant. It held that mere submission of an affidavit without informed consent could not bind the complainant to restricted reimbursement. The consumer panel further noted that the treatment was for a life-threatening disease and the expenses incurred were genuine and undisputed.

Terming the partial reimbursement as "arbitrary" and amounting to "deficiency in service", the commission directed the authorities to pay the balance Rs 2.90 lakh along with 9 per cent annual interest from August 17, 2021, till realisation.



## Short news

**ATS-only vehicle fitness rule: Himachal seeks relief citing hill challenges**

**Dharamshala. (Agency)**

With the Government of India making vehicle fitness testing mandatory through Automated Testing Stations (ATS), the Himachal Pradesh government has urged the union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to allow continuation of manual fitness tests for commercial vehicles in Kangra district, citing practical difficulties in a hilly state.

The state government has taken up the matter with the Ministry through a formal communication (No. TPT-F(5)-14-2022), requesting a temporary deferment of the decision to ensure smooth transition and uninterrupted public services. The proposal is currently under consideration by the Centre.

It may be recalled that the Ministry, through directions issued on March 14, 2026, mandated that from April 1, 2026, all 14 Registering and Licensing Authorities and Regional Transport Offices in Kangra district must completely discontinue manual fitness testing and issuance of fitness certificates. As per Notification No. GSR 652(E) dated September 23, 2021, and subsequent amendments, vehicle fitness testing is now to be carried out exclusively through ATS, eliminating human intervention.

In compliance, ATS facilities are being set up in Kangra, Mandi, Bilaspur, Solan and Nalagarh through private investment, while government-run stations are under development in Haroli (Una), Nadaun (Hamirpur), and Baddi (Solan).

As per Rule 81 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, a detailed fee structure has been prescribed for fitness testing. The testing fee ranges from Rs ₹400 to ₹1,500 depending on the age of the vehicle, along with 18 per cent GST and applicable state charges.

**Himachal: Rama Thakur dubs Women's Reservation law historic shift towards real power**

**Dharamshala. (Agency)**

BJP State Media Co-Incharge Rama Thakur today termed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam a historic, visionary and transformative decision taken under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that it grants not just respect but real political power to women.

She said the constitutional amendment, passed in September 2023, ensures 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and the Delhi Assembly, calling it a landmark decision that will be recorded in golden letters in India's democratic history.

Taking a swipe at the Congress and other parties, Thakur said that while they spoke about women's rights for decades, it was the Modi government that turned the promise into reality. She described the Act as not just a law, but a commitment to transform both the thinking and structure of Indian politics.

Highlighting the growing role of women, she said women today are making their mark in every field and strengthening democracy as voters, with nearly half participation in Panchayats. However, their representation in Parliament and Assemblies remains relatively low, which the Act seeks to correct.

Referring to various central schemes, Thakur said initiatives like the Ujjwala Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Mudra Yojana and Jan Dhan accounts have significantly improved the lives of women over the past decade by providing clean fuel, water access, self-employment opportunities and financial inclusion.

**Mamata leveled another serious allegation against the BJP in an election rally, cautioning the people.**

## BJP planning to launch an operation soon, and you should be cautious

**Kolkata.** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has accused the BJP of hatching a conspiracy. Expressing apprehension, she said during an election campaign on Sunday that an "operation" would begin in poll-bound Bengal from midnight on Sunday. Mamata Banerjee made these remarks while campaigning in Khandagosh, East Burdwan. Advice to be especially cautious about voting machinery. Expressing her concern, the Trinamool chief said, "Be very careful about the voting machinery. This is their plan: slow voting and slow counting. Initially, they will make it appear that the BJP is winning. You can well understand the nature of the opposition we are facing. Attempts are being made to arrest many people. We have received intelligence that this 'operation' will begin at midnight tonight. If TV channels show the BJP ahead, then understand that they are spreading lies." She also confidently declared, "We will win. No power in the world can defeat us. Trinamool will be victorious." It's worth noting that Mamata Banerjee has repeatedly expressed concerns about the poten-



tial tampering of electronic voting machines. The Trinamool Congress chief reiterated these concerns in her election speeches this time as well. Furthermore, she expressed fears about potential vote-rigging. Today, Mamata Banerjee alleged that the BJP is distributing money to buy votes.

She also advised people not to share their bank account information with anyone. Expressing her apprehensions about the matter, Mamata warned, "They will withdraw all the money deposited in those accounts. After that, they will deposit 'black money' in them and then send it to the ED and CBI for investigation. There are many opponents lurking outside. Ignore them, even if they claim they are working on my behalf." "If you have the Coal Ministry then how did Trinamool become a thief? Mamata Banerjee launched a scathing attack on the BJP, saying that the central government holds the coal ministry, yet they call the Trinamool Congress government coal thieves. "If the central government is responsible for coal, how did our party members become thieves?" Mamata Banerjee directly attacked the central government, saying that leaders and ministers within her own party are taking crores of rupees in coal money. "You are ignoring this and making us thieves," she said. "The public is watching and will use their votes to drive your party leaders out of Bengal."

**Abhishek Banerjee's open challenge to BJP in Hooghly public meeting, told people**

## The day BJP gives Rs 3000 per month to Lakshmi Bhandaar, I will quit politics.

**Kolkata.** Hooghly: Before the Bihar elections, the NDA government gave women ₹10,000. Now, after winning the election, they are demanding their money back. Trinamool Congress National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee has alleged that if beneficiaries fail to repay the money, their homes are being demolished with bulldozers. The BJP in Bengal has announced that, if they come to power, they will provide a monthly allowance of ₹3,000 to women. This amount is double the cash assistance currently provided by the Trinamool Congress. Speaking on this issue, Abhishek compared the situation to the situation in Bihar and directly challenged the BJP camp. He said, "If the BJP can implement a scheme like the Trinamool Congress government's 'Lakshmi Bhandar' in Bengal, I will quit politics." "She raised an important question: The BJP is currently in power in many states across the country; so why are they unable to provide women in those areas with an unconditional allowance? In Delhi, she said, they promised to deposit ₹2,500 into bank accounts if they formed the government. Fourteen months have passed since then, yet no one has received a single penny. The BJP has expanded its promises beyond women, promising a monthly allowance of ₹3,000 to the state's youth. Taking a dig at this, Abhishek said, "The BJP's election manifesto is nothing more than a chit-fund pamphlet." Speaking at an election rally at Hooghly's Dunlop grounds on Sunday afternoon, the Trinamool MP challenged the BJP, saying, "Modi babu has been in power for 12 years, while Ma-

mata Banerjee has ruled Bengal for 15. Let's compare our 'report cards.' Let's have a debate. If the BJP can prove that they have deposited even a single penny in anyone's bank account for housing assistance, I will never set foot in Hooghly again. If they can prove that they have released funds for the '100-day work scheme' MNREGA, I will stop campaigning for the Trinamool." Abhishek further asserted that the Modi government has contributed absolutely nothing, not even 10 paise, to the various government welfare schemes that the people of Bengal are currently benefiting from. The Trinamool prince said, "Our politics is based on performance and work, while the BJP's politics is based on religion. The BJP means 'detention,' while the Trinamool means 'no tension.'" Abhishek also compared the BJP to the Taliban in Afghanistan. He remarked, "There's no difference at all between the BJP and the Taliban. The Taliban destroys Buddhist statues, and BJP goons vandalize the statue of Vidyasagar." Abhishek further claimed that if the BJP comes to power in Bengal, they will not allow people to eat fish and meat. He said, "They call us 'Bangladeshis' just because we eat fish and meat. They insult Rabindranath Tagore. They disrespect Swami Vivekananda." In Bihar, the BJP's Deputy Chief Minister has announced that fish and meat will not be allowed. They want to bring about the same change here. In such a situation, there will be no eggs, fish, or meat. Instead, you will be forced to eat your rice with only cheese and potatoes."



## For critical magnets, the State must carry its part of the risk

India's push for building a domestic rare-earth permanent magnet (REPM) base will need more than just industry effort. Recent experience with the production-linked incentives (PLI) in battery manufacturing proves that the State cannot just design an incentive, hold a tender and then step away. The battery PLI was clearly ambitious. It envisaged rapid commissioning in two years and sales-linked incentives over a five-year window. Domestic value-addition was targeted at 60 percent within these five years. The challenges were limited technology availability, a skilled-manpower gap, dependence on imported equipment and non-availability of upstream components such as cathode/anode materials and electrolyte. The scheme tried to pull a gigafactory into existence, but the ecosystem that makes a gigafactory bankable and buildable was still to be set up. By October 2025, only 2.8 percent of targeted capacity had been commissioned, commercial sales had not meaningfully begun and investment lagged far behind targets. The structural issue still existed: India is overwhelmingly import-dependent for the minerals that anchor the clean-tech stack. A recent assessment by Niti Aayog shows near 100 percent import dependence for lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare-earth elements—exactly the inputs that sit in batteries, electric vehicle motors and wind turbine generators. This is the context in which we are looking at the just-announced REPM PLI scheme. It makes an improvement by explicitly targeting an integrated midstream chain and recognising raw material constraints. However, more needs to be done with government support for market-making (offtake), bankability (risk-sharing finance) and supply security (feedstock, trade and stockpiles). The scheme notes that India imports all its sintered neodymium-iron-boron magnet because of missing midstream steps—oxide-to-metal, metal-to-alloy, alloy-to-magnet—and aims to build integrated manufacturing capacities of 6,000 million tonnes per annum. It allocates 600-1,200 MTPA to each of five potential bidders.

The scheme correctly identifies feed stock constraints, but the numbers show a gap. The notification states that the country's existing neodymium-praseodymium oxide (NdPr) production capacity is 400 MTPA with a 500 MT stock, supporting roughly 1,500 MTPA of magnets—thus falling short of the 6,000 MTPA ambition. The scheme offers limited assured supply and the core challenge of oxide availability remains a problem that is pushed onto bidders.

The import-risk dimension is also sharper for magnets than for many other components. Trade data disclosed in Parliament shows that for permanent magnets, import dependency reached 90.4 percent in 2024-25. Bankability hates price volatility. NdPr prices have swung from triple digits to \$60 a kg in 2023, traded around the low-50s in mid-2024 and then surged again in 2026. That is not a commodity cycle but a whiplash that can wipe out any financial model. Given this, five policy actions can be game-changers.

First, the State must guarantee feedstock adequacy and a predictable oxide-to-alloy pathway. The scheme's NdPr allocation needs a time-bound plan to expand domestic availability. The recently-announced rare earth element (REE) corridors are a welcome step, signalling intent to create integrated mining-to-processing ecosystems. Fast-tracking these corridors with plug-and-play infrastructure, streamlined approvals and clear execution timelines would be essential to unlock production. Complement this by a national push on recycling and circularity through strictly-enforced producer responsibility and targeted incentives and penalties to ensure recovery of rare earths from end-of-life products to augment secondary feedstock supply. These measures are essential to prevent the 6,000-MTPA aspiration from collapsing into a 1,500-MTPA reality.

## Op Epic Disaster : 5 weeks of chaos, no strategic gain

This ceasefire must not become merely an intermission before the next round of killing; it should instead serve as a moral reckoning

IN the early hours of April 7, President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social that "a whole civilization will die tonight." After hours of dread and uncertainty, came another message: "This will be a double-sided ceasefire", followed by a triumphant flourish — "A big day for World Peace." Iran's response was notably more restrained. Tehran indicated that it would halt its defensive operations if attacks on its territory ceased, while also making it clear that the Strait of Hormuz would remain open, though under Iranian oversight. And so, after five weeks of relentless bombardment, devastating civilian casualties, shattered infrastructure and a region pushed to the edge, the world arrived at a ceasefire that was as fragile as it was hurried. Within hours, however, Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon raised immediate doubts about how durable any peace could be. In a war that has yielded little except grief, dislocation and strategic instability, Benjamin Netanyahu's uncompromising militarism continues to hold regional peace hostage. The origins of this calamity reportedly lie in a secret White House meeting held on February 11, when Netanyahu is said to have presented a detailed case about the "Iran threat" before senior US officials. Those present reportedly included Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine, CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Jared Kushner and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff. It was there, by many accounts, that Trump appears to have been persuaded that Iran could be "finished off" — its leadership decapitated, its military command broken and its nuclear ambitions extinguished once and for all.

The first strikes that followed were meant to produce precisely that outcome. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was reportedly killed, along with a number of senior military and intelligence figures. Civilian sites too were struck, including, according to several reports, a school where large numbers of children were killed. Yet it was here that the script began to collapse. Netanyahu had seemingly assured Washington that the elimination of Iran's leadership, followed by overwhelming bombardment, would secure rapid victory. There may also have been a belief that the shock would produce internal collapse, perhaps even regime change.

But Iran was not Libya. Nor was it Iraq. Within hours, Iran retaliated. What followed was not a short punitive campaign, but five weeks of sustained regional trauma. The Gulf states — long accustomed to the promise of US protection and strategic shelter — suddenly found themselves exposed. Missile defence systems failed to reassure. Energy installations, desalination plants and strategic infrastructure appeared vulnerable in ways previously unthinkable. The

temporary disruption and looming threat around the Strait of Hormuz served as a brutal reminder of how precariously the global economic order rests on a narrow geography of fear.

It is worth pausing, now, amid this uneasy ceasefire, to ask the most basic question of all: what exactly has this war achieved? Ayatollah Khamenei may be dead. Much of the old command structure may have been destroyed. But Iran has not collapsed. On the contrary, a new and perhaps more hardline leadership appears to be emerging around Mojtaba Khamenei. Iran's strategic doctrine has not softened. Its nuclear stockpile, by several accounts, has not been decisively neutralised. Its capacity to threaten maritime chokepoints remains real. The Houthis retain the ability to widen the theatre of



instability. The petrodollar system, already under long-term strain, has been dealt another serious shock. China is purchasing Iranian oil in yuan. Russia is profiting from higher energy uncertainty. This war has also shaken assumptions in the Gulf. The region's glittering capitals had marketed themselves as islands of safety, liquidity and long-term confidence. That illusion now stands damaged. Investors may return, but not with the same innocence. The transatlantic alliance, too, has suffered. European capitals have watched, often helplessly, as Washington lurched from threat to escalation to triumphant self-congratulation, with little evidence of strategic coherence. Ukraine, too, may feel the consequences as American military stockpiles deplete. But perhaps the most important lesson of this war lies elsewhere — that human endurance often outlasts military calculation. It is no defence of the Iranian regime to say this. The Islamic Republic has long presided over a deeply authoritarian order. Its repression of dissent, especially of women and young protesters, has been severe and often brutal. Demonstrations in Tehran, Isfahan and elsewhere in the weeks before the war had

revealed a society marked by fatigue, anger and a desire for reform. The execution of dissenters and the crushing of protest are stains that cannot be washed away by nationalism.

And yet, wars have a cruel habit of reviving precisely those loyalties that governments in peacetime fail to command. What Netanyahu and Trump did not care to understand is that Iran is not merely a regime. It is also a people steeped in a culture of endurance. The Shia ethic of sacrifice and martyrdom, the memory of Karbala — all this returned with force once foreign bombs began to fall. What was expected to produce collapse, instead, produced cohesion. What was forgotten was that nations respond as wounded communities. They rally around humiliation. And the war is far from truly over. The ceasefire remains contested. Israel's continuing actions in Lebanon make any durable calm tenuous. Negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme, missile capability, sanctions, maritime security and reparations will be complex, bitter and prolonged. None of this will be made easier by an Israeli leadership that appears unable to imagine security except through permanent confrontation.

One country that has emerged from this crisis with enhanced diplomatic visibility is Pakistan. Both Washington and Tehran have acknowledged the role played by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir in facilitating communication at critical moments. Pakistan now appears, at least temporarily, to have regained strategic relevance in Washington while maintaining channels with Tehran, Riyadh and Beijing. In geopolitics, relevance is a currency of its own. India, for its part, faces a difficult balancing act. It has deep ties with the US, expanding relations with Israel, vital energy and diaspora interests in the Gulf, and a longstanding civilisational and strategic relationship with Iran. This war has exposed just how narrow India's room for manoeuvre can become when West Asia convulses. Delhi will need tact, sobriety and strategic patience — not rhetoric. In the end, however, the deeper question remains unchanged: what has this war left behind? Fresh graves. Traumatized families. Ruined neighbourhoods. Broken infrastructure. A more frightened region. A world once again reminded that military power can destroy cities far more easily than it can produce wisdom.

This ceasefire must not become merely an intermission before the next round of killing. It should instead serve as a moral reckoning — a reminder that history does not finally honour those who displayed the greatest firepower, but those who stepped back from the abyss before civilisation itself paid the price.

## J&K lakes dying: Scientific governance, monitoring needed

As many as 518 out of 697 lakes have either disappeared or are shrinking.

A recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has underscored a serious environmental challenge in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 518 out of 697 lakes have either disappeared or are shrinking. This scale of loss signals not merely the decline of individual water bodies but a broader weakening of the region's ecological stability. Lakes that once sustained biodiversity, moderated local climates and supported livelihoods are steadily losing their capacity to perform these functions. The reasons for this decline are both structural and immediate. Encroachments, land-use change and unregulated construction have reduced lake areas. Sewage and agricultural runoff has accelerated the pollution of water bodies, choking them with excessive vegetation. The weed-filled lakes become oxygen-poor systems, eventually becoming marshy land. Siltation, driven by deforestation and soil erosion, is steadily filling lakes, even in high-altitude regions.



These pressures are compounded by disrupted natural drainage systems and changing climatic patterns, including reduced snowfall and higher evaporation. Multiple departments, including the forest, revenue

and agriculture departments, share responsibility for lake management. The absence of a coordinated framework has hindered effective conservation. Notably, only a handful of lakes, such as Dal Lake and Wular Lake, have structured management plans, leaving the majority without adequate protection.

The consequences extend well beyond environmental degradation. Lakes act as natural flood buffers. Their decline has increased vulnerability to extreme events such as the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir floods. Their loss also threatens biodiversity, weakens groundwater recharge and undermines economic activities linked to tourism and fisheries. Addressing this crisis requires coordinated governance, scientific monitoring and strict regulation of land use around water bodies. Without sustained intervention, the continued disappearance of lakes will deepen ecological and climate risks in the region.

## Discord keeps ceasefire on thin ice

Iran's insistence on continued civil nuclear enrichment is a key point of contention

ON the night of April 7-8, as US President Donald Trump's deadline for annihilating the Iranian "civilisation" approached, a two-week ceasefire was announced. In India, the development evoked both relief and concern. It was a welcome sign that an impending economic and humanitarian crisis had been averted. However, the fact that Pakistan seized centre stage sparked fears that it could misuse its enhanced diplomatic stature to rally support on bilateral disputes like Kashmir or the sharing of river waters. Immediately, differences emerged over the ceasefire's scope. Israel continued pounding Lebanon, especially Beirut, with missiles, claiming exemption from the truce. Reports that Trump had accepted Iran's 10-point plan as the basis of negotiations were also refuted. The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, wrote on X that with three conditions in the 10-point proposal violated, the Gulf of Hormuz's opening was on hold. He referred to the ceasefire not covering Lebanon, drones entering Iran's airspace and the denial of Tehran's right to nuclear enrichment. He regretted that this had happened even before the start of negotiations in Islamabad (Pakistan). Reportedly, a petrochemical facility on Iran's Lavan island and some coastal areas were targeted by airstrikes.

If the Islamabad talks are held, as scheduled, on April 10, these hiccups may pass. But their postponement can complicate matters. Collating the demands of both sides shows areas of possible agreement or serious divergence. The Iranian demand for lifting sanctions has been conceded by the US in principle, though the

timeline remains unknown. The demand for reparations to compensate for the damage caused by US-Israeli air attacks has been overtaken by Iran's plan to raise revenue by levying tariffs on ships transiting the Strait. Although the Americans want the Strait's immediate opening, President Trump has even suggested revenue-



sharing. The areas of dissonance are: Iran insisting on continued civil nuclear enrichment, albeit under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); seeking the US military's exit from the region and closure of military bases; and finally, Iran's delinking from its regional allies, like the Houthis,

Hezbollah and Hamas. The US has been insisting on the complete dismantling of Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities. America reverted to this approach after seeking Iranian regime change at the war's start. Iran's nuclear weapon-making capability is the principal target. Differences are surfacing between the US and Israel. The New York Times revealed how the decision was taken to attack Iran. In June 2025, the two countries had attacked Iranian nuclear facilities at Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow. On February 11 this year, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House with his national security team. He made a presentation to President Trump, arguing that a four-stage military operation could achieve regime change in Iran. First, the assassination of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and then the destruction of Iranian offensive and defensive capabilities. This would cause a popular uprising, catalysed by Mossad-activated armed Kurdish fighters infiltrating from Iraq. Finally, a secular government would emerge. A list of possible future leaders was also shared.

The US team's reaction was divided, with CIA Director John Ratcliffe describing the expectation of an uprising as "farcical". Gen Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dilly-dallied, unlike the commanders during President Trump's first term. Vice President JD Vance expressed "strong scepticism" about the prospect of regime change. Reportedly, he recently chided Netanyahu on the phone for misleading the US with unrealistic expectations.

Right from the beginning of the war, I have argued in

newspaper articles and television debates that the Iranian regime would not collapse under military coercion. It is still unclear why Prime Minister Narendra Modi suddenly visited Israel on February 25-26, two days before the war started. Israel announced his visit only on February 22. Did someone share Netanyahu's arguments about Iranian regime change with him, encouraging the Indian government to ignore the appearance of partiality towards the US-Israel camp? Since 1991, when India established diplomatic relations with Israel, closer engagement with Tel Aviv has always been seen as beneficial for India-US ties.

Six weeks into the Iran war, the regional security architecture in the Gulf and West Asia faces restructuring. Pakistan's diplomatic ascendancy through mediation and China's behind-the-scenes role in militarily and economically supporting Iran have implications for South Asia. If the interim ceasefire leads to a more permanent solution, a new regional order could emerge. The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations are now divided. Qatar has cut a deal with Iran and is seeking the removal of the US military base. The differences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worsened. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is rushing to the UAE as the Saudis now seem fully aligned with Pakistan. The BJP-led government's decade-old policy of wooing the Gulf's ruling families to isolate Pakistan now appears defunct. Türkiye and Egypt are also with the Saudi-Pakistan axis, backed by the US. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has always been keen to draw investments away from Dubai. Prosperity and investments may not fully return to Dubai and the UAE, so long as Iran is run by a regime with new faces but the same ideology. Additionally, the Iranian morale has been boosted by the successful defiance of the US and Israel.

# Best ways to better Sleep

After a really tiring day, all we want to do retire on our cozy bed, and sleep without any worries. However, not many of us are blessed with sound sleep, most of us have varied and fragile sleep patterns that do not let us get a really feel sleep, even if we try our best. For those who suffer from lack of good sleep, here are few ways that you can adopt to get better sleep...

## Free your mind of worries

First and most important thing to do is to free your mind and relax. Stop thinking about anything and everything, do not think about work or any personal issue as well. In fact, try to bring good thoughts to your mind, think about everything you like or wish to do, this will make sure you have pleasant thoughts before bedtime. This will calm your mind and activate the sleep boosters.

## Keep a check on caffeine

A cup or two of coffee or tea is a norm for most of us, however not many of us realise

that the caffeine present in coffee puts off our sleep boosters and energises us to do more. In fact, it slows down the sleep process and keeps you up for longer than usual. Make sure you stop your caffeine intake at least 5-6 hours before bedtime, since the effects of caffeine are strong and longer for a long time.

## Bedtime stories or soothing music

Well, now this is something you must try, remember your childhood when your

grandma or parents would narrate you happy bedtime stories, while you retired on their lap, that's when you would get the most awesome and relaxed sleep. Do the same, either read or listen to bedtime stories, and make sure they are nice and happy stories that generates positive thoughts for a better sleep. Also you can listen to some soothing music, line a piano, a slow rendition of old melodies, etc that will help relax your mind.

## Make your bed more cozy

Lastly, do not keep your bed dirty or shabby. In fact, keep as it dreamlike, exactly like you see it on fairytales. Won't you love to retire in a nice and cozy bed, that is soft that you simply sink inside. Put on light coloured upholstery and close the windows with curtains to create that cozy look. Also, install some dim lights to create a freaky relaxed and calming atmosphere that will help you sleep easily.



## Shun the heat with these traditional coolants

Now that technology has gotten the better of us, so much so that we can buy home comfort at the click of a button, rustic remedies may no longer sound very sophisticated. But a little insight into the conventional ways of living will show us that a rerun of the age-old methods can make our urban setup a better place to live in, no matter how hot the weather gets. Here's a throwback to the traditional coolants...

### CLAY COOLER

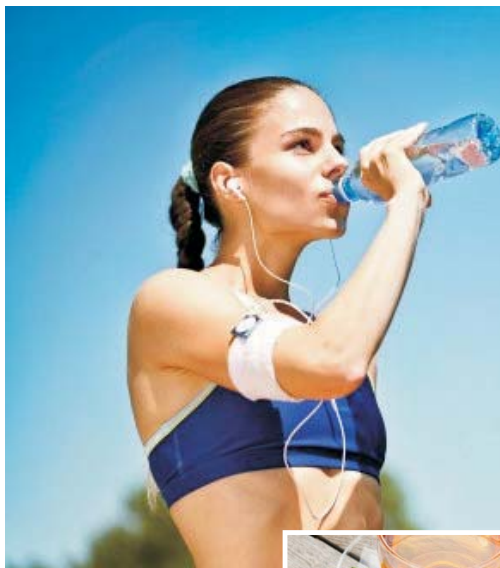
Clay pots, or matkas, can be used to store drinking water, particularly during the peak summer season. Apart from cooling and absorbing impurities and toxins, these earthen kitchenware are believed to render a sweet taste to drinking water. Matkas are readily available in all sizes that can purify up to 10 litres of water.

### FRUITS AND VEGGIES

It is advisable to eat fresh vegetables like leafy greens and different varieties of gourds as much as possible in summers. Lettuce, spinach, cabbage, radish and tomatoes are also good choices. Cucumber, which has high water content and can be easily grown in the kitchen garden, is an excellent option. Cut to fresh fruits, water melon, cocum and bel help prevent summer ailments, while many people also prefer conventional drinks such as aam panna, sugarcane juice, sweet lime, thandai, jal jeera, lassi, chhanch and tender coconut water because of their heat-resistant properties.

### WONDER BUNCH GRASS

Commonly referred to as khus, vetiver is useful when the heat becomes unbearable. Mats made by weaving the roots of this perennial bunch grass can keep away heat wave when bound with cords and hung on the doorway. The organic drapes should be kept moist by spraying them with water from time to time. Apart from mitigating the passing air, these mats also emanate a soothing aroma. Refreshing summer drinks made from khus are available in the market.



period of time. Based on the theory of evaporative cooling, this system operates without electricity and consists of two concentric earthenware pots separated by a layer of wet sand. Some households still use steel replicas of zeers to preserve food items like yoghurt, butter and cheese.

Fill a bucket with cold water or ice cubes and then soak a towel in the water. The arrangement should be such that half of the soaked towel is placed in the bucket, and the remaining is hung outside it. This method, apparently, helps to keep the room temperature low during warm summer nights.

### HERBAL HACKS

Herbs and plants have natural cooling properties that can aid the relaxing processes in the body. Known to be an excellent blood cleanser, Yellow Dock, for instance, is an excellent blood cleanser, while it is also thought to be a good health tonic. Dandelion, a perennial herb, is a cooling herb used for digestive problems. Found on lawns, river banks and waste ground, it helps slimming as well. The combination of amla and brahmi are known to give a calming effect that helps to

reduce stress. Herbal tea is a natural coolant, which helps lower body temperature when suffering from heatstroke or even fever.

### WATER INTAKE

Summers see a spike in the temperatures. Thus to combat the hot air around us and cool down, the body begins to sweat. This, however, results in a loss of water causing dehydration in many cases. We can counter this by raising our water intake. Not fulfilling the required quota may also lead to pH imbalance, making us susceptible to many diseases, particularly stomach ailments.



### ARCHITECTURAL TECHNIQUES

Since its introduction in 1952, refrigerant air cooling has been the quickest and easiest remedy for overheated spaces. With concrete buildings increasingly spreading over cityscapes and semi-urban areas now, effective cooling techniques have become the need of the hour. Filler slabs, which behave as insulators, can trap air between two layers of concrete walls, keeping room temperatures low. Rooftop gardens and cooling ponds on the terrace can also help to beat the heat, while roof sprays are good alternatives to Acs.

### POT-IN-POT FRIDGE

Also known as zeer, the pot-in-pot refrigerator can serve as a useful tool to preserve perishable commodities, especially vegetables, for a longer

## Dance workouts you cannot miss

Achieving the ultimate fitness goal is a never ending process. And if your monotonous fitness regime ceases to motivate you and give the desired results, then here are a few exciting rhythmic workouts to keep you charged.

### Bokwa Fitness

This workout is apt for those who are looking for intense cardio aerobic activity, but the interesting part is that it follows a rhythmic format. It is a combination with South African war dance - Capoeira along with kickboxing. The moves are quite vigorous and can help you burn up to 1,200 calories in a single session. "Through the use of fast paced extreme movement, it sums up to be a fun, challenging and an energising full body workout."

If you're not the one who normally enjoys the gym, Bokwa may be right up your alley, many participants say that the dance doesn't feel like exercise because they're having so much fun," says Ruchika Tolani, an instructor. Since the steps are structured and based on the forms of letters and numbers like L, 3, J, K etc you needn't count steps, like a traditional eight count followed by most dance-based fitness programs. You can freely move with the beat.

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needn't count steps, like a traditional eight count followed by most dance-based fitness programs. You can freely move with the beat.

### Qbop

This dance workout is a fusion of various international styles. The dance form has sassy moves which comprise of street and urban styles. So that's where the energy level rises.

Twerking, whacking are the dance hall moves that make the workout fun. It's a high intensity regime and can make you shake your leg even on Hindi as well as international numbers. You'll sweat it out with this high power-packed workout resulting in over all toning.

## Short news

## Uncertainty over Class 6 textbooks as Maharashtra prepares NEP rollout

Mumbai.(Agency)

With the 2026-27 academic year approaching, uncertainty surrounds the availability of revised Class 6 textbooks for the Maharashtra state board, as the new syllabus aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is yet to receive final approval. The Maharashtra government has initiated the rollout of a new curriculum under NEP 2020, with the updated State Curriculum Framework (SCF) for School Education still under discussion. As per the implementation plan, Classes 2, 3, 4 and 6 are scheduled for curriculum revision from the upcoming academic year.

While work on Classes 2, 3 and 4 is progressing as planned—with textbook development in its final stages and printing expected soon—the Class 6 curriculum remains under finalisation. The delay has pushed back textbook preparation and printing timelines, raising concerns among educators as schools prepare to reopen.

Teachers have begun questioning whether the Class 6 revision can realistically be implemented this year. "This implementation plan is ready from the year 2024 when the initial SCF was prepared. The SCERT should have worked accordingly on finalising the new curriculum," said a senior teacher.

Some educators have suggested postponing the rollout. "There is no point in this haste in finalising curriculum and preparing textbooks, because this delay is indication that textbooks will not be ready by June when school will resume after summer-break."

## BMC moots hiring Gen Z 'intern army' to police roads, garbage and transport

BENGALURU.(Agency)

Mumbai may soon deploy a 50-strong team of Gen Z 'civic fellows' to track potholes, garbage and transport gaps on the ground—armed

with mobile apps and paid stipends as the BMC considers a pilot to tighten oversight and speed up fixes across city wards.

This is a proposal for a pilot 'Mayor Next Gen Civic Fellows Programme' mooted by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) corporator Tejinder Singh Tiwana, which has been put up and will be deliberated by the general body panel later this month.

In a notice of motion, dated February 23, Tiwana has called for innovation in monitoring of urban problems ranging from road conditions, garbage collection and segregation, public transportation and overall sanitation in the city. In a move that seeks to usher in cutting-edge technology and innovative thinking, Tiwana has proposed to rope in 50 trained and educated youth—between the ages of 18 to 25—as interns under the 'Mayor Next Gen Civic Fellows' programme.

"The project will improve monitoring of civic amenities and also involve the youth in administrative work, thereby enhancing efficiency and transparency into the civic administration. The interns can be provided with a fixed remuneration in the way of stipend," read the notice. According to Tiwana's proposal, the model can be first implemented in 10 wards of the city where the interns can be tasked with inspection and submission of reports.

## Solving Crime: When Karnataka police had suspects in custody before they knew there was a murder

BENGALURU.(Agency)

Twelve years ago, on the night of the Banashankari festival in Karnataka's Badami, two men sitting inside a parked autorickshaw at 4 am gave mismatched answers to a patrolling team's routine questions. That was enough to bring them to the police station. Hours later, news came in of a gruesome murder nearby, and the police realised with shock — the suspects were already in their custody.

A suspicious pair for pickpocketing Badami, once the capital of the erstwhile Chalukya dynasty, houses rock-cut cave temples carved into red sandstone cliffs and is considered to be one of the wonders of India. The town is known for the Banashankari Amma festival — one of the biggest fairs in the state with nearly 30-40 lakh devotees attending it. During that time, the police force from at least 3-4 districts is deployed, as it is the season when pickpockets and thieves from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and other parts of Karnataka come to make quick bucks.

During the festival season in 2013, the night patrolling police team spotted two men — identified as Gangadhara and Shafi Abdul Munaf Takalli — sitting inside an autorickshaw around 4 am on November 19.

## Constable alleges harassment, denial of leave, Madhya Pradesh Police deny claims

**In the video, constable Roop Singh claimed that he has been unwell and diagnosed with kidney stones, but was not granted leave for treatment. He alleged that he was instead made to perform domestic chores, including washing utensils, at the official residence of Morena Superintendent of Police Sameer Saurabh.**

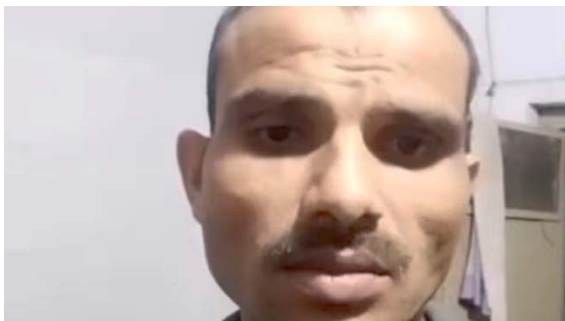
Mumbai.(Agency)

A constable in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district has sparked controversy after releasing a video on social media alleging harassment and denial of medical leave despite suffering from kidney stones.

In the video, constable Roop Singh claimed that he has been unwell and diagnosed with kidney stones, but was not granted leave for treatment. He alleged that he was instead made to perform domestic chores, including washing utensils, at the official residence of Morena Superintendent of Police Sameer Saurabh.

Singh further alleged that even after informing senior officials about his medical condition and requesting 15 days' leave for treatment, his application was rejected. He expressed distress in the video, questioning

whether he had any recourse within the police department and stating that he continued to work despite his illness. The video quickly



went viral, triggering concern within the Morena police department.

However, police officials have denied the allegations. Reserve Inspector Ravikant

Shukla stated that the claims are baseless and alleged that the constable had been absent from duty for two days. He suggested that the video may have been recorded under the influence of alcohol and said a medical examination has been conducted, with the report awaited.

Shukla further said that the constable had later submitted a written statement admitting he was intoxicated at the time of recording the video. He also noted that due process for applying for leave had not been followed, adding that medical leave requires proper documentation and approval through official channels. While officials maintain that procedures were not followed, the video has drawn attention to the constable's condition and raised questions about workplace treatment and access to medical leave within the force.

## In Vadodara, a BJP pick's name goes 'missing'; rebellion after Congress surprise

Vadodara.(Agency)

The BJP felt an early-morning jolt Saturday, the last day of filing nominations when it found the name of one of its candidates from Vadodara city, missing from the electoral rolls, thus disqualifying him from contesting.

Raag Machhar, who was nominated for Ward no. 1 of Vadodara city, did not find his name in the revised electoral rolls issued by the State Election Commission, which conducts the local body polls. The BJP had to then rush to field a fresh candidate within minutes, and, thus, Bhursinh Rathwa—a resident of Ward no. 16—filed his papers in the place of Machhar.

Senior party leaders called it "shocking" that Machhar's name was missing from the electoral roll. A senior party leader said, "That Machhar's name was missing from the local body voter list came to our notice late night on Friday. We communicated the same to the party. His name featured on the electoral roll of the assembly constituency that was issued

following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise on February 17 by the Election Commission. However, the name has been excluded from the roll of the local body elections... We are looking into the issue. At



that moment, there was nothing we could do except field another candidate. It was the decision of the parliamentary board of the party. The party has also taken a serious note of this lapse... the candidate (Machhar) did not know

that his name had been excluded from the voter list for the local body polls. It is unfortunate that such a thing happened."

Meanwhile, a last-minute rush was seen at the district collector's office as candidates of the BJP, the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), as well as rebel and independent candidates, dashed to fill their nomination forms for the April 26 local body polls on Saturday, when the deadline for the same ended.

The Vadodara unit of the Congress—which pulled a surprise by fielding three women from Ward no. 1—is facing a rebellion there with outgoing corporator Harish Patel filing his papers as an independent after being left out. This marked a departure from the Congress's usual practice. Among the three women two are outgoing corporators: Pushpsa Vaghela for the general woman seat and Ami Ravat from the general seat (which is usually allocated to male candidates).

## In Vadodara BJP, Not the Lotus but the Clan Blooms; Dynasty Overshadows Ticket Distribution

**Vadodara.** The BJP's candidate selection for the Vadodara local body elections has triggered intense political debate, raising questions over the party's long-standing claim of being a cadre-driven organization. The newly released list has sparked criticism that loyal grassroots workers have been sidelined, while greater importance has been given to political families and their heirs. Heirs Take the Front Row: 8 Family-Linked Faces in the List The ticket distribution has reignited the dynasty debate within the party. The list reportedly includes sons, daughters, and daughters-in-law of former MLAs and influential corporators, reinforcing the percep-



tion that political lineage carried more weight than years of organizational work. Around eight names in the final list are said to have direct links to powerful BJP families in Vadodara. This has left many long-time booth-level workers and local organizers disappointed, with murmurs that those who spent years strengthening the party on the ground have been ignored in favor

of "silver-spoon successors." Mahanagar Metro Question: Has Internal Democracy Been Replaced by Surname Politics? The development has become politically significant because the BJP has often attacked Congress over dynastic politics. Vadodara's ticket list, however, is now being cited by critics as an example of the same culture taking root within the saffron camp. Key questions are now being raised: Has surname begun to outweigh merit in local BJP politics? Are grassroots workers now reduced to merely ensuring victories for political heirs? Could this dominance of old political families trigger internal resentment ahead of polls? Risk of In-

ternal Discord Party insiders suggest the ticket distribution may lead to visible dissatisfaction in several wards, where local resistance is already beginning to surface. Some workers have openly remarked that if elections are to be fought only by leaders' families, then mobilizing crowds and carrying the organization should also be their responsibility. Conclusion Vadodara's voters now face a clear political choice—whether to vote for performance and local work, or for family legacy and political surname. Whether this "family-first" approach strengthens the BJP or fuels rebellion from within will only become clear when the election results arrive

## Religious conversion syndicate case: Fresh FIR registered against Dawood Ahmed

Agra.(Agency)

**The case first came to light in July 2025 after two minor sisters went missing from Agra's Sadar area. During the investigation, police discovered that the girls had come in contact with an organized conversion racket. They were later rescued from Kolkata, leading to the exposure of a larger network.**

Agra police have launched another major crackdown in the widely discussed religious conversion syndicate case, registering a fresh case against Dawood Ahmed for allegedly funding the network. Authorities have also pasted a property attachment notice at his residence in Bhopal, signalling the start of legal proceedings to seize his assets.

The case first came to light in July 2025 after two minor sisters went missing from Agra's Sadar area. During the investigation, police discovered that the girls had come in contact with an organised conversion racket. They were later rescued from Kolkata, leading to the exposure of a larger network.

So far, more than 14 accused have been arrested in connection with the case. Police identified Abdul Rahman as the alleged

mastermind operating from Delhi, while his associate Ayesha was reportedly managing



parts of the network from Goa. During police remand, the accused revealed that the syndicate was receiving financial support from abroad. Funds were allegedly routed from countries including Canada and

the UAE. Investigators found that Dawood Ahmed, originally a resident of Bhopal and currently based in Canada, played a key role in channelling these funds. Police teams conducted raids in Bhopal to apprehend him, but he remains absconding. Following his failure to appear in court despite summons, authorities have intensified action. A notice for property attachment has been affixed at his Bhopal residence, and further steps to seize his assets are expected soon.

Additionally, a new case has been registered against Dawood Ahmed at Sadar Bazar police station under Section 209 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

During the course of the investigation, police also rescued several girls from the alleged syndicate. Officials say efforts are ongoing to dismantle the entire network and further arrests and actions are likely in the coming days.

## Out for morning walk, village pradhan's husband shot dead in Mirzapur over 'panchayat poll feud'

KANNUR.(Agency)

The husband of a village pradhan was shot dead allegedly over a rivalry over panchayat elections in the Katra area of Mirzapur district on Saturday, police said. One of the two assailants has been identified with the help of CCTV footage and a manhunt has been launched to nab them, they claimed.

According to police, the victim, identified as Rajeev Kumar Singh, alias Rinku Singh (40), the husband of Devari village pradhan Pratima Singh, was fired upon by the assailants when he was out for a morning walk.

CCTV footage collected from the area shows the assailants waiting by the roadside on a motorcycle and one of them approached Singh, who was alone, and fired at him from a close range before trying to flee, police said.

The clip, which has since been widely circulated on social media, shows the assailant trying to kick-start the two-wheeler, while the pillion rider brandished his gun to threaten bystanders, police said.

Aparna Rajat Kaushik, Superintendent of Police, Mirzapur, said, "Police have collected credible leads in the case and are examining it from all possible angles."

Information was received on Saturday morning that a man had been shot at in the Katra area. Our team rushed to the spot and took the victim, who suffered a gunshot wound in his chest, to the hospital, where he was declared dead, police said, adding one of the assailants has been identified as Hari Rajan Sonkar, a resident of Devari village, while efforts are underway to identify the other suspect.

# Phase 2 of SIR ends with over 7.2 crore deletions across 12 states, UP tops

**At the start of the SIR exercise, the combined electorate in these states and UT stood at around 51 crore. The deletions account for roughly 10.2 per cent of the voter base.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
In what is being billed as the largest voter list cleanup, more than 5.2 crore names have been deleted from electoral rolls across 12 states and one Union Territory following the second phase of Special Intensive Revision (SIR), accounting for about 10 per cent of total voters.  
The drive began in Bihar and later expanded to 11 states and one UT. At the start of the exercise on October 27, 2025, the combined electorate in these regions stood at around 51 crore. The deletions translate to roughly 10.2 per cent of the voter base.  
**NET ROLLS SHRINK DESPITE FRESH ADDITIONS**  
During the second phase, about 7.2 crore names were removed. Uttar Pradesh led with the highest number of deletions at 2.89 crore, followed by Tamil Nadu with 97 lakh and West Bengal with 90.8 lakh voters removed. However, nearly 2 crore electors were added

through fresh registrations (Form 6) and address updates (Form 8), partially offsetting the deletions.  
After the revision, the total electorate across these regions stands at 45.8 crore.  
**WHY NAMES WERE DELETED**  
**Election Commission data shows deletions targeted voters who were:**  
Absent at registered addresses: 13 crore  
Permanently shifted: 3.1 crore  
Dead, duplicate, or other categories: over 1.2 crore  
Officials said the exercise aimed to eliminate "ghost voters" and improve roll accuracy.  
**STATE-WISE IMPACT**  
**The scale of deletions varied widely:**  
Andaman and Nicobar Islands: 16.6 per cent (highest)  
Uttar Pradesh: 13.2 per cent  
Gujarat: 13.1 per cent  
Chhattisgarh: 11.3 per cent  
West Bengal: 10.9 per cent

Tamil Nadu: 10.6 per cent  
Goa: 10.2 per cent  
**Lower reductions were seen in:**

Kerala: 20.4 lakh  
Rajasthan: 15.4 lakh  
Madhya Pradesh: 12.9 lakh  
Gujarat: Over 12 lakh



**BENGAL SIR ROW**  
In West Bengal, the SIR process was dogged by controversy. Over 60 lakh faced adjudication, of which authorities removed over 27 lakh names after verification, along with another 6 lakh based on objections.  
Ahead of assembly polls, the number of voters in the state stands at 6.75 crore, considerably lower than the 7.66 crore on the rolls before the revision began.  
Officials said the revision removes the risk of bogus voting by eliminating inactive or unverifiable voters, including over 6.5 crore electors who had not voted despite being on rolls. The exercise, they said, results in a "cleaner and more accurate" electoral database ahead of upcoming elections.  
Madhya Pradesh: 5.7 per cent  
Rajasthan: 5.4 per cent  
Kerala: 2.5 per cent  
Lakshadweep: 0.3 per cent  
Puducherry recorded about a 7 per cent drop.  
**UP SEES HIGHEST ADDITIONS**  
Among new entries, Uttar Pradesh topped with 92.4 lakh additions. Other states included: Tamil Nadu: 35 lakh

## Intel ops, tracking kingpins: Eye on pan-India drug syndicates, Delhi Police's ANTF now a specialised unit

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
In response to a significant surge in the cases related to narcotic drugs in the Capital, the Delhi Police has established a dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) to dismantle interstate syndicates. The Indian Express has learnt. The move comes amid a threefold spike in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) cases and seizures over the past five years. In 2021, the Delhi Police had registered 566 such cases — a figure that shot up to 2,154 by 2025.  
The ANTF, according to senior officers, will focus on intelligence-driven operations, tracking inflows from porous borders, and targeting kingpins behind the transit of heroin, cocaine, and synthetic drugs. "This specialised unit will enhance our capacity to intercept consignments and break supply chains before they reach Delhi's streets," a source said.  
"The formation aligns with national efforts to curb the drug trade, building on the Delhi Police's existing Special Cell expertise while streamlining resources for faster action. It will also coordinate with the Narcotics Control Bureau and other state police forces for intelligence sharing and inputs," the source added. The logo and a helpline number (1933) for the task force have already been launched and the process of formation of a bigger team is going on, it has been learnt.  
The ANTF was initially set up as a small unit in June 2022 after restructuring the Narcotics Cell under the Crime Branch. So far, the Special Commissioner of Police, heading the Crime Branch, has overseen the ANTF.  
As a specialised unit, it will now be led by a Special Commissioner of Police, supported by one Joint Commissioner, one Additional Commissioner, one Deputy Commissioner of Police, and two Assistant Commissioners.

## Delhi govt orders 5-year audit of 4 bodies operating retail liquor vends across Capital

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The Delhi government on Saturday directed the Excise Commissioner to conduct an independent cross-verification of sales, stock and revenue figures of all four corporations operating retail liquor vends in the city for the last five years after instances of alleged financial irregularities came to light.  
The directions have been issued after the Finance department, headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, noted financial irregularities arising from prolonged lack of reconciliation of books of accounts, said officials.  
"...The retail operations of liquor in National Capital Territory of Delhi have been entrusted to certain state societies/corporations, namely Delhi Consumer Co-operative Wholesale Store (DCCWS), Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC), Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation (DSCSC), and Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), which have set up retail outlets in various parts of the city. Some instances of financial irregularities have been brought to the notice of the Finance department which have occurred due to lack of reconciliation of books of accounts for a long period of time," the department said in an official order issued on Saturday.  
Maintaining that stricter oversight is needed to address the issue, the order said, "...to ensure integrity of financial records and revenue realisation pertaining to retail operations of liquor, there is a need for stricter oversight and reconciliation of books of accounts i.e. sale, purchase, cash account, etc. in all the societies/corporations..., to rule out any financial mismanagement and loss to the government exchequer." "The societies/corporations shall ensure close coordination with the Excise department... to ensure verification and validation of records," it added.  
Meanwhile, the Excise Commissioner has been directed to submit a report to the Finance department within two months. "Commissioner (Excise), shall carry out an independent cross-verification of sales, stock, and revenue figures reported by the... societies/corporations.... A comprehensive report shall be submitted by the societies/corporations and Excise department to the Finance department within two months..." the order said.

## Arrested after 500-km chase: How a Delhi Police team caught a digital fraud accused near China border

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
At nearly 10,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh, the road to Tawang winds through thin air. On January 31, as temperatures dipped below freezing, a Delhi Police team drove deeper into the mountains, closing in on a man they had been tracking across several states. Tawang sits close to India's edge — its police station is among the last in the country, just 16 km from the Line of Actual Control with China. It was here, police said, that they hoped to find a 24-year-old accused in an investment fraud that stretched across borders and digital platforms.  
The 24-year-old man, Babidul Khan alias Bobby, was accused of duping at least 15 people and operating multiple mule accounts where he allegedly moved the defrauded amount worth Rs 5 crore. The racket was operating from China, said police, and Khan's arrest — after a 500-km hunt from Guwahati — eventually happened in Tawang.

The racket had come on the police radar just weeks before when Diwakar Jha (45), a retired Air Force personnel and a resident of South West Delhi's Sagarpur area, claimed that he was duped.  
"Diwakar retired about two years ago, and was living with his wife and their



two children," a police officer said. His wife is suffering from paralysis, and most of his time went into caring for her and the children, police said, adding that he often felt lonely.  
"Last November, he made his profile on a matrimony website. He was not looking to remarry, but he saw no

harm in talking to a woman for sometime and seeing how it goes," a police officer said.  
At the start of December, Jha matched with a woman named Prachi. "They got along well. Prachi even discussed possible future prospects, and said they would need money to settle together as he was retired. The conversation then moved on to an investment scheme from where she claimed to have earned good returns," the officer said.  
Marriage was not on Jha's mind, but money was. Intrigued, he agreed to join a WhatsApp group that Prachi was part of. Initially, he was asked to deposit Rs 80,000 in an account whose details were sent to him. Jha made a decent profit in two days. "He then made another deposit of Rs 30,000 into another bank account. In the days that followed, he made his final deposit of Rs 6 lakh 50 thousand in a third account in the first week of January," the officer added.

## Gangster wanted in 16 cases deported from Thailand, arrested by Haryana STF

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The Special Task Force (STF) of Haryana Police Saturday arrested gangster Sahil Chauhan, alias Sahil Rana, as he landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport after being deported from Thailand, a senior officer said. Chauhan, a resident of Ambala's Shahzadpur, was wanted in 16 criminal cases involving murder, attempt to murder, dacoity and the use of illegal firearms and had been on the run since 2024 after jumping bail in a case of firing at a rival gangster, he added.  
A look out circular (LOC) and a Red Corner Notice issued against him in 2025 and the Central Bureau of Investigation located him in Bangkok where he was detained before being deported. "The CBI, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs coordinated the return of the wanted fugitive from Thailand," a statement from the CBI said.  
A key member of Bhuppi Rana and Bambiha gangs, Chauhan committed his first crime in 2016 and operated in Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh areas. He was also associated with Gurgaon's Kaushal Chaudhary gang. STF IG B Satheesh Balan said that Sahil joined Bhuppi Rana gang at the age of 18. "His criminal dossier includes severe charges such as murder, attempt to murder, robbery, extortion, criminal intimidation, and violations of the Arms Act. His primary areas of influence span the districts of Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Ambala, and Panchkula", he said.  
He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for firing upon rival gangster Monu Rana in Jagadhari court on January 4, 2017. However, after being released on bail in 2024, he first fled to Bengaluru and from there, using a fake passport, he fled abroad.  
"He kept moving to Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Angola. He had reached Thailand a few days ago. He was trying to renew his father's passport, as his father was due for dialysis. He wanted to take his father to Thailand. Meanwhile, the STF learned about his presence there," Balan said.  
"He tried to travel to Portugal, and when he could not, he returned to Thailand where he was captured at the Bangkok airport based on the Red Corner Notice," Balan said, adding his fraudulently acquired passport was impounded on March 17 this year.

## Delhi's draft EV policy out, big tax breaks proposed for strong hybrid vehicles

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A 50% exemption on road tax and registration fees for strong hybrid cars priced up to Rs 30 lakh, a proposed ban on registration of new internal combustion engine (ICE) petrol two-wheelers from April 2028 and CNG autorickshaws from 2027, as well as incentives on purchase of electric two- and three-wheelers — these are among the key proposals in the draft Electric Vehicle Policy 2026, released by the Delhi government on Saturday, inviting suggestions and comments from the public by May 10. The current policy, launched in 2020 and extended multiple times, had expired on March 31. Thereafter, it was extended again for three months.  
As per the draft, all kinds of electric vehicles (EV) registered in Delhi since the notification of the policy, including cars priced up to Rs 30 lakh (ex-showroom), will get 100% exemption from road tax and registration



fees until March 31, 2030. However, the draft draws a clear line for higher-end vehicles, stating that electric cars priced above Rs 30 lakh will not be eligible for any exemption. Until now, Delhi has not provided a road tax exemption on strong hybrid cars. As per the draft, people who are looking to buy such cars — which allows the driver to switch from electric to fuel — will get a 50% discount on road tax and registration fees applicable for new cars.  
On March 12, besides road tax and registration fee exemptions for electric cars, The Indian Express had also reported that year-wise incentives for electric two-wheelers and e-autorickshaws, along with incentives for scrapping old vehicles, expansion of charging infrastructure, as well as setting up systems for battery recycling are likely to be among the key features of the government's upcoming EV Policy.

## Delhi Metro to upgrade 70 trains on Red & Blue Lines by November 2027

**Delhi Metro plans to upgrade 70 trains on Red and Blue Lines by November 2027. Check details, timeline, and expected passenger benefits.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Delhi Metro Refurbishment Plan: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has set a target to upgrade 70 trains operating on the Red and Blue Lines in a phased manner by November 2027. According to DMRC, these trains, inducted between 2002 and 2007, have completed around 19 to 24 years of service and are being refurbished with modern systems and features to meet the latest rolling stock standards.  
**DMRC launches mid-life refurbishment of trains**  
The DMRC will refurbish the metro trains in three phases. In the first phase, 12 trains have already been upgraded. In the second phase, 18 trains have been refurbished, and work on another 9 trains will begin soon, followed by work on the remaining 9 trains. In the third phase, 22 Blue

Line trains will be refurbished by November 2027.  
In a statement, Anuj Dayal, Principal Executive



Director, Corporate Communications at Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, said that DMRC has undertaken a comprehensive mid-life

refurbishment (retrofit) initiative for its Blue Line trains to enhance passenger safety, comfort and overall travel experience.  
"Under this initiative, the oldest Rolling Stock (RS-1) trains are being upgraded with modern technology and improved facilities to ensure they remain reliable and meet current standards," he said.  
**Delhi Metro to modernise oldest Rolling Stock**  
So far, 31 trains have been refurbished. The refurbishment work includes major improvements to both the train interiors and systems. The interior areas, including passenger sections and driver cabins, have been repainted to restore aesthetics, and fix wear and tear from many years of use. Electrical panels have also been upgraded to enhance performance and reliability, it said.

## PPF: It can pay you Rs 90,000 a month; know how to tap this pension-like feature

Kolkata.(Agency)

Pension in PPF: Public Provident Fund, or PPF, is one of the most popular guaranteed-return instruments that have survived the transition of the country from a controlled economy to a market-driven one. It also has a provision by which one can use it like a source of pension. But very few subscribers are actually aware of the fact that PPF can be used as a source of pension-like income. The advantage of PPF is that anyone — whether working or not working — can open a PPF account. Therefore, anyone who can open a PPF can take the benefit of a pension-like regular income from the account once he/she builds a sizeable corpus in it. PPF currently offers a rate of interest of 7.1%. The lock-in period in PPF is 15 years but even after the expiry of this period, an investor can keep extending the investment by multiples of five years. In other words, one can invest for 20, 25, 30, 35 or even 40 years and beyond in PPF. Thus a big corpus can be built and in utmost safety since PPF carries sovereign guarantee.

### How much corpus in PPF in 30 years?

A contributor can invest a maximum of Rs 1.5 lakh in PPF account every year. Considering one begins investing at the age of 30 and invest the same amount every year till he/she reaches 60, the total amount will be Rs 1,54,50,911 or 1.54 crore. It is assumed that the rate of interest remains at 7.1% throughout this period, during which the out-of-pocket investment amounts to Rs 45 lakh and the interest works out to Rs 1,09,50,911, or Rs 1.09 crore.

### The "pension" calculation from PPF

Now we know that PPF pays 7.1% interest annually. Considering one has Rs 1,54,50,911 in the PPF account, it will generate Rs 1,09,7,014 in the 31st year. PPF has a provision, whereby one can withdraw from the account once every year. Therefore, one can draw this entire amount (or Rs 1,09,7,014) from the PPF in the 31st year. This works out to be Rs 91,417 per month. The amount in the PPF account does not go down even if this withdrawal is made. Thus, every year one can take out this moey which acts like a big pension every month.

## Flexi cap funds drew highest investment in March: Know the top 10 return generators

Kolkata.(Agency)

The mutual fund industry is on an upswing. Even in war-torn March, when the US-Iran war kept ravaging the equity market, the mutual fund industry recorded the highest ever SIP of Rs 32,087 crore, according to Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) data released today. The amount in February was Rs 29,845 crore. The category of funds that attracted the highest investment was flexi cap funds. This category of funds attracted a total of Rs 10,054 crore in March, which indicates the popularity of these funds. In a volatile market, flexi cap funds become appropriate. The reason: For these funds, the fund manager has the flexibility to invest in stocks of all sizes and across sectors. Please note that at least 65% of total assets of a flexi cap fund must be invested in equity and equity-related instruments. These are appropriate for investors with moderate to high risk appetite. This flexibility allows them to make changes in the portfolio as market conditions change of optimising returns. Experts point out that they are ideal for meeting long-term financial goals.

## Diesel & ATF export duty hiked: Impact on fuel prices & economy



New Delhi.(Agency)

The Centre on Saturday increased export duty, or windfall tax, on diesel to Rs 55.5 per litre and on aviation fuel Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) to Rs 42 a litre. The Finance Ministry statement stated that the duty hikes would come into effect from today. On March 26, the central government imposed an export duty of Rs 21.50 a litre on diesel, and Rs 29.5 per litre on ATF. The government levied the duties to increase domestic availability of the fuel amid the US-Israel and Iran war. The decision to hike the windfall tax hike on diesel and ATF is believed to have been taken to increase revenue. The government decision to increase the export duty on diesel could impact exports. It is expected to increase costs for companies and result in some changes in the domestic market. The government has also raised the tax on high-speed diesel. The special additional excise duty has been increased to by Rs 24 per litre. Additionally, the road and infrastructure cess has been raised to Rs 36 per litre. This has increased the overall tax burden. This could impact the transport and logistics sector. The increased tax on aviation turbine fuel would increase costs for airlines. It has to be seen whether flight ticket prices are increased by airlines or not. The government has not hiked petrol prices. The export duty on petrol remains zero. The decision is a huge relief for the common people.

Economic Repercussions of the Windfall Tax Hike on Fuel The decision to increase export duty, or windfall tax, on diesel is aimed at minimising the financial pressure on the government.

# Why Indians can't access Rs 2 lakh crore in unclaimed assets, even if it's theirs

New Delhi.(Agency)

India is sitting on a growing pool of money that no one is using, not because it is not needed, but because it has slipped out of sight. Unclaimed assets across bank deposits, shares, insurance policies and retirement funds are estimated at Rs 2.2 lakh crore, according to a new Finance Magazine study. What is more concerning is that this figure has grown sharply over the past five years, highlighting gaps in succession planning, documentation and financial awareness. In most cases, the money has not vanished. It sits in accounts that stopped moving, investments that were never tracked again, and claims that were never filed. Over time, the link between the asset and its owner weakens, and eventually breaks. The largest share lies in bank deposits. Nearly Rs 97,545 crore has accumulated in the Reserve Bank of India's Depositor Education and Awareness Fund, growing at 24% annually. Dormant accounts are steadily transferred into this pool, where the

money remains but becomes harder to trace. Much of this comes from an earlier era of finance, when accounts were opened with physical records and rarely consolidated. Once a bank account stays inactive for 10 years, the money is moved by the bank to a fund managed by the Reserve Bank of India. The money does not disappear. It can still be claimed at any time by the account holder or their family through the bank, which then settles the claim with the RBI. Until that happens, the money earns a low fixed return, currently around 3%, and is used for depositor awareness programmes.

The ownership stays with the depositor, but the money is no longer held directly with the bank. A similar pattern is visible in the equity markets. Shares worth Rs 89,004 crore, spread across 166 crore shares in 1,671 companies, have moved to the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority after remaining unclaimed.

If dividends remain unclaimed for seven years, both the dividend and the underlying shares are transferred to the

IEPF, where they remain until claimed. Some of these holdings date back decades, continuing to gain value while their owners or heirs lose track of them. A



significant portion is concentrated in a handful of companies, including Reliance Industries.

Insurance policies account for Rs 20,062 crore in unclaimed maturity proceeds, death benefits and surrendered policies.

Unclaimed insurance proceeds stay with insurers for up to 10 years before being

transferred to a government fund, where returns no longer flow back to policyholders. Retirement savings show the same drift. Rs 10,915 crore is locked

in 31.87 lakh inoperative EPF accounts, many of them untouched for years. Nearly 38% of these accounts have been inactive for 5 to 10 years, and 21% for more than 20 years. EPF accounts are classified as inoperative after three years of inactivity, often due to job changes or lack of tracking across employers.

Newer financial products are now adding to the pile. Mutual funds account for Rs 3,452 crore in unclaimed dividends and redemptions, while REITs, InvITs and similar instruments contribute another Rs 764 crore, growing at over 31% annually.

Unclaimed payouts are parked separately and remain claimable, but any gains after a certain period may no longer accrue to the investor.

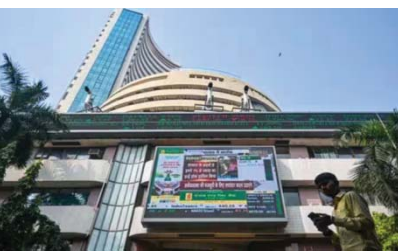
## Indian stock market in positive territory, overall sentiment remains balanced

The World Bank's baseline estimate now projects growth in emerging markets and developing economies of 3.65 per cent in 2026, compared to 4 per cent in October, dropping as low as 2.6 per cent in an adverse scenario with a longer-lasting war.

Washington.(Agency)

The Indian stock markets witnessed a strong rebound last week after six consecutive weeks of decline, supported by favourable global cues, according to analysts. Sentiment remained buoyant amid optimism surrounding a temporary US-Iran ceasefire, although lingering geopolitical uncertainties capped the pace of gains as the week progressed. The rally was further aided by a stable domestic macro backdrop, with broader markets outperforming the benchmarks. Despite elevated volatility marked by sharp mid-week gains and subsequent profit booking, indices trended higher," said Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. The Nifty and Sensex gained around 6 per cent to close near the week's highs at 24,050.60 and 77,550.25, respectively. According to analysts, global developments remained a key influence, with the

temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran improving risk appetite, though uncertainty around its sustainability persisted. Meanwhile, a



sharp decline in crude oil prices below the USD100 mark eased domestic concerns and triggered a strong rebound across markets. On the domestic front, the RBI maintained the repo rate at 5.25 per cent and retained a neutral stance, highlighting the need to balance inflation risks with growth support. The central bank also revised

FY26 GDP growth upward to 7.6 per cent while projecting FY27 growth at 6.9 per cent. Inflation projections were raised to 4.6 per cent for FY27, reflecting risks from elevated energy prices and potential weather-related disruptions. Market watchers said that overall sentiment remains balanced but cautious, shaped by global cues, crude oil price movements and ongoing foreign investor activity. Downside appears to be relatively contained, but upside momentum remains constrained, pointing to a recovery that is still tentative and low in conviction, they added. Economic indicators showed signs of moderation, with the Services PMI easing to 57.5 and the Composite PMI to 57.0 in March. However, global agencies remained constructive, with the World Bank raising India's growth outlook, supported by strong domestic demand and structural factors, said analysts.

## India faces lingering, long-term war impact

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Philippines was the first to declare a national emergency after Iran choked the Straits of Hormuz. Pump fuel prices had shot up by 177% compared to pre-Iran war rates. Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said the measure is designed to ensure even supply of energy and prevent hoarding and black-marketing. In the US, the average rates have topped \$4.14 per gallon in April, the highest since 2022. UK diesel is up 17%, and Europe is averaging 25% higher since the conflict started on 28 February. Many Asian countries like Vietnam are reporting 50% higher prices, and 85 nations now facing fuel driven inflation. In India, except for premium petrol prices, up about Rs 2.35 a litre, and Jet fuel (ATF) higher by 8.5%, consumers have been spared the hikes for now. For that they have to thank elections in 4 states and one Union territory starting 9 April, and ending 29 April. The Union

government, not wanting to upset voters, has lowered excise duty to keep pump prices stable. After the last vote is counted on 29 April, be sure the scenario will change. The problem is there is no end in sight. A ceasefire announcement by the US and welcomed by Iran has turned out to be a damp squib. Israel has continued to bomb Lebanon and the Straits of Hormuz continues to be closed as Iran insists on a ceasefire in Lebanon. Even if the Gulf waters open up, restoring normalcy for shipping will take weeks if not months. What then are the implications for India?

### Dependence on the Gulf

India's dependence on Gulf oil and gas is much higher than the global average. While on a global level the Hormuz Straits is the passage for 20% of crude supplies, India sources 50% of her crude oil, about 40% of liquefied natural gas (LNG), mostly from Qatar, and 90% of liquefied petroleum gas

(LPG) through the straits.

Neeraj Mittal, secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, acknowledged this irrationally high dependence. "The Gulf crisis has shown that what we develop as national infrastructure when things are not as bad as they could be, we forget to plan for adversities.

The world's energy dependence on the Strait of Hormuz is roughly 20%; but ours is more in all three -- crude oil, natural gas and LPG.

Speaking at an event in New Delhi, Aurelien Kruse, World Bank Lead Economist for India, underlined how the disruption and turmoil in energy supplies had dented the growth momentum for India, though the country had entered the new fiscal year from a position of strength.

Though India had the buffers to prevent the volatility to pass through to retail prices of fuel, Kruse said the volatility would impact growth in the long term.



Eveline, a textile manufacturer and supplier to brands such as Van Heusen and Guess.

Some of these sectors had already witnessed a decline in exports following the imposition of US tariffs in August last year. The resulting fall in production due to weak export demand led to a sharp decline in the hiring of daily wage labour during that period. Before the sectors could recover from the tariff impact, the West Asia crisis further dented worker confidence. According to exporters in Punjab, many workers fear that the geopolitical situation could affect industrial activity, prompting them to seek alternative employment opportunities in their hometowns.

# IndianOil conducts over 10,600 inspections, takes strict action against erring persons

Additionally, in coordination with state governments, over 1.2 lakh raids and more than 990 FIRs have been done nationwide, across the industry to safeguard fair distribution, IndianOil said in a post on X.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Indian Oil Corporation has conducted over 10,600 inspections, and strict actions have been taken against erring persons and agencies, including show-cause notices and suspensions, it said in a statement. Additionally, in coordination with state governments, over 1.2 lakh raids and more than 990 FIRs have been done nationwide, across the industry to safeguard fair distribution, IndianOil said in a post on X. "Indane distributorships remain under continuous surveillance to uphold service standards and ensure LPG reaches every genuine customer. IndianOil said it is prioritising LPG supplies for domestic consumers, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and uninterrupted distribution across the country. Strict monitoring and enforcement measures are in place to curb diversion, black marketing, and hoarding.



Meanwhile, more than 51.5 lakh domestic LPG cylinders were delivered on April 10, the government said on Saturday, adding that about 1 lakh 5-kg FTL cylinders were sold across the

country on the same day, against a daily average of 77,000 in the month of February 2026. Since March 23, 2026, more than 12 lakh 5-kg Free Trade LPG cylinders have been sold to students and

vulnerable communities including migrant labourers, informed Petroleum Ministry. These 5-kg FTL cylinders will be at disposal of the state government for supplying only to migrant labourers in their state with assistance of Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs). PSU OMCs have organised around 2,900 awareness camps for 5-kg FTL cylinders during last 8 days, wherein more than 29,000 5-kg FTL cylinders were also sold, said the government. "Citizens are advised to avoid panic purchase of petrol, diesel and LPG and rely only on official sources for information. LPG consumers are requested to use digital booking platforms and avoid visiting distributors. Citizens are encouraged to use alternate fuels such as PNG and electric or induction cooktops. All citizens are urged to conserve energy in their daily use during the current situation," according to the ministry. omer," it added.

# Perfect Exercises for the Perfect butt

With icons like Jennifer Lopez, Beyonce and Pippa ruling the roost with their perfectly shaped posteriors, every woman wants to shape up and fast. This brings us to the doorstep of our expert, International Master Trainer - Sophia Yasmin. We asked her what it takes to get that perfect toned butt, and here are her answers.

## If you are working out at home, try out:

**Single leg squat** - First learn to balance yourself, then stretch out your arms parallel to the floor. Lift one of your legs and squat, stay down for a second and rise.

**Step ups** - Place your left leg on a step or a riser area for a second, and let your right leg be behind you. Then step down with your right leg followed by left.

**Hip extensions** - Place a table a little ahead of you, stand with you legs apart. With the support of the table bend forward at a 45 degree

angle; then lift your legs behind you without bending it or your body. Hold it for a second, and bring your leg back down.

## If you want to try an outdoor sport to improve your derriere, try out:

**Cycling** - When you push down the pedal you are exercising the gluteal maximus, it is the muscle that begins at the upper part of the butt at the pelvis and stretches to the thigh bone.

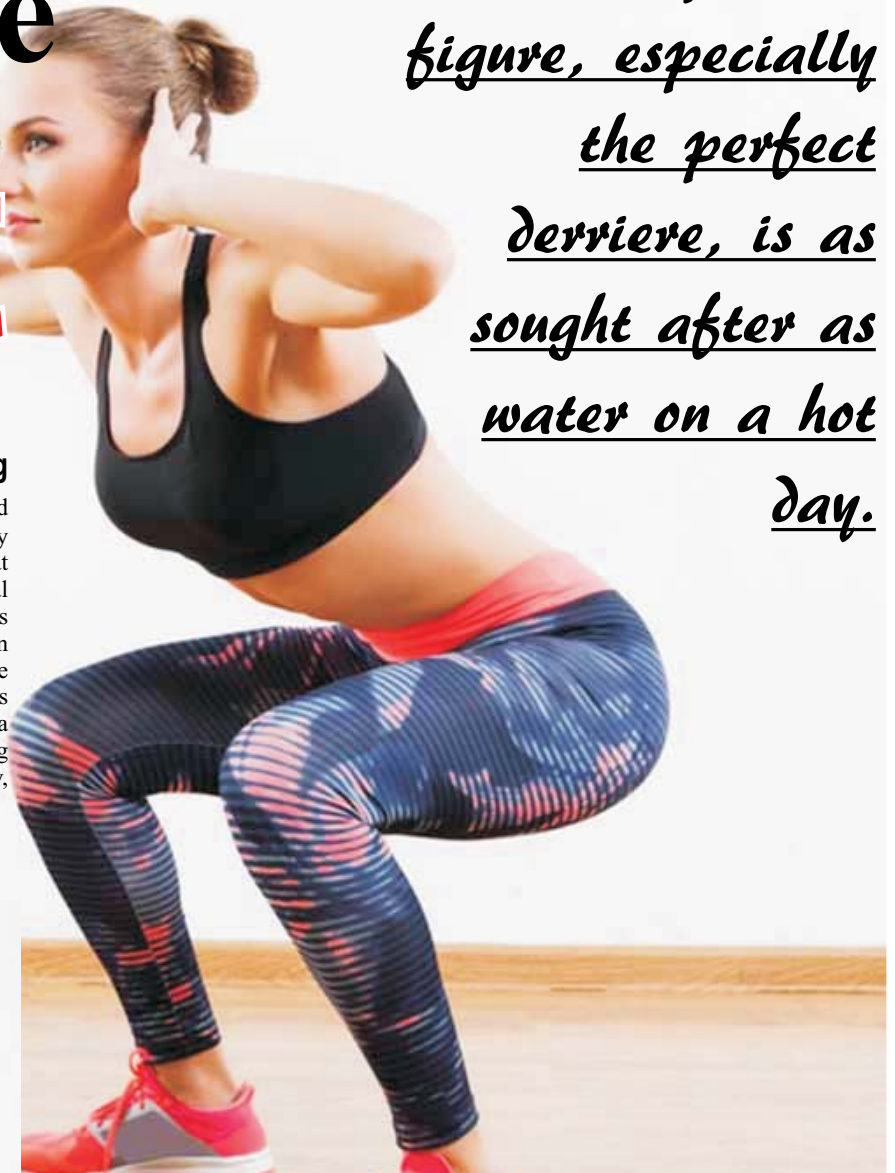
## If you want to try yoga she has the answer, try out:

Pilates, especially side leg lift series and Shoulder Bridges.

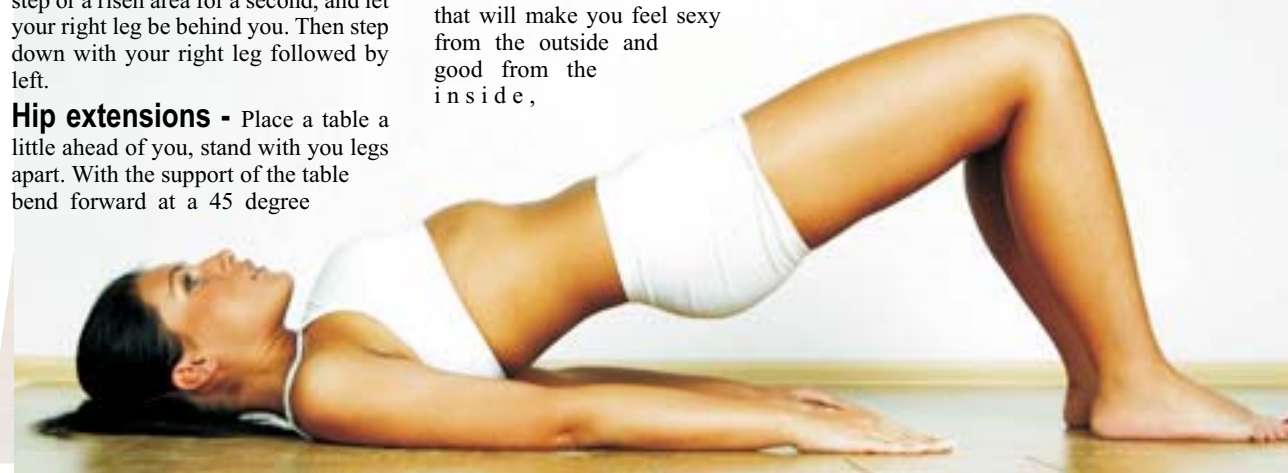
There are other outdoor activities that will make you feel sexy from the outside and good from the inside,

you can try out: Running and swimming.

**Remember that spot targeting does not work.** Therefore, if you need to first lose weight in order to get a shapely butt, then you will need to attack that frontier with a balanced diet and optimal workout routine. The exercises and regimes listed above will work if you are within reach of your desired weight, and are including them in a well-rounded fitness programme. The ultimate solution to a flabby backside is always exercise along with a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, there are no short cuts.



*The perfect figure, especially the perfect derriere, is as sought after as water on a hot day.*



## 7 reasons Meditation isn't a waste of time



Think meditation is a waste of time? Here are seven reasons why you are wrong. Sitting in total silence, eyes closed, palms facing upward and mouthing Om, may seem a practice for sadhus. But this very mindful meditation technique can fit perfectly into the mundane lives of nine-to-five working professionals. And you'll be more than enlightened. Here are seven benefits to lure you to trying it.

### 1. Reduces the pain

Certain studies suggest that the pain you experience in your body is suppressed rage. Meditation helps you cool down. Also, though your back or other body areas may be feeling the ache, part of that pain may actually be in your head. In fact, a study published in the Journal of Neuroscience suggested just 80 minutes of meditation training could cut pain perception nearly in half. In the study, volunteers were given a pain test before and after the meditation training; brain scans using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of pain-reception regions revealed significant changes before and after meditation, too.

Another study found that people who meditated regularly found pain less unpleasant. Apparently their brains were busy focusing on the present and anticipated the pain less, blunting its emotional impact.



2. Charges up your sex life That's right. A little mindfulness can go a long way in bed. A recent research suggested that mindful meditation training (in which a person learns how to bring thoughts into the present moment) can enhance a woman's sexual experience. Turns out, self-judgmental chatter often fills a woman's mind during sex, keeping her from the full sexual experience. In another study, college girls who meditated were quicker to become aroused when viewing erotic photos compared with non-meditating women.

3. Steer clear of mental blocks Whether you are trying to get out of a bout of depression or solve a dispute with a friend, doing the same thing in the same way doesn't always work. Meditation can help a person avoid mental traps that drag out problem solving. After just a few weeks of mindfulness training, volunteers were better at switching strategies for problem-solving than volunteers who were not taught the technique.

quarrels and arguments may be able to break the cycle and look at things in a fresh perspective. Clinicians may be better able to offer new ways of looking at a clinical situation. Negotiators may be better at finding novel ways to settle disputes. Managers may be better able to think 'out of the box' and replace existing non-adaptive procedures with new and improved ones.

4. Makes you mentally tough Meditation can protect a person from the debilitating effects of some emotional events. In a study, US marines preparing for deployment spent two hours each week practising mindfulness meditation training for eight weeks. Compared with the marines who didn't meditate, those who did showed improved moods and working memory (allows for short-term retrieval and storage of information). The training seems to allow individuals to stay alert and in the moment without becoming emotional, equipping them with a mental armour.

### 5. Helps you keep cool

Both novice and experienced meditators in the study practised compassion meditation (widely practised by Tibetan leaders), which involves focusing on loved ones and directing loving-kindness toward them, and then extending that goodwill to all beings indiscriminately. When participants heard emotional sounds, such as a distressed woman crying or a baby laughing, they showed more brain activity in brain regions linked to empathy while meditating than when not meditating.

6. Helps you focus City denizens tend to suffer from mild ADHD. And smart phones, laptops, wi-fi and the opportunity to essentially contact anyone at any time, compounds the problem of distraction. Then how does one stay focused? The Zen practice of 'thinking about not thinking' boosts your attention span by freeing the mind of distractions. A brain-scan study results showed that Zenmeditation training, in which a person stays alert and aware of their breathing and posture while dismissing wandering thoughts, led to different activity in a set of brain regions known as the default network, which is linked with spontaneous bursts of thought and wandering minds. Their brains were also quicker to return to this Zen mode after being distracted compared with those who had no meditation training.

7. Bulks up the brain A few Om chants may make you smarter, suggests research on the effects of meditation on the brain. A study found that long-term meditators (who practised various techniques, including Samatha, Vipassana, and Zen) have larger amounts of folding, of the brain's cortex than people who don't meditate. The extra folds may allow the meditators to process information faster than others. Another study found that people who meditate also have stronger connections between brain regions and show less age-related brain shrinkage. The bulking-up in white matter was seen throughout the brain, the researchers said.

## 6 ways you are not using Lemons

**In addition to enhancing the tangy taste to various delicacies, there are various other ways lemons can be used.**

**Cleanse and boost your system:** A cup of warm lemon water first thing in the morning acts as the perfect body cleanser. Specifically because lemon is a diuretic and flushes out toxins from the body. Not only that, lemons are also believed to boost your immune system.

### Digestive aid:

Lemon with water pushes the liver to produce bile acid, which is required for digestion. Moreover, they aid in moving toxins from the digestive tract.

### Mosquito repellent:

Using it as a mosquito repellent, strange as it may seem, isn't it, but is a natural extr

emely simple process. You just need half a lemon, stuff it with sufficient amount of cloves and there you go. Now you are all set to drive away the nagging mosquitoes.

### Home freshener:

Lemons, if mixed with rosemary and vanilla makes for a great way to freshen up your home.

### Keep apples fresh:

Lemons when added to cut apples and avocados will keep it fresh, such that it doesn't get brown.

### Sanitize your cooking boards:

Use lemon to clean your chopping board to reduce the microbial count and make it ready and hygienic for the next batch of vegetables to be chopped.

### Make them last long:

When you get your next batch of lemons, don't forget to store them in a glass container filled with water. It will stay fresh for a longer period of time.



## Why should you have soaked almonds

**If you love eating almonds raw and hate the idea of soaking it overnight, then it's time to put in that little extra effort. It's not about taste anymore and more about picking the healthier option when choosing between soaked almonds and raw almonds.**

### Why soaked almonds are better?

Many are unaware that the brown peel of almonds contains tannin, which inhibits nutrient absorption. Once the almonds are soaked, the peel comes off easily, allowing the nuts to release nutrients. Soaked almonds also help with digestion. It releases the enzyme lipase, which is beneficial for fat digestion. What's more? Almonds also



help in weight loss. They contain monounsaturated fats that curb your appetite and makes you feel full. Soaked almonds are a good

source of antioxidants too. It resists free radical damage and prevents ageing. Soaked almonds contain Vitamin B17 and folic acid that are vital for fighting cancer and reducing birth defects, another reason worth putting in a little effort. So make a habit, soak the almonds overnight and have your daily share of nutrition every morning.

## NEWS BOX

## 18-year-old Gout Gout shatters Usain Bolt's record, runs 200m sprint in 19.67 seconds



New Delhi. (Agency)

Gout Gout delivered a landmark performance at the Australian Athletics Championships on Sunday, clocking 19.67 seconds in the 200 metres to win the title and go past a benchmark set by Usain Bolt early in his career. Bolt's best time before the age of 23 was 19.93 seconds. Gout, at 18, has now gone significantly quicker, adding another layer of context to what is already a standout performance. For an athlete of his age, the time places him among the quickest in the world this season. It also marks a sharp improvement from his previous best of 20.02, underlining the speed of his pGout had previously dipped under 20 seconds, but that effort came with the assistance of a tailwind and was not recognised as an official mark. Sunday's run, therefore, marked his first sub-20 performance under legal conditions, and one that immediately stands out in the broader sprinting landscape.

The final itself saw a strong field, with Aidan Murphy finishing second in 19.88 and Calab Law taking third place in 20.21. Gout, however, separated himself through the latter half of the race, maintaining control after the bend and pulling away in the closing stages. Regression over the past year. Gout had previously dipped under 20 seconds, but that effort came with the assistance of a tailwind and was not recognised as an official mark. Sunday's run, therefore, marked his first sub-20 performance under legal conditions, and one that immediately stands out in the broader sprinting landscape.

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## Kerala rejoices: Shashi Tharoor praises Sanju Samson after maiden CSK century

New Delhi. (Agency)

Indian National Congress MP, Shashi Tharoor heaped praise on Sanju Samson after the Kerala batter's match-winning century for Chennai Super Kings, saying "Kerala rejoices" following his heroics against Delhi Capitals. Samson finally found his rhythm at Chepauk, scoring a 52-ball hundred to lead CSK to their first win of IPL 2026. After a slow start to the season with scores of 6, 7 and 9, the innings marked a much-needed turnaround for the wicketkeeper-batter, who had arrived at the tournament on the back of a strong T20 World Cup campaign. "I had a gut feeling last night that after three failures Sanju Samson would come good. Cleared the decks and watched the match with quiet and mounting satisfaction," Tharoor posted. "Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram and its MP are rejoicing in Chennai's victory and the contribution of a modest Mallu to CSK's belated success. Keep it going Sanju!" he added. Tharoor's praise carries added weight given his long-standing association with Samson. The MP has backed him through different phases of his career, often speaking



up when opportunities were limited and standing by him during lean patches.

At Chepauk, Samson repaid that faith with a commanding knock. He dominated the PowerPlay, scoring 45 of CSK's 61 runs in the first six overs, and never allowed Delhi to settle. His innings, which included 14 boundaries and three sixes, laid the platform for CSK's imposing total of 212 for 2. Despite a strong start from DC in the chase, CSK pulled things back with timely wickets, with the bowlers stepping up to defend the total and secure their first points of the season.

### HOW SAMSON HIT FORM FOR CSK

The innings felt like a release for Samson after a quiet start to his CSK stint. Instead of forcing things, he trusted his game and let the innings build naturally.

He was decisive early on, taking advantage of anything loose, but also showed control when needed. That balance allowed him to keep the scoreboard moving without taking unnecessary risks.

# 16 meetings, 1651 points each: Alcaraz meets Sinner in a tennis final, once again

Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner meet in the Monte Carlo Masters final with the world No. 1 ranking on the line. Across 16 meetings, the two have won 1651 points each, underlining how little separates them.

LISBON. (Agency)

On Sunday, Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner met in the final of the Monte Carlo Masters, with the world No. 1 ranking on the line. There has been almost nothing to separate the two over the course of their rivalry. Across 16 meetings, Alcaraz and Sinner have won 1651 points each, a statistical quirk that underlines just how closely matched they have been every time they have stepped onto court. Alcaraz leads the head-to-head 10-6, but this will already be their ninth meeting in a final, another marker of how consistently they have occupied the same space at the top



of the sport. Both are chasing their 27th career title. Alcaraz, the defending champion, booked his place in the final with a straight-sets win over Valentin Vacherot. He broke early in the opening set and closed it out with an ace, before navigating a brief shift in momentum in the second.

Vacherot, backed by a home crowd and coming off wins against Lorenzo Musetti, Hubert Hurkacz and Alex de Minaur, moved 4-3 ahead in the second set. Alcaraz responded by winning three straight games to seal a 6-4,

6-4 win. With that result, Alcaraz became only the third player to reach 10 ATP Masters 1000 finals before the age of 23, joining Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

"I think it's the dream spot for everyone," Alcaraz said. "I'm fighting for my second Monte Carlo title; Jannik's fighting for his first one. The world number one is on the line. That makes it even more special." On the other side, Sinner's run has been more direct. The Italian beat Alexander Zverev 6-1, 6-4 in the semi-final, taking control early

and holding it through the match. He raced through the opening set with a double break and, after a tighter second set, broke at 4-4 to close it out. The result capped another strong stretch in his season. Sinner has already won Indian Wells and Miami, becoming only the fourth player to reach the finals at the first three Masters events of the year, alongside Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic. "I'm very, very happy," Sinner said. "I felt really solid from the beginning. When you're a break up straight away, it changes the dynamic of the match."

If Alcaraz has had to adjust within matches this week, Sinner has imposed himself early and rarely let go. Their rivalry has been one of the most compelling among the younger generation in tennis. Since the era of Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, the sport has once again found a duopoly that has the makings of defining this phase. Matches between the duo have rarely been straightforward. Carlos Alcaraz's ability to stay in contests and Jannik Sinner's consistency from the baseline have made their meetings closely fought. That is reflected not just in the head-to-head, but in the balance of their numbers.

### IPL 2026, LSG vs GT

## Lucknow seek home cure as Pooran and Pant hunt for form

New Delhi. (Agency)

It is that stage in the Indian Premier League 2026 season where teams either find momentum or fall behind. With two wins from three matches, the Lucknow Super Giants will look to avoid an early-season mid-table scramble when they take on Gujarat Titans in their second home game at the Ekana Stadium on Sunday, 12 April.

Both teams head into the match on the back of last-over thrillers. Lucknow Super Giants unearthed a potential superstar in Mukul Choudhary, who smashed seven sixes in a sensational finishing act against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens last week. Gujarat Titans, meanwhile, arrive in Lucknow after surviving a last-ball thriller against Delhi Capitals in the capital. LSG vs GT will be the first match of Sunday's double-header. The game will begin at 3:30 pm IST. Star Sports will telecast the match live in India, while live-streaming will be available on JioHotstar.

### LSG vs GT: WHAT TO EXPECT

Lucknow Super Giants are on a five-match losing streak at home. The Ekana Stadium, one of the trickier venues to adapt to, has not offered home comfort to Rishabh Pant's side since the second half of last season. In

their first home match of IPL 2026, they lost to Delhi Capitals after their batting faltered, getting bowled out for 141. On the road, Lucknow have beaten Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kolkata Knight Riders, but they will want to turn their home ground into a fortress. To do so, LSG will hope their captain Rishabh Pant finds form. He showed flashes of brilliance against Sunrisers



Hyderabad with a 50-ball 68 in a successful chase of 160 in Hyderabad. However, the wicketkeeper-batter has struggled for fluency. Pant has been working hard in the nets, and Saturday afternoon was no exception. The Lucknow faithful will be hoping their captain delivers at the Ekana.

### CAN POORAN FIRE?

Nicholas Pooran's form is perhaps a bigger

concern. The West Indies power-hitter, one of the most natural six-hitters in the league, has managed just 22 runs across three matches this season. Is Pooran batting out of position? Usually a top-order batter, the left-hander has been slotted in at No. 5, with Pant at No. 3 and young Ayush Badoni at No. 4. LSG are unlikely to alter that order, given Badoni's form, but if opener Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram provide a strong start, they may need to show flexibility and push Pooran higher up the order. LSG's middle order has been revitalised by the highly rated Mukul Choudhary, a 21-year-old wicketkeeper-batter from Rajasthan, who made headlines with a blistering 27-ball 54 against Kolkata Knight Riders. The home crowd will be eager to see more from the youngster, who has the makings of a crowd-favourite finisher.

On the other hand, Gujarat Titans' batting unit looked far more assured in Delhi last week after two difficult outings at the start of their campaign. Captain Shubman Gill, returning from a neck spasm, appeared in good touch with a 45-ball 70. Questions were raised about his strike rate after Gujarat posted 210 on a favourable batting surface, but their victory overshadowed those concerns.

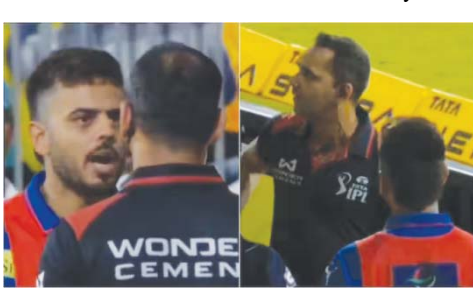
## Nitish Rana fined after heated spat with umpires during CSK vs DC clash

IPL 2026: Nitish Rana's frustration in a high-pressure moment ended up costing him more than just momentum in the game. While the controversy centred around a glove change, it was his reaction that ultimately drew disciplinary action from the IPL.

Chennai. (Agency)

Nitish Rana has been fined 25 per cent of his match fee and handed one demerit point for breaching the Indian Premier League (IPL) Code of Conduct during Delhi Capitals' clash against Chennai Super Kings at Chepauk. The sanction came after Rana was found guilty of using audible obscenity during a heated exchange with the fourth umpire in the 19th over. The DC batter admitted the offence and accepted the punishment handed down by the match referee. Nitish Rana, batter, Delhi Capitals has been fined 25% of his match fee and has also accumulated 1 demerit point for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. Rana was found to have breached article 2.3 of the IPL's Code of Conduct,

which relates to 'use of an audible obscenity



during a match," it added. Rana's reaction came in the middle of a tense phase in the game, with emotions running high as DC tried to keep themselves in the contest. While there has been no update on any

disciplinary action against Tristan Stubbs for his visible frustration, it was Rana who ended up facing the penalty for his altercation with the officials or Players," the IPL statement said.

### WHY DID NITISH RANA ARGUE WITH UMPIRES?

The flashpoint centred around a decision involving Stubbs, who wanted to change his gloves mid-over due to the humid conditions affecting his grip. The umpires, however, denied the request, citing playing conditions that restrict equipment changes during an over. Stubbs struggled to regain his rhythm after that and was dismissed soon after, clearly unhappy with the call.

## Ayush Shetty proved why badminton should not be 15-point game: Coach Vimal Kumar

New Delhi. (Agency)

Ayush Shetty's comeback win over Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the semi-final of the Badminton Asia Championships 2026 has reignited the debate around the scoring system in badminton, with coach Vimal Kumar opposing the Badminton World Federation's proposed move to shift from the current 21-point format to a shorter 15-point system aimed at making matches more broadcast-friendly. Shetty, 20, produced the biggest win of his career in Ningbo, coming back from a game down to beat the World No. 1 10-21, 21-19, 21-17. After a one-sided opening game, the Indian settled into the contest, stretched rallies, and forced Vitidsarn into longer exchanges before taking control in the decider. The semifinal between Ayush Shetty and Kunlavut Vitidsarn was a powerful reminder of what our sport truly stands for," Kumar said. "It was intense, demanding, and deeply tactical. Ayush's win underlined one critical truth: there are no shortcuts in our sport. Physical endurance, resilience, and mental strength are non-negotiable." The Badminton World



Federation's proposal to shorten matches has been driven by the need to make the sport more television-friendly, with tighter broadcast windows and quicker match turnarounds. Kumar, however, believes that approach risks altering the fundamental nature of badminton. "This move risks reducing a sport built on endurance and skill into one designed merely to fit television windows," he said. "The idea of compressing five events into a three-hour broadcast slot cannot come at the cost of the sport's essence." Shetty's run in the tournament has underlined that point. Ranked World No. 25, he has beaten higher-ranked opponents like Li Shi Feng, Jonatan Christie, and Kunlavut Vitidsarn to reach the final. With early exits for Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu, the 20-year-old has carried India's challenge deep into the competition.

## Sanju Samson's calmness near MS Dhoni level: CSK's confidence on star opener pays off

IPL 2026: Sanju Samson's first big knock for CSK could not have come at a better time, both for him and the team. Backed by CSK bowling coach Eric Simmons, his calm, composed century might just be the turning point this season.

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Sanju Samson finally delivered a statement innings for Chennai Super Kings, smashing a match-winning century against Delhi Capitals at Chepauk. His knock not only powered CSK to a crucial win but also earned high praise from bowling coach Eric Simmons, who compared Samson's composure to that of MS Dhoni. The hundred

came at an important time for Samson, who had struggled in his first few outings for CSK after his move from Rajasthan Royals. Scores of 6, 7 and 9 had raised early questions, but the Kerala batter responded in style with a 52-ball century, the first of IPL 2026. "I've been privileged to spend many years playing and being involved with MS Dhoni, who is one of the calmest cricketers I've ever come across, and Sanju Samson is not far behind him. He understands the game from that perspective," Simmons said.

"I've seen no panic, no sense of desperation. It's just the way the game goes sometimes. You just have to keep trusting and believing in your quality, and he certainly has that in abundance," he added. Samson's innings stood out not just for the numbers but for the control he showed throughout. He dominated the PowerPlay, scoring 45 of CSK's 61 runs in the first six

overs, setting the tone early against the DC attack. His footwork was sharp, his shot selection clear, and there was a sense of calm authority that had been missing in his



previous outings. Boundaries flowed freely as he mixed timing with placement, finishing with 14 fours and three sixes. CSK built on that start, with contributions from the middle order pushing them to a strong total of 212

for 2. That cushion proved vital as DC threatened early in the chase before losing momentum.

### HOW SAMSON ROARED BACK TO FORM

The innings felt like a reset for Samson. After a slow start to the season, he went back to basics, trusted his game, and let things fall into place. He did not try to force the pace unnecessarily. Instead, he picked his moments, built partnerships, and accelerated when needed. That balance allowed him to control the innings rather than chase it. More importantly, the knock showed clarity. Samson looked settled at the crease, reading conditions well and adapting to what the situation demanded. With MS Dhoni still recovering and not fully available, CSK needed someone to take charge. Samson did exactly that, combining calmness with intent to deliver one of the standout performances of the season.

# Rashmika Mandanna

'Danced Non-Stop On Salman Khan Songs' DJ Ganesh Spills Inside Secrets From Viros'h Wedding

Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda's wedding has to be the biggest celebration of 2026. The couple jetted to Udaipur and, in an intimate ceremony in the presence of their close ones, the couple tied the knot. Now, a well-known celebrity DJ, Ganesh, who played at Viros'h's post-wedding party, has revealed inside details about the songs that were played, security, restrictions, and more in this exclusive chat with News18 Showsha. Sharing how the couple were super happy and were dancing their hearts out to Bollywood hits, DJ Ganesh told us, "It was the last celebration before they had to get back to their normal lives. Rashmika Mandanna loves Bollywood songs, and that is the reason why they got me on board. When I first got to know that I



had to play, I was confused because I assumed it to be a South Indian wedding. Later, I realised how big of a fan Rashmika is of Bollywood music." The artist further revealed that he and many others got to know about their wedding in December itself, but the couple had everyone sign an NDA to maintain privacy. At the same time, he also confirmed that the security wasn't that heavy since it was a family function with only close relatives present. "They were kind enough to come and speak to us," Ganesh said, while adding that, "Rashmika made us play 'Saami Saami'. Apart from this, she was dancing crazily to Salman Khan's songs like 'Mujhse Shaadi Karogi' and 'Jeene Ke Chaar Din'."

Were phones allowed inside the venue? When asked, DJ Ganesh shared that he didn't face any such restrictions and revealed, "At Rashmika and Vijay's wedding, phones were allowed, at least for me, because they knew I wouldn't take any pictures. Privacy is very important for them when it comes to celebrity parties."

Rashmika and Vijay tied the knot on February 26, 2026, in Udaipur in the presence of their close friends and family members. Their traditional wedding ceremony took place at the luxurious ITC Mementoes, Udaipur. Following the wedding, they hosted a lavish reception in Hyderabad on March 4. The celebration featured several prominent figures from the Indian film industry, including Chiranjeevi, Ram Charan, Nagarjuna, Allu Arjun, Karan Johar, Kriti Sanon, and Nani.



## Does Imtiaz Ali Plan To Make Jab We Met 2, Tamasha 2? Filmmaker Breaks Silence



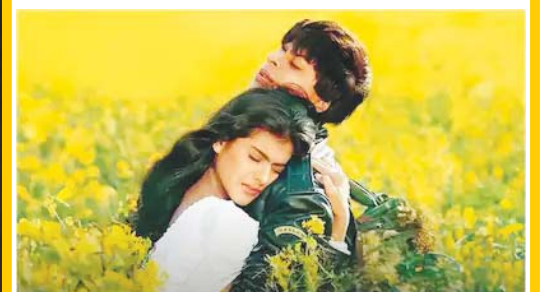
Imtiaz Ali, one of the most loved filmmakers in the industry, has gifted audiences with memorable films like Jab We Met, Rockstar, Tamasha, and Love Aaj Kal, to name a few. His storytelling, often rooted in themes of love and self-discovery, continues to strike a chord with viewers across generations. The director, who is currently busy promoting his upcoming film, Main Vaapas Aaunga, recently spoke about his plans for Jab We Met 2 and Tamasha 2.

**Imtiaz Ali opens up on making Jab We Met 2, Tamasha 2**

Jab We Met, starring Shahid Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor Khan, and Tamasha, featuring Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone, remain fan-favourite films that are loved across generations. Recently, while speaking on The Right Angle, the director revealed that he has no plans to come up with the sequels. He recalled making Love Aaj Kal starring Kartik Aaryan and Sara Ali Khan, which failed to impress audiences and performed poorly at the box office. He said, "I do keep hearing about it. To those who ask me about them, I say, 'Love Aaj Kal 2 bhi toh banayi thi na, voh toh itni achhi nahi gayi.' I feel that if there's something that comes that strongly to me as a maker, then I will." But he went on to say, "But I don't think, especially for Jab We Met, I won't. Some things are best left untouched."

As for his other films, Imtiaz Ali made it clear that he does not want to approach filmmaking from a calculated standpoint. He said that he does not believe in starting with the intention of making a "money-making plan" or treating it like a purely professional move, adding that good films cannot be made that way. Instead, he emphasised that films should come from a place of genuine connection to a story and the desire to immerse oneself in its world.

## Kajol 'Votes For' DDLJ As The Academy Features Shah Rukh Khan's Movie In Travel Romance Film List



Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol starrer Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ) was released in 1995, and remains one of the most iconic films till date. The film, directed by Aditya Chopra, became a global phenomenon and continues to enjoy popularity worldwide. Recently, The Academy shared a post on X, featuring iconic romance films centred around travel. Much to Bollywood fans' delight, the list included DDLJ along with popular titles such as You, Me & Tuscany, The Holiday, and Eat Pray Love. Interestingly, Kajol also reacted to the post!

**Kajol Reacts To The Academy's Post**

The Academy's X post asked followers to choose their favourite romance film involving travel, quickly drawing attention from global audiences. Among the featured titles, DDLJ stood out for Indian cinema fans, who continue to celebrate its legacy decades after its release. "What's your favourite romance film that involves travel? Featured films: YOU, ME & TUSCANY, THE HOLIDAY, DILWALE DULHANIA LE JAYENGE, EAT PRAY LOVE," read the post. Adding a delightful moment to the conversation, Kajol herself responded to the post with a simple yet heartfelt message: "I vote for DDLJ." Her reaction instantly went viral. Check out the post below!

**DDLJ Immortalised At Leicester Square**

Meanwhile, last year, Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol's Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge made history by becoming the first Indian film to get a statue at the famous Scenes in the Square trail in London. Several pictures and videos of SRK and Kajol unveiling the DDLJ statue went viral on social media. They were also joined by Kajol's children Yug and Nysa Devgan.

Shah Rukh Khan has shared a note on social media, expressing his delight over the unveiling of the statue in London. "Bade Bade Deshon Mein, Aisi Chhoti Chhoti Baatein Hoti Rehti Hain. Senorita! Thrilled to unveil the bronze statue of Raj & Simran at London's Leicester Square today, celebrating 30 years of Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ)! Incredibly delighted that DDLJ is the first Indian film to be honoured with a statue in the Scenes in the Square trail. A big thank you to everyone in the UK for making this possible. Come meet Raj & Simran if and when you are in London... we would love to see you make more memories with DDLJ...", he wrote.

# Ravie Dubey

Reveals Ranbir Kapoor Was 'Calm And Focused During The Shoot' Of Ramayana

Ranbir Kapoor starrer Ramayana is turning into the biggest magnum opus, and with the teaser of the film released just recently on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti, the buzz is even bigger. Now, with fans awaiting more details about the project, Ravie Dubey, who plays Lakshman in the film, has spoken about working with Kapoor. Speaking about their collaboration, Ravie Dubey shared, and Bollywood Hungama quoted, "Ranbir Kapoor has an incredible aura. He's quiet, graceful, and deeply committed. He carries a very soft energy, and I think that's something everyone who meets him would feel." The actor further described Kapoor as calm and focused during the shoot.

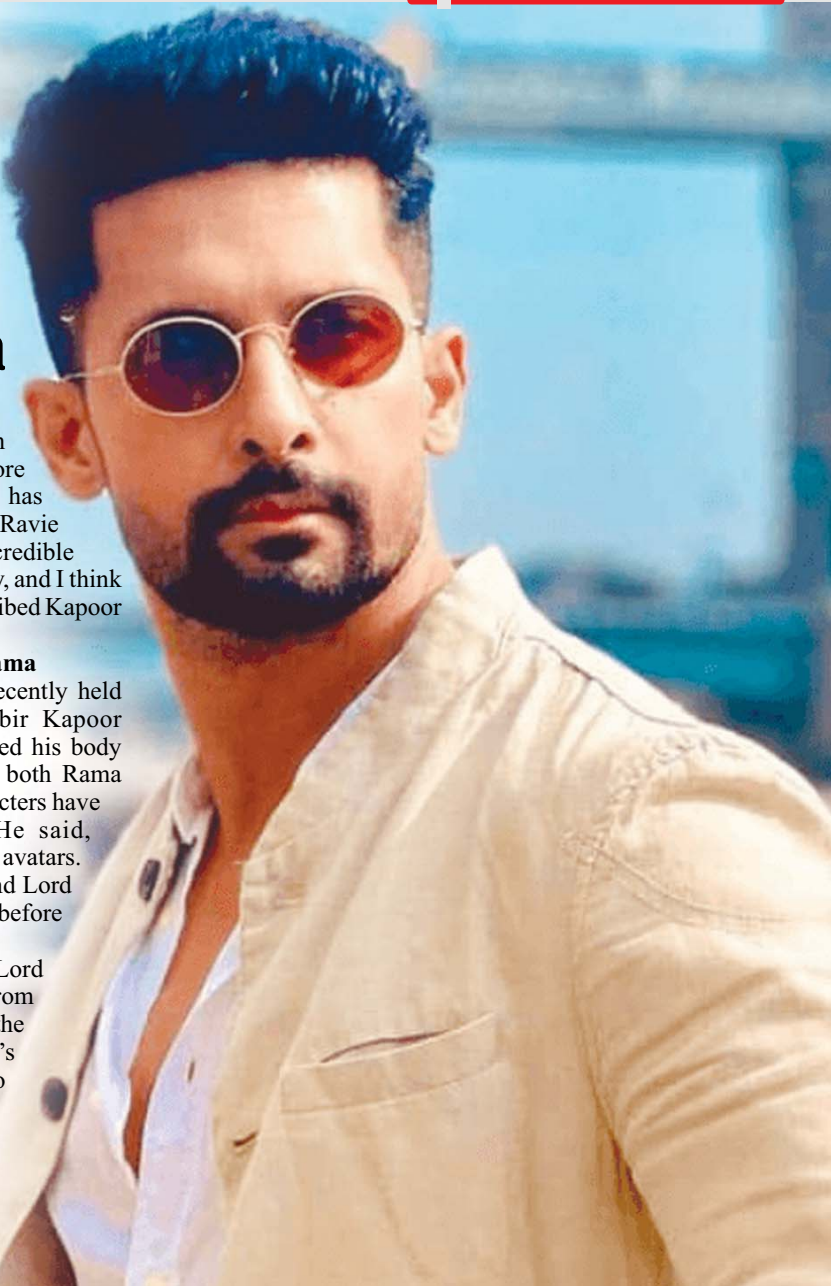


**Ranbir Kapoor on playing Rama**

Speaking to Collider at the recently held teaser launch in LA, Ranbir Kapoor opened up about how he used his body language and voice to play both Rama and Parshurama, as the characters have different temperaments. He said, "Lord Vishnu had different avatars. Lord Rama was an avatar, and Lord Parshurama was an avatar before Lord Rama."

Ranbir Kapoor added, "Just to get the opportunity, you know, how I got to play Lord Rama, to also play Lord Parshurama was fantastic. I think as an actor, apart from body language, I think if you deeply understand the spirituality and the emotionality of the characters, I think everything starts from there. I think that's what I did the year leading up to the shoot of Ramayana, to understand who these people and characters are, what they stand for, and what their motives are."

While Ranbir Kapoor is playing the role of Lord Ram, Sai Pallavi will be seen as Goddess Sita. KGF star Yash will be seen as Ravana in this movie. Sunny Deol and Ravie Dubey will play the roles of Hanuman and Lakshman, respectively. On the other hand, Kajal Aggarwal and Rakul Preet Singh will be seen as Mandodari and Surpanakha.



NEWS BOX

### China says it will resume some ties with Taiwan, including more direct flights

BANGKOK. (Agency)

China said Sunday it would resume some ties it had suspended with Taiwan such as direct flights to cities across China and imports of Taiwanese aquaculture products as the island's opposition party leader concludes her visit. The Taiwan Work Office under China's Communist Party issued a statement saying it would explore setting up a longstanding communication mechanism between the Communist Party and Taiwan's Kuomintang Party, and facilitate the import of Taiwan's aquaculture products, after it banned them in recent years. Cheng Li-wun, the head of the Kuomintang, and China's President Xi Jinping held a high-profile meeting Friday during which both called for peace without offering specifics. Taiwan is self-ruled but China claims the island as part of its territory. Relations between China and Taiwan have been tense since 2016 when the Taiwanese public elected Tsai Ing-wen from the Democratic Progressive Party as president. Since then, Beijing cut off most of its official dialogue with Taiwan's government in the capital Taipei and started sending military planes and vessels towards the island on a daily basis.

The list of measures in the statement touches on ties that China had suspended in recent years as tensions increased. China plans to resume direct flights to other mainland cities like Xi'an or Urumqi to Taiwan, the statement said, although it remained unclear how the measures will be implemented.

China banned individual trips by Chinese people to Taiwan in 2019. Taiwan's rules now require Chinese visitors to hold a valid resident visa from another country, like the U.S. or the European Union, to apply for a visitor visa. China also said it would work toward construction of a bridge that would connect to Matsu and Kinmen, Taiwanese islands that are closer geographically to China. The project is a longstanding proposal that Beijing has previously announced. China banned the import of Taiwanese pineapples in 2021 and since then extended the import ban to products as varied as the grouper fish, squid, tuna and other fruits.

### Jaishankar discusses regional situation with UAE Deputy PM; lauds leadership's role in safeguarding Indians in Gulf

World. (Agency)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi as part of his four-day two-nation visit to Mauritius and the UAE from April 9-12. "A real pleasure to meet DPM & FM @ABZayed of UAE in Abu Dhabi this evening. Our conversation focused on the evolving regional situation and its implications," he said in a social media post on Saturday. Jaishankar said he conveyed India's deep appreciation for the efforts of the UAE leadership in ensuring the well-being of the Indian community in the Gulf nation. The minister also expressed confidence that the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership will continue to advance further. Jaishankar arrived in the UAE on Saturday after concluding his visit to Mauritius, where he attended the 9th Indian Ocean Conference.

### "Chicago 1893 To Seattle 2026": Swami Vivekananda's Statue Unveiled In US

Tehran. (Agency)

The first-ever life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda in the US was unveiled in Seattle, honouring the renowned Indian philosopher and spiritual leader. The life-size bronze statue, installed at the busy Westlake Square in downtown Seattle, is the first such installation hosted by a city government anywhere in the US, officials said.

Sculpted by Indian artist Naresh Kumar Kumawat, it was jointly unveiled on Saturday by Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson and Consul General of India in Seattle Prakash Gupta. "From Chicago 1893 to Seattle 2026! Seattle's skyline has a new Indian icon: Swami Vivekananda! City of Seattle becomes the first city government to host the Swami Vivekananda Monument in the heart of downtown Seattle," the Consulate General of India in Seattle said in a social media post. Addressing the event, Wilson said the monument reflects Seattle's inclusive spirit and strengthens cultural ties between India and the diverse metropolitan tech hub in the US Pacific Northwest. The statue has been gifted by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) to the City of Seattle in recognition of its "in recognition of the city's rich multicultural character and spirit of inclusivity", the Indian mission in Seattle said in a statement. The unveiling of the statue was held on the occasion of the celebration of ICCR Day and is part of India's broader cultural diplomacy initiatives aimed at strengthening people-to-people ties between India and the US Pacific Northwest, the Consulate said. Located at the bustling Westlake Square, which sees over 400,000 visitors daily, the monument stands near prominent landmarks including the Amazon headquarters 'Spheres', the Seattle Convention Center. The unveiling ceremony was attended by several local leaders, including mayors from cities in the Greater Seattle area, community representatives and members of the Indian-American community, nre and the Seattle Centre Monorail.

## Haitians cut back on already scarce food and ask how they'll survive rising fuel prices

PORT-AU-PRINCE. (Agency)

For a factory worker in Haiti, the war in distant Iran means he now has to walk two hours to work and the same distance home each day, because he can no longer afford public transportation. On a recent morning, Alexandre Joseph, 35, fretted about his family's future in a loud voice, attracting the attention of passersby in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

"The government raised the prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene, hitting my family. I now am unable to feed my two children on the salary I have," he said. The conflict in Iran has caused oil prices in Haiti to surge, disrupting critical supply chains, doubling transportation costs and forcing millions of undernourished people to cut back on already scarce meals. Haiti, the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere, has been hit the hardest by rising oil prices that experts warn will deepen a spiraling humanitarian crisis. "One of the most fragile countries in the world" On April 2, Haiti's government announced a 37% increase in the cost of

diesel and a 29% increase in the cost of gasoline. "The consequences are huge," said Erwan Rumen, deputy country director for the United Nations World Food



Program in Haiti. "It's one of the most fragile countries in the world." Almost half of Haiti's nearly 12 million inhabitants already face high levels of acute food insecurity. In recent months, Rumen noted, about 200,000 people dropped from the emergency phase to the acute one, a significant milestone.

"What is a bit frightening is to see that so many efforts could be basically wiped out by things that are completely out of our control," he said. "This part of the population is extremely fragile. They're on the verge of collapsing completely." Gang violence has exacerbated hunger, with armed men controlling key roads and disrupting the transportation of goods. An increase in food prices will only worsen hunger in a country where gangs easily recruit children whose families need food and money. Emeline Toussaint, main coordinator of Mary's Meals' BND school-feeding program in Haiti, said that gas stations in some regions are selling fuel 25% to 30% higher than even what the government stipulated because of gang violence and difficulties with trucks trying to access certain areas. She said the U.S.-based nonprofit is forced to use boats and take longer and multiple roads to feed the 196,000 children they serve across Haiti to avoid armed

groups. "The humanitarian crisis that we're facing right now is at its worst," she said. "So far, we are doing our best not to step back. Now, more than ever, the kids need us. ... Most of them, it's the only meal they receive."

#### 'Everything will go up'

Fedline Jean-Pierre, a soft-spoken mother of a 7-year-old boy, sat under the shade of a tattered beach umbrella as she mulled increasing the prices of carrots, tomatoes and other produce she sells at an outdoor market in Port-au-Prince.

"People are not buying now because they don't have money," she said, noting she likely won't have a choice but to increase prices to survive. "I have a child to feed." The 35-year-old mother said she and her son have lived for two years in a cramped and unsanitary shelter, among the record 1.4 million Haitians displaced by gang violence in recent years.

"The government doesn't do anything for me," she said. "Gas is up now, meaning everything will go up."

## Iran-US talks in Islamabad held via indirect channels before direct engagement: sources

The discussions began with separate meetings of the visiting delegations with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday, followed by exchanges through Pakistani interlocutors.

World. (Agency) Talks between Iran and the United States in Islamabad ended without an agreement after a series of indirect and direct negotiations, official sources said on Sunday. The discussions began with separate meetings of the visiting delegations with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday, followed by exchanges through Pakistani interlocutors. The Iranian delegation was led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqir Ghalibaf, while the US side was headed by Vice

President JD Vance. According to sources, the talks later progressed to direct negotiations between the two sides, lasting about two-and-a-half hours in the presence of Pakistani officials. This was followed by a break during which technical aspects of the demands were discussed at the expert



level, with exchanges continuing late into the night. However, by Sunday morning, it became clear that differences remained unresolved,

prompting Vance to announce that the talks had concluded without a deal. The US delegation also included Jared Kushner and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, while Iran was represented by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and other senior officials. Both delegations had arrived in Islamabad over the weekend, days after Iran and the US announced a two-week ceasefire on April 8.

The meeting marked their first direct, high-level engagement since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pakistan has expressed hope for further rounds of dialogue and reiterated its willingness to continue facilitating talks, though no timeline has been announced. The lack of a breakthrough has cast doubt on the durability of the ceasefire and the prospects of reopening the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global energy supplies.

## Cambodia urges Thailand to resume talks on disputed border

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Saturday that he "strongly hopes" the two neighbours will be able to work together "quickly and with sincerity".



Washington. (Agency) Cambodia has urged Thailand to resume talks as soon as possible on their disputed border, a long-standing disagreement that led to deadly clashes last year. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Saturday that he

"strongly hopes" the two neighbours will be able to work together "quickly and with sincerity". "This will be foundation for long-lasting peace that would allow our people living along shared border to live peacefully. Cambodia is fully ready," he said in a

statement posted on social media. Thailand's Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow said earlier Saturday that his country was not ready to resume talks, even though a new government had just been formed. When asked about Cambodia's renewed call for negotiations, he said it had the "right" to do so, but that Thailand had its "own procedures" to follow. The two Southeast Asian countries have been at odds for decades over the demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) border, a legacy of the French colonial era. The dispute erupted into several rounds of clashes last year, killing dozens of people and displacing more than a million in July and December. The countries signed a ceasefire agreement in late December that allows for border talks.

## Polls open in Hungary in a key election that could unseat populist Prime Minister Orbán

BUDAPEST. (Agency)

The election was being closely watched in countries around Europe and beyond, which is a testament to the outsized role Orbán occupies in far-right populist politics worldwide.

Hungarians were casting ballots Sunday in what is widely seen as Europe's most consequential election this year, a vote that could unseat populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, after 16 years in power. It's a key moment for Orbán, the European Union's longest-serving leader and one of its biggest antagonists, who has traveled a long road from his early days as a liberal, anti-Soviet firebrand to the Russia-friendly nationalist admired today by the global far-right. Polls opened at 6 a.m. local time and were scheduled to close at 7 p.m. Orbán and his top challenger, Péter Magyar, were expected to cast their votes later in the morning. The election was being closely watched in countries around Europe and beyond, which is a testament to the outsized role Orbán occupies in far-right populist politics worldwide. Members of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement are among those who see Orbán's government and his Fidesz political party as shining examples of conservative, anti-globalist politics in action, while he is reviled by advocates of liberal democracy and the rule of law.

Casting her ballot in Budapest early Sunday, retiree Eszter Szatmári, 62, said she felt the election was "basically our last chance to see anything vaguely resembling ... democracy in Hungary." "We all have to make real effort to show to the world that we are not what people



thought we were in past 10 years," she said. After the first hour of voting, 3.6% of registered voters had cast a ballot, according to the National Election Office. The figure was a record in Hungary's post-Socialist history and nearly twice the turnout from the same period in 2022 elections.

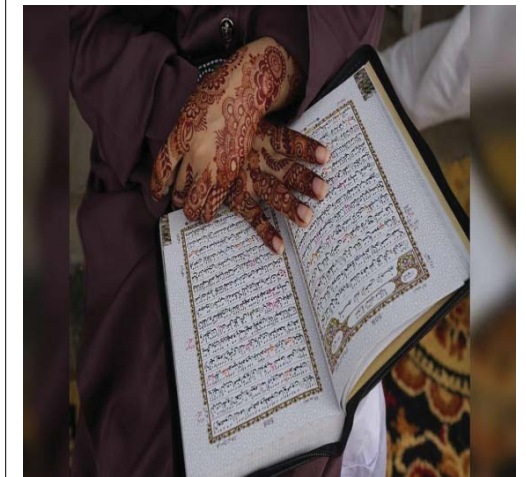
Orbán has been at the helm since 2010. During his 16 years as prime minister, Orbán

has launched harsh crackdowns on minority rights and media freedoms, subverted many of Hungary's institutions and been accused of siphoning large sums of money into the coffers of his allied business elite, an allegation he denies. He also has heavily strained Hungary's relationship with the EU, seeming to revel in using his veto power to stymie the 27-member bloc's important decisions. Most recently, he blocked a 90-billion euro (\$104 billion) EU loan to Ukraine, prompting his partners to accuse him of hijacking the critical aid.

Yet after winning four consecutive elections with a two-thirds majority for his party in Parliament, signs have emerged that Orbán's absolute control over Hungary's politics may be reaching its end.

#### A serious challenger on the rise

Magyar has rapidly risen to become Orbán's most serious challenger. The 45-year-old leader of the center-right Tisza party, which is leading in independent polls, campaigned on issues affecting ordinary voters including Hungary's faltering public health care and transportation sectors and what he describes as rampant government corruption.



Maruli Ahiles Hutapea told AFP. The video of the incident spread like wildfire on social media, sparking public anger. Rights groups have long campaigned against the blasphemy laws, which they say are frequently misused to target religious minorities. Jakarta's ex-governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, better known as Ahok, was jailed for nearly two years on blasphemy charges in 2017. In 2024, a court sentenced a stand-up comedian to six months in prison after he made a joke about the name Muhammad. Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, with more than 240 million adherents.