



# MAHANAGAR METRO

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## Relieved to learn Trump, First Lady are safe: PM condemns dinner shooting

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the shooting at the White House Correspondents' dinner, expressing relief that Donald Trump, Melania Trump, and the Vice President were safe. A gunman opened fire near the venue but was arrested, with no injuries to key officials as security swiftly contained the situation.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday condemned the shooting incident at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, expressing relief that US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, and the Vice President were safe.

In a post on X, Modi said he was "relieved to learn" that Trump, the First Lady and the Vice President were safe and unharmed following the security incident at a Washington DC hotel. He extended his best wishes for their continued safety and stressed that violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned. Trump and

Melania Trump were rushed out of the dinner by Secret Service agents on Saturday night after a man opened fire with a shotgun on security personnel, officials said. An FBI official told Reuters that the armed man fired at a Secret Service agent. Trump later said the officer was saved by a bulletproof vest and was in "good shape."



Authorities arrested the suspect, whom Trump described as a "sick person." All federal officials present at the dinner, including Trump, remained safe.

Addressing a press conference at the White House, Trump said, "A man charged a security checkpoint armed with multiple weapons, and he was taken down by some very brave members of the Secret

Service." Closed-circuit TV footage shared by Trump on Truth Social showed a man running rapidly through a security checkpoint, briefly catching security personnel off guard before they drew their weapons. "He charged from 50 yards away, so he was very far away from the room. He was moving. He was really moving," Trump said, adding that officials believe the suspect acted alone.

"He was a guy who looked pretty evil when he was down," Trump said, noting that federal agents were raiding the suspect's California home.

Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said the agency was investigating the shooting near the main screening area at the event entrance.

As shots rang out, dinner attendees froze before chaos erupted. People screamed, "Get down, get down!" as many of the 2,600 attendees took cover, while waiters ran toward the front of the dining hall. Security agents pushed senior officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, to the ground for protection. Personnel in combat fatigues stormed the stage and evacuated Trump and the First Lady. Some agents took positions on stage, pointing rifles into the ballroom, while cabinet members were escorted out one by one.

## Heroin recoveries surge 148% from 2017-21 to 2022-26 as Bhagwant Mann Govt's 'Yudh Nasheyen Virudh' tightens grip on drug-gang nexus

**Punjab's war on drugs as crackdown intensifies under Bhagwant Mann government, with cases up 40 per cent and official seizures spike across key narcotics**



New Delhi.(Agency)

Punjab's 'Yudh Nasheyen Virudh' has intensified into a sustained, high-impact crackdown under the Bhagwant Mann-led Punjab Government, with fresh data pointing to a sharp rise in enforcement, deeper network disruption, and significantly improved conviction outcomes driven by the flagship campaign Yudh Nasheyen Virudh.

The data shows that 73,541 NDPS cases have been registered between 2022 and 2026 (till date), marking an increase of over 40 percent compared to 52,255 cases during 2017-21. Arrests have also seen a steep rise, reaching 98,596 in the current period, up nearly 45 percent from 68,064 earlier, indicating sustained, large-scale action against drug trafficking networks across Punjab.

The scale of enforcement is most evident in seizure patterns, which reflect a deeper penetration into supply chains. Heroin recoveries have surged by 148%, with 5,979 kg seized since 2022 compared to 2,412 kg between 2017-21. Opium seizures have also risen by over 43 percent to 3,583 kg, pointing to intensified ground-level operations.

Action against synthetic drugs has seen a particularly sharp escalation. Ice (crystal methamphetamine) seizures have jumped more than fourfold, rising from 17 kg in the earlier period to 93 kg since 2022, registering a 447% increase. Cocaine seizures, at 6,064 kg, remain broadly consistent with 6,852 kg recorded earlier, reflecting continued pressure on high-value narcotics.

The crackdown has also widened to address pharmaceutical drug abuse, with enforcement agencies recovering 8.7 crore tablets and capsules between 2022-26, underlining a broader strategy to cut off supply chains feeding addiction among youth.

Crucially, the enforcement drive is translating into stronger judicial outcomes. Conviction rates have climbed to 89 percent, indicating tighter investigations, improved evidence-building, and more effective prosecution. Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav said, "This is not just an increase in enforcement activity, it is a structural shift in how the drug menace is being tackled. The rise in cases and seizures reflects deeper, intelligence-led targeting of networks, while the jump in conviction rates shows that cases are being carried through to conviction. There is sustained pressure across the entire chain, from suppliers to distributors."

## Himanta Sarma's Bengal Campaign Takes Him Closer To Role In Central BJP

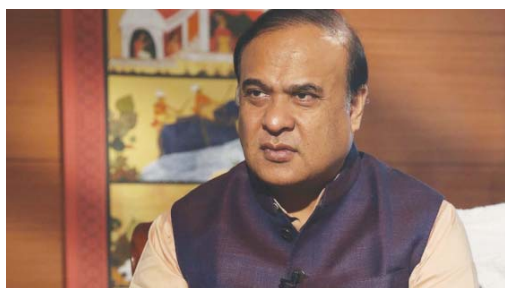
**Over the past few years, Himanta Biswa Sarma has played a crucial role in consolidating the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) across the northeastern region**

Kolkata.(Agency)

While the BJP has put all its top leaders and whatever resources available for the high-stake battle in West Bengal, the emergence of Himanta Biswa Sarma as a key face in the BJP's national campaign strategy marks a significant shift in eastern India's political landscape.

Sarma has campaigned extensively in Assam after voting ended on April 9. His projection as a key star campaigner for the Bengal campaign highlights not only his growing political stature but also the BJP's intent to expand its governance narrative beyond traditional strongholds.

Over the past few years, Sarma has played a crucial role in consolidating the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) across the



northeastern region. After he became chief minister, he was given key responsibilities in Jharkhand and Odisha polls. This time in Bengal, he is playing a key role for the party campaign, and

several functionaries of the party's Assam unit are handling crucial responsibilities in several constituencies.

This success has given rise to what party leaders often describe as the "Assam model" of governance: an approach centered on development, security, and regional integration. The BJP's decision to position Sarma prominently in Bengal's electoral battlefield is fully strategic. The state remains politically challenging for the party, and deploying a leader with administrative experience and strong oratory skills is aimed at energizing the cadre and appealing to voters seeking an alternative governance model. Sarma's ability to connect with a diverse audience, combined,

## Hoodia Gang's Dark Empire Exposed

### 'Hoodia Gang' Accused of Running Multi-Crore Extortion Racket Targeting Jain Monks and Diamond Industry

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

**Mumbai:** A chilling and explosive story is emerging from Mumbai, where an alleged organized crime syndicate has infiltrated two of the most trust-driven ecosystems—religion and high-value trade. According to highly placed sources, a trio identified as Hardik Hoodia, Jagat Parekh, and Vikram Bafna is at the center of a sprawling extortion network that has reportedly shaken the Jain community and the diamond business sector. What makes this case particularly alarming is the calculated manner in which the gang allegedly exploited faith, influence, and long-standing relationships. By gaining access to respected Jain monks and well-established diamond merchants, the group is believed to have built credibility before executing large-scale financial manipulation and coercion. The modus operandi, as described by sources, reflects a disturbing blend of psychological pressure, strategic networking, and targeted intimidation. Victims were allegedly drawn into a web of trust, only to later face demands for massive sums of money under various pretexts. In several instances, the amounts reportedly ran



into crores, pointing towards a deeply entrenched and systematically executed operation. Insiders suggest that this was not a one-off scam but a sustained enterprise functioning across key commercial pockets of Mumbai. The gang is believed to have identified high-value targets, particularly those less likely to approach authorities due to reputational concerns, making the scheme even more insidious. However, the tide now appears to be turning. Multiple sources indicate that investigative agencies, along with independent watchdogs and alert members of the community, have

begun piecing together crucial evidence. Financial trails, property links, and alleged benami assets connected to the accused are reportedly under scrutiny. A detailed dossier is said to be in preparation, which could soon bring the full extent of the operation into the public domain. There are also indications that testimonies from affected individuals are being quietly recorded, potentially strengthening the case against the accused. If confirmed, these developments could mark the beginning of one of the most significant crackdowns on a faith-linked financial exploitation network in recent

times. The impact of such an operation extends far beyond financial loss. It strikes at the very foundation of trust that sustains both religious institutions and traditional business communities. The alleged targeting of Jain monks—figures held in the highest moral regard—adds a deeply sensitive dimension to the unfolding case. Legal experts believe that if the allegations are substantiated, the accused could face serious charges under multiple sections related to fraud, criminal conspiracy, and extortion. Given the scale and nature of the case, it may also trigger wider investigations into similar networks operating under the radar. While official confirmation from authorities is still awaited, the mounting evidence and coordinated scrutiny suggest that a major exposé is imminent. The coming days are likely to be crucial, as more details surface and the alleged empire built on deception faces the risk of collapse. For now, Mumbai watches closely as one of the city's most shocking alleged crime stories edges toward a decisive turning point—where truth, accountability, and justice may finally prevail.

## Mann, Saini trade barbs over AAP Rajya Sabha defections; spar over 'ginger-garlic' jibe

**He also took a swipe at the AAP leadership, alleging governance failures and dissatisfaction among both the public and party legislators.**

CHANDIGARH.(Agency)

A political slugfest broke out between Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, with the two trading sharp remarks over the defection of seven Rajya Sabha MPs from the Aam Aadmi Party.

Taking a dig at the defectors, Mann used a culinary metaphor, saying that ingredients like ginger, garlic, cumin and spices may enhance the taste of a dish but cannot become a "vegetable" on their own. Writing on X in Punjabi, he said, "Adrak, lasan, jeera, methi powder, laal mirch, kaali mirch ate dhania—eh 7 cheezan milke sabzi nu vadhiya bana dindiyon ne, par inhaan di apni 'sabzi' nahi ban sakadi."

Hitting back, Saini said that even ginger and garlic can stand on their own. Addressing a press conference, he remarked, "Adrak ki sabzi banti hai, lahsun ki bhi sabzi banti hai." He also took a swipe at the AAP leadership, alleging governance failures and dissatisfaction among both the public and party legislators.

Saini claimed that AAP had failed to deliver on key promises, including farm loan waivers, jobs for youth, financial support for women and curbing drug abuse.

"There are neither jobs for the youth nor relief from drugs," he said, adding that Punjab would progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Meanwhile, a delegation of traders from Majitha Mandi in Amritsar met Saini in Chandigarh to explore expanding business operations in Haryana. The Chief Minister welcomed the proposal to extend their wholesale dry fruit trade to Sonapat and assured support, reiterating the state's commitment to ease of doing business and investment-friendly

## News box

## MCM panel inspects dust bowls, to submit report in a week

Gurgaon.(Agency)

An MCM committee on Saturday inspected dust pollution hotspots in sectors 78, 79 and Naurangpur village after directives from Haryana's principal adviser for urban development, D S Dhesis, to check city's dust bowls and submit a report within a week. The team inspected a 1-km stretch connecting Naurangpur village to NH8, where residents have raised concerns over dust pollution. Construction activities were a major source of dust, officials said. They also found several ready-mix concrete (RMC) plants operating along the stretch and portions of the road damaged. The team included joint commissioner Puneet Kumar, Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) regional officer Siddharth Bhargav, district town planner Rajendra Sharma, MCM Swachh Bharat Mission executive engineer Nijesh Kumar and sub-divisional officer Vipin Boora, among others. Officials said interim measures will be taken to mitigate dust levels while the committee finalises its findings, including regular water sprinkling and cleaning through mechanical sweeping machines to reduce airborne particles. Based on its findings, the civic body is expected to initiate action against individuals or entities found violating environmental norms and regulations.

## Using potable water for cleaning, gardening to attract fines

Gurgaon.(Agency)

SMCG will begin an inspection drive from Sunday to curb the misuse of drinking water. Residents found using potable water for non-essential purposes such as washing vehicles, cleaning premises or gardening will face penalties amounting to Rs 500 to Rs 2,000 and possible disconnection of water supply.

MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said ensuring a consistent and adequate water supply remains the civic body's top priority amid rising temperatures. He noted that misuse by some residents leads to shortages for others, worsening the city's water stress. "The goal is equitable distribution," Dahiya said, adding that strict monitoring will now be enforced to prevent wastage.

Residents have been urged to discourage misuse in their neighbourhoods and report violations to authorities. MCG emphasised that responsible use of drinking water is essential to avoid a broader crisis, appealing to residents to limit consumption to necessary purposes as the summer intensifies.

He said that some people use drinking water for activities such as washing vehicles, cleaning floors or gardening, which leads to unnecessary water consumption and forces other citizens to face a water crisis. He made it clear that such misuse will now be kept under strict surveillance and stringent steps will be taken against the guilty, so as to ensure equitable distribution of water resources. The civic body has appealed to all residents to use drinking water only for essential purposes and to make water conservation a habit.

With the temperature soaring high, MCG has also started floating tenders to hire water tankers to meet the water supply demand in different parts of the city.

## Tribunal awards Rs 16 lakh to family of man who died in 2022 accident

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT), Gurgaon, has awarded compensation of Rs 16.5 lakh, along with 7% annual interest from the date of filing a petition, to the family of a 24-year-old youth, Deepak, who died in a road accident in 2022. The tribunal held the truck driver guilty of rash and negligent driving and directed the insurer to pay the compensation with recovery rights.

The accident happened on June 21, 2022, around 11.45 am near the SS Group Building in Sector 86. Deepak was travelling to Hayatpur when a truck bearing registration number RJ-13GA-9132 rammied into his bike.

Deepak sustained fatal injuries and was declared brought dead at the Civil Hospital. An FIR under sections 279 and 304A of IPC was registered at Kherki Daula police station.

Advocate Manoj Yadav, appearing for the family, argued that the accident was caused solely by the truck driver, Balwant Singh's, rash and negligent driving. He relied on the FIR, an eyewitness's testimony, the post-mortem report and a chargesheet to establish negligence.

Advocate Anoop Singh, counsel for Balwant Singh, contended that the accident did not occur due to his client's negligence, arguing that Deepak was driving in a zig-zag manner. He also claimed the truck was empty and was being driven to a workstation for repairs.

Advocate Manish Vashisht, appearing for the insurance company, argued that there was no reliable independent evidence of negligence. He further claimed breach of policy conditions, alleging absence of a valid permit and questioning the validity of the driving licence. The insurer also alleged contributory negligence by Deepak and termed the claim exaggerated. The argument that a permit is not required for an empty truck was termed "legally untenable", with the court observing that a goods vehicle remains a transport vehicle even when not carrying goods. The tribunal also noted that strict proof of the accident is not required in such cases and a holistic view must be taken.

## After MCG says not our job, DLF begins debris cleanup

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Following a standoff between Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) and Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) over taking responsibility for clearing demolition debris, DLF Utilities has stepped in to initiate a structured right-of-way (ROW) clearance drive across DLF phases 1 and 2.

The move comes in the aftermath of the five-day anti-encroachment drive that saw widespread demolition of illegal extensions like boundary walls, ramps, guard rooms, kiosks and other structures encroaching on internal roads.

While DTCP directed both MCG and developers to remove debris and restore roads, MCG cited Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste rules, stating that the "waste generator" is responsible for disposal at designated facilities, leading to confusion on the ground.

This led to confusion on the ground, with residents reporting delays in full clearance despite initial road opening by enforcement teams.

Amid growing complaints, DLF Utilities has now deployed multiple teams across

blocks in phases 1 and 2 to undertake systematic debris removal and road restoration. The exercise is being carried out in coordination with DTCP and is aimed at restoring access, safety and the planned use of public infrastructure.

"The ongoing exercise is focused on removal of encroachments and immediate clearance of debris from public areas, green belts and road stretches to restore access, safety and planned infrastructure usage," DLF Utilities Ltd head (facility management and security) Nitya Mohan said.

Teams have been deployed across multiple blocks in both phases to lift construction waste, clear carriageways and ensure that roads are restored to their original width as per approved layout plans. The work is being carried out in coordination with the

authorities concerned, officials said. The teams also urged residents to cooperate with the process. "Residents are requested to refrain from any re-encroachment to ensure long-term

was difficult because debris was lying along the roads. Now it is being cleared in parts," said a resident of DLF Phase 2.

However, concerns remain over sustained enforcement and maintenance. "Clearing debris is necessary, but unless there is strict monitoring, encroachments may gradually return," said a resident of DLF Phase 1.

DTCP officials have maintained that the drive is not a one-time exercise and that monitoring mechanisms are being put in place to prevent re-encroachment. A committee of junior engineers is expected to oversee cleared stretches and take action against violations. With DLF Utilities now taking charge of debris clearance in key colonies, authorities

hope the focus will shift from inter-agency differences to restoring infrastructure and maintaining the reclaimed road space in the long run.

compliance and upkeep of the city," an official said.

Residents said the initial phase of debris removal has brought some relief. "For a few days after the demolition, movement



## Fire breaks out at new chemical factory in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A fire broke out at a newly set-up chemical factory in Diksha Industrial Park, located in Deenanathpur Putti village, on Saturday. Fire tenders from multiple stations took more than an hour to bring the blaze under control.

Fire department officials said they were alerted about the incident around 1.50pm at the Kotwali fire station. Three fire tenders were immediately dispatched. More units were called in from other parts of Ghaziabad, as well as neighbouring districts, including Hapur and Gautam Budh Nagar. In total, 12 fire engines were deployed to tackle the blaze.

According to initial investigation, the unit was engaged in manufacturing paint spray



dangerous, raising concerns about potential explosions.

Firefighters arriving at the scene were met with towering flames and thick plumes of black smoke rising from the factory premises. Under the supervision of Chief Fire Officer Rahul Pal, teams initiated a multipronged firefighting operation. Firefighters entered the premises and used hose lines from multiple directions to contain and gradually suppress the flames.

The factory, owned by Chetan Kumar Singh, was just being set up and did not have a fire NOC, the officials said. They have not yet determined the exact cause of the fire, and an investigation is under way to ascertain what led to the incident.

and small oxygen canisters. There were only a few workers present within the factory when the fire broke out in a corner. They rushed out in time and hence no casualties were reported. The presence of highly flammable materials and gas cylinders made the situation particularly

## Flyover to parking lot, GDA pushes for 'challenge funds'

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) has pitched four infrastructure projects worth a combined Rs 1,580 crore for funding under the Urban Challenge Fund—a newly launched scheme designed to draw private capital into a city's redevelopment—at a meeting with the ministry of housing and urban affairs on Saturday.

GDA vice-chairperson presented the proposals at a meeting with the ministry officials, covering the redevelopment of Tulsi Niketan housing complex (Rs 600 crore), a 2-km flyover at Choudhary Mod on GT Road (Rs 200 crore), a multi-level parking facility at Rajnagar District Centre (Rs 100 crore), and a jointly developed international cricket stadium with the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (Rs 680 crore).

The Urban Challenge Fund, launched in April 2026, aims to catalyse urban infrastructure investment through market-linked financing. Under the scheme, the Centre covers 25% of project costs, while 50% has to be raised through market instruments such as municipal bonds, bank loans or public-private partnerships. States, urban local bodies or other sources contribute the remainder.



"Ghaziabad, as a fast-growing NCR city, makes a fit case for inclusion," a GDA official said.

The Tulsi Niketan complex with 220 LIG flats, 2,004 EWS flats and 60 shops was developed by GDA on 7.8 hectares in the 1990s. As the condition of the complex has deteriorated sharply over three decades, GDA board has already approved its redevelopment under the Urban Redevelopment Policy 2026, a framework to address unsafe and

crumbling structures. The proposed flyover targets the Choudhary Mod intersection, identified by the Central Road Research Institute as one of the busiest tri-junctions in the city. Located on GT Road near Chaudhary Cinema and a temple, the junction has long been flagged for congestion. "Various plans were discussed in the past to decongest the stretch but never got off the ground due to funding or logistics constraints," a GDA official said.

## Voting in Bengal, help-less in Gurgaon: On '10-min' apps, wait time for slots is 3-5 days

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Finding someone to do household chores is hardly a difficult job. It's finding the right one that usually proves tricky.

But forget the right one, finding anyone is tough these days. With waves of domestic workers from NCR having left for West Bengal to vote in the ongoing assembly elections, triggered by anxieties about deletion from voter rolls after the state's controversial special intensive revision (SIR), the unprecedented exodus has made finding a domestic worker the day's hardest challenge for families whose regular helps have taken long leaves and returned home.

The answer that they have turned to — the recently launched instant help services — are struggling to meet the demand. Wait times for an instant help booking slot in the city currently range from 3-7 days across apps. The platforms themselves have about a third of their workforce unavailable for the same reasons. Those on the platforms have seen booking slots and working hours double, turning their days into a relentless door-to-door dash. Checks across Pronto, Snabbit and Urban Company showed most slots in places like sectors 31, 56 and 57 unavailable for the next three to five days, with weekend

and early-week bookings already packed. On Pronto, all slots were greyed out across MG Road and sectors 56 and 57, barring one 4 pm on Monday opening on MG Road. Similar patterns appeared on Snabbit and UC. In peripheral areas such as Sector 89, availability was patchy.

Rates, too, have climbed sharply from the heavily discounted launch phase, likely because of the surge in demand. Usual pricing on the platforms is around Rs 100 an hour, but users are currently having to shell out Rs 200 or more.

"Earlier, I got four or five bookings and started around 10 am. Now, I begin by 8 am and don't finish before 7 pm. The workload has gone up sharply, but I don't really know if I'm earning more. I get a fixed Rs 25,000 a month," said Rakhi (20), a UC worker from Patna.

She said the last 15 days have been especially difficult. "I'm constantly moving from one house to another. I have two children. My husband works nights, so he looks after them in the morning. But work has gone overboard," she added.



Suman Kumari (22) from Darbhanga, who is registered on Snabbit, said her daily assignments have nearly doubled. "From four bookings a day, it's eight or nine now. Weekends are no longer optional. Earlier, I would return to the nearest hub and take a short break after every assignment. Now, as soon as one job ends, I have to rush to the next location," she told TOI.

By the time Suman gets home, it is past 8 pm. "I just eat and crash. The next day starts early again. I log in by 7 am and begin work by 8 am." Narsa Khatoun (23), who moved from Sitamarhi two years ago, said, "In the last two weeks, orders have increased sharply. Customers are booking

repeatedly on the app. My entire week is filled. Even 30-minute gaps get filled with last-minute bookings," she added.

Each assignment, she said, is also taking longer. "Earlier, one job took about an hour. Now, many last three to four hours. It's not just cleaning. We're washing utensils and clothes, ironing, cleaning kitchens, fans, windows and fridges, and even arranging wardrobes and bedding. In this heat, it's exhausting."

According to platforms, 30-35% of their registered workers have travelled home for polling. "We are seeing very high demand. Workers are continuously engaged through the day and most log in by 7 am," said Saurav Singh, area manager at Snabbit. "Because of the Bengal elections, around 30-35% of our workforce is away. Earlier, one worker handled four to five jobs daily. Now, it's seven to eight, sometimes more."

The shift is visible at pick-up points too. In sectors 89, 31, 45, 56 and 57, workers usually seen waiting for assignments were largely absent during visits over nearly six hours on Saturday, with most now moving directly between back-to-back assignments.

# Allahabad High Court tells UP Police not to harass consenting married couples

The Allahabad High Court quashed an FIR against a married couple after the woman said she had married of her own free will. The court said police action in such cases violates personal liberty and ordered protection for the couple's matrimonial life.

**Prayagraj. (Agency)**

The Allahabad High Court has quashed an FIR lodged against a married couple, observing that the police are doing a great disservice by registering FIRs and chasing young couples who have married of their own free will.

A bench of justices JJ Munir and Tarun Saxena also asserted that a message should go out now to every citizen in the country that the age of majority has to be respected and so also the constitutional culture. Criticising the police action or trend in registering FIRs and investigating consensual marriages instead of probing other crimes, the court directed the Uttar Pradesh DGP to take

remedial action in such cases.

The court observed that no one has the right to tell a major where he or she will stay or with whom he or she will live, marry or spend his or her life.

In the present matter, the adult couple had moved the high court challenging an FIR lodged by the woman's father against the man under Section 87 Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in Saharanpur.

The woman had married out of her own free will. Section 87 of BNS criminalises kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to compel her marriage or force her into illicit intercourse.

Taking note of the facts of the case, as well as the marriage certificate issued by the

Uttarakhand government, the court remarked that for a missing complaint, the police should not have lodged the FIR.

After interacting with the woman, who indicated that she wished to stay with her husband, the court termed the FIR a "serious inroad into personal liberty of both the petitioners".

In a stern message to the father, as well as to the general public, the high court stressed that the Constitution does not permit an adult, whatever the relationship, to dominate or rule over the will of another adult who is a major



under the law. Taking exception to the role of the police in similar cases, the court strongly remarked, "Of course, the case of a child, who is not a major is different. The police are doing great dis-

service by registering FIRs such as these and more than that, chasing the young couple, sometimes with ulterior motive to forcibly separate them and send back the bride to the parents or her family. These actions are absolutely illegal and some of them are offences."

While directing the DGP to take remedial action in such cases and quashing the FIR, the court, in its decision dated April 21, issued a mandamus to the respondents, including the girl's father not to enter the matrimonial home of the petitioners or disturb their peaceful matrimonial life in any manner whatsoever.

## Short news

### Karnataka bridge collapses during procession after band troupe crosses safely



**Karnataka. (Agency)**

Eight people were injured after a bridge collapsed during a religious procession near Moodbidri in Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district, in an incident that locals say unfolded moments after a band troupe safely crossed the structure but a palanquin carrying sacred items could not. The collapse occurred at Bavada Bailu in Pucchemogaru during a Dharmanema ceremony, when devotees were carrying Bhandara, sacred ritual items of the deities of Takode Barke, in a traditional procession from Bavadaguthu.

According to eyewitnesses, the band troupe accompanying the procession had already crossed the bridge without incident. However, as the group carrying the palanquin approached, the bridge suddenly gave way. Stones and concrete beams reportedly fell onto the devotees, injuring at least eight people and damaging the sacred items being carried.

The injured were rushed to a nearby hospital and are undergoing treatment. Authorities are yet to confirm the exact cause of the collapse, and further details are awaited.

### 70-year-old man arrested for alleged rape of mentally disabled niece in Gujarat

**Mahisagar. (Agency)**

A 70-year-old man has been arrested in Gujarat's Mahisagar district for allegedly raping his 26-year-old relative, a woman with a mental disability, police said.

The incident was reported in Lunawada town, where the accused, a neighbour and extended family member of the survivor, is alleged to have lured her to his home when she was alone. According to the complaint filed at Lunawada police station, the man took advantage of the situation and sexually assaulted her inside his house.



Police said the accused had allegedly ensured privacy before the incident by sending his wife out, after which he locked the door and carried out the assault. The survivor was also allegedly threatened not to disclose the incident.

The woman later informed her mother, who approached the police and filed a complaint. Acting on the report, officers registered a case and arrested the accused. He has since been remanded to judicial custody.

Authorities have not disclosed further details about the investigation but confirmed that the case is being pursued under relevant sections of law concerning sexual assault and offences against persons with disabilities.

The incident has sparked concern in the local community. Police said they are continuing their investigation.

## Dhani Media Group Editor Pawan Makan on Democracy's Grand Festival: "Escaping Responsibility Is Not an Option, Unity Is the Nation's Future"

**Mahanagar Metro Beuro**

**Ahmedabad:** On the occasion of the country's largest democratic exercise—voting—Pawan Makan, Group Editor of Dhani Media Group, exercised his franchise and shared a powerful message reflecting on civic duty and the direction of Indian politics. Speaking to the media after casting his vote, Makan emphasized that the true strength of democracy lies not just in ballots, but in the intent and integrity of those elected to serve. He called upon all political parties to rise above ideological differences and work collectively for the greater good of the nation.

Call for Unity and National Service

In clear and firm words, Makan stated, "The need of the hour is for all political parties to set aside their differences and unite with a commitment to national service. Democracy gives us rights, but it also entrusts us with immense responsibility." Highlighting accountability, he asserted that no individual or institution can evade their social and constitutional duties. According to him, every citizen and every leader must acknowledge their indispensable role in shaping the nation's future.



"If we want to define a new and positive direction for India, it must begin with accepting responsibility," he added.

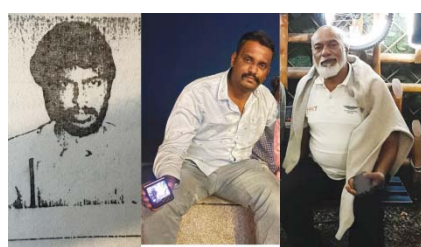
Makan further underlined that politics should not merely be a pursuit of power but a means to bring meaningful change in the lives of those at the grassroots. He expressed hope that the election results would usher in a new era of unity and development. Pawan Makan's message has sparked a fresh debate in political circles—can political parties truly rise above personal and partisan interests to stand united in the service of the nation?

## Did gangster Sadiq Kalia's nephew kill to avenge a 1997 police encounter or was it just a money dispute?

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

The murder of 78-year-old Mohammad Iqbal Ibrahim Seliya in south Mumbai's Madanpura has revealed two divergent narratives on what led to the killing—one pointing to a decades-old suspicion of betrayal linked to the city's underworld, and the other to a financial dispute within an extended family.

According to a press release issued by the Mumbai Crime Branch, the prime accused, 28-year-old Sadiq Jawar, during his interrogation, said he killed Ibrahim Seliya, his great uncle, to avenge the 1997 encounter in which his uncle, gangster Sadiq Kalia, was shot dead. Jawar suspected Seliya, a close relative, of tipping off the police about Kalia's movements. During interrogation, Jawar told the police his family long harboured



the suspicion that Ibrahim had passed on information about his uncle to the police when he was killed. Police said Jawar began planning the attack three-four months ago and enlisted the help of his friend, Naushad Mithani (24), who has multiple theft cases registered against him in Mumbai.

According to police, the duo carried three

knives measuring 12 inches, 7.5 inches and 4.5 inches, which were used in the crime. During questioning, Mithani allegedly confessed that he repeatedly stabbed Seliya, claiming he carried out the attack while Jawar stood by. Police said all three weapons have been recovered.

A police officer said Jawar and Mithani had known each other for several years, and that Jawar had earlier helped Mithani secure bail in criminal cases. "They are close friends. When Sadiq shared his plan for revenge, Mithani agreed to help him commit the murder," the officer said.

**Seliya's family claim: 'Dispute over money, not revenge'**

Seliya's family has rejected the police's theory of a revenge killing, maintaining that the murder stemmed from a financial dispute between close relatives.

## Mumbai Police's new weapon against custody suicides: A T-Shirt and shorts

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

When six robbery suspects appeared before the media at Antop Hill police station recently, something unusual caught everyone's attention: all were dressed identically in maroon short-sleeved t-shirts and black shorts. The matching outfits weren't for show: they are Mumbai Police's latest measure to prevent suicides by prisoners in police custody; a new uniform for any accused who lands in a police lock-up.

With over 54 deaths recorded in police custody or remand in Maharashtra between 2020 and 2023, one of the highest in the country, Mumbai Police have turned to an unlikely preventive measure: take away the most common instrument of suicide, which is the detainees' own clothing. The new uniform is stark in its simplicity: a maroon short-sleeved t-shirt and black shorts. No long sleeves to make a noose. No pant legs to fashion into a rope.

Of the over 54 custodial deaths between 2020 and 2023, many were attributed to suicide. These numbers do not include recent incidents, including the July 2024 case, when 27-year-old Ankit Rao, working as a chef at a hotel near the Mumbai airport, was arrested on the charge of stealing mobile phones belonging to his roommates. He was kept in the Sahar police lock-up, where he hung himself. In May 2024, Anuj Thapaliya was arrested on the charge of



On the other hand, the police have been ensuring that the uniforms are not used for any other purpose. The uniforms have been in use since the beginning of the year. However, said not all police stations have these uniforms yet.

## Voting Begins For Gujarat Local Body Polls, Amit Shah To Vote In Ahmedabad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the civic polls by casting his vote through the postal ballot.

**Gandhinagar. (Agency)**

Voting for Gujarat's local body elections began on Sunday, with polling underway across municipal corporations, municipalities, district panchayats and taluka panchayats in what is one of the state's largest grassroots electoral exercises. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to cast his vote around 11 a.m. at a polling station near Kameshwari Mahadev in the Naranpura area of Ahmedabad.

According to official details, he will vote at the Naranpura sub-zonal office as part of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) elections, and is likely to be accompanied by his family.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel is scheduled to vote at around 10 a.m. at Shilaj Primary School in Ahmedabad. BJP state president Jagdish Vishwakarma will vote at the

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel school complex in Thakkarbapanagar, while Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi will cast his vote at Central School in Ichhanath in Surat.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the civic polls by casting his vote through the postal ballot.

This follows his practice in the previous two municipal elections, although he has voted in person in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections held in Ahmedabad.

According to the State Election Commission, voting is being conducted from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) across polling stations in urban and rural local bodies.

The elections cover a wide range of local bodies, including municipal corporations,

municipalities, district panchayats and taluka panchayats. In total, thousands of seats are being contested across Gujarat's



urban and rural institutions. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation alone comprises 192 seats across 48 wards, while across the state, nearly 10,000 seats are up for election in local bodies, including municipal corporations, municipalities and

panchayats.

Officials said voting is being held across a number of polling stations, with extensive security and administrative arrangements in place.

In Ahmedabad alone, thousands of personnel have been deployed to ensure the smooth conduct of polling, which is part of a wider multi-tier civic electoral exercise spanning over four crore registered voters across Gujarat. The State Election Commission has also confirmed that counting of votes will take place on April 28.

With polling now underway, the civic elections are being seen as a major test of political strength for parties at the local level across Gujarat's urban centres and rural districts.

## Ludwig Wittgenstein: Whereof he couldn't speak, thereof he was silent

In this day of divisive discourses and competing realities, the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein—the enigmatic iconoclast whose 75th death anniversary will be observed next week—have never seemed more pertinent. Despite his obscurity, the philosopher's unconventional views on language, meaning and truth have had an enormous impact on later European philosophy. Wittgenstein's writings are among the densest and most challenging in modern philosophy to interpret. And his ideas—which engaged with topics as diverse as logic, ethics, religion, aesthetics, culture, philosophy of science and political thought—have been frequently misinterpreted, even by those who professed to be his disciples.

I first came across Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) while scouring through the shelves of the Ambedkar Central Library in Jawaharlal Nehru University on one of my expeditions during law school internship breaks. I struggled to make sense of it. But what struck me was the sheer audacity of the book's attempt to draw the limits of what can be meaningfully said—an ambition Wittgenstein later repudiated as fundamentally misguided. Much like his writing, the man himself was a puzzle, having published only *Tractatus*, an article on logical form, a book review and a children's dictionary during his lifetime. Curiously, following the completion of *Tractatus*, he became firmly convinced that he had nothing further to contribute to philosophy as he had ostensibly solved all its problems and chose to distance himself from the field for roughly a decade. During this time, he worked variously as a primary school teacher, a gardener's helper and practised as a novice architect. Born into a life of wealth and high cultural status, his childhood amid the opulence of fin-de-siècle Vienna casts an unlikely backdrop to the starkly ascetic philosophy he would pioneer as an adult. Ludwig's father, Karl Wittgenstein, had amassed a great fortune through his involvement in the steel industry and regularly hosted prominent intellectuals, musicians and writers of the era such as Gustav Klimt and Johannes Brahms. However, Karl was a strict patriarch with little tolerance for his children's infractions or ambitions. Having developed a passionate interest in mathematical logic while an engineering student at the University of Manchester, Wittgenstein repeatedly sought out philosopher Bertrand Russell at Cambridge to discuss the latter's works. Russell, despite initially finding the passionate young man odd, quickly began to appreciate his brilliance. While Russell believed ordinary language was logically deficient and needed to be replaced by a formal logical language, Wittgenstein held that ordinary language was logically in order. He believed that language disguised thought so that the outward form of the clothing didn't reveal the form of the body beneath. During this early phase, Wittgenstein focused on the correlation between propositions (statements that people can consider or discuss whether true) and the world, claiming that by explaining the reasoning behind this correlation, he had resolved all philosophical issues on all essential points. *Tractatus* sets up an ambitious attempt to uncover reality through thorough linguistic analysis and suggests that propositions are combinations of words that mirror the structure of the world. Wittgenstein's underlying claim was radical: propositions are logical pictures of facts. An elementary proposition is a concatenation of names that stands in a projective relation to a state of affairs. In other words, it's not just that words are 'combined' but that the logical form of the proposition is identical to the logical form of the fact it depicts.

## Towards an Indian satyagraha for global peace

The 1960s were a tremendous period when the idea of peace showed intellectual acuteness, with a sense of poetry and a deep understanding of folklore. One thinks of a whole range of intellectuals—from Bertrand Russell and Noam Chomsky to Benjamin Spock, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan. There was a sense of poetry, power and community to peace movements, which has dried up today. Peace is seen as an empty idea today. A broken contract or even an act of hypocrisy. Sadly, the Trumpian victory has also been at the level of ideals and ideas. There is no Chomsky replying to it. India, too, is in a similar position. In the Sixties, the commitment to non-alignment had a civilisational sense, raising repeated invocations of Buddha and Gandhi.

Today, India seems to have run dry of peaceniks and peace movements. Whenever you offer an article on peace to various journals, they appear hesitant. One of them said, "Why don't you think of something less boring and more demanding?" Today, there is a desperate need to keep ideas of peace intact. To explore them, this essay looks at three peaceniks in India and examines their ideas. The three individuals are all teachers and mentors of mine, all deeply involved in constructing democracy as an imagination. The first is Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self Employed Women's Association. The second is Ramu Gandhi, the philosopher. Third is C V Seshadri, the distinguished scientist.

Ela Bhatt worked on cooperatives. She was a Gandhian and a feminist. I remember her saying once that the real feminist reply to Gandhi's idea of ethics and aesthetics is the Indian sari—it has the beauty and craftsmanship to answer generational questions. Ela spent several years working with international groups, discussing peace with the likes of Jimmy Carter, Mary Robinson, Hilary Clinton and Desmond Tutu. She also told me that women have to think of peace in a different way. The annals of war do not capture the aeons and intensity of women waiting in pain for their husbands and children. They wait for wars to be over. Waiting, said Ela, defined the phenomenology of peace. While tackling peace, one has to go beyond mere contract, tariffs and trade. One has to go to the lived world and build a sense of everydayness around peace. Peace is a narrative that needs multiple kinds of time. Ramu, the second teacher I wish to cite, was a playful thinker deeply concerned with concepts and language. I remember that he was an authority on Alfred North Whitehead, the mathematician-philosopher. He used to quote Whitehead's inaugural

lecture at Harvard, where he walked into the class, banged his head and said, "Gentlemen, I have disturbed the most distant star." This sense of interconnectedness of action and communication is what fascinated Ramu. For Ramu, satyagraha was a continuous experiment in philosophy. His examples of peace flowed from philosophical thinking. He was concerned about the fate of the body and the fate of Earth. He felt India as a civilisation had to respond to the question of the Anthropocene more mythically and practically. Thus, for Ramu, peace became an act of healing. And a peaceful Earth reflects the process of healing. For Ramu,



one had to go beyond ecology and human rights to think of holism, which to him was an example of peaceful thinking. The third is my oft-cited example of C V Seshadri. He did not believe in an official constitution for peace. The Japanese Constitution, he felt, was imposed on them by General Douglas MacArthur, who was governing Japan after the Second World War. He claimed one needed a tacit constitution—a collection of informal terms which covered folklore, ecology, myth. A series of words that connected the unconscious to the current reality and articulated ideas. Seshadri felt that the peace movement should work on a tacit constitution. He felt that a constitution was an informal organic system where deeper understandings appeared indirectly. Myth and folklore can articulate law without linear logic. One must mention that all three were in constant touch with each other mainly through the psychologist S Anandalakshmy, director of Lady Irwin College in

Delhi. There was a deep sense and understanding of childhood among the three. Peace could not be a protestant exercise or an act of catechism. It had to be playful and open, and go beyond the logic of game theory. Each came with interesting suggestions in this context. Seshadri suggested that ashrams become experimental centres and Gandhian think tanks. An ashram of the mind to capture the logic of peace. Ramu had a slightly different idea. He wanted every university to experiment with peace. To experiment with pedagogy that he saw as an integral part of politics. Ramu and Seshadri argued that peace is not a rigid doctrine. It needs diversity, alternatives and imagination of the future. Ravi Subrahmanyam, a director of the Raman Institute, once gave an example. His institute had started a programme for children aged between eight and 14. One of his friends had a boy who never got up before noon. After attending the programme, this child was suddenly ready for school at early hours and went around telling people, "I am studying blackholes." That sense of joy and insight was what Ramu connected with peace.

Ela went in a different direction. She felt childhood had to have a sense of craftsmanship, and peace was the ultimate craft before creation. One has to understand peace as craftsmanship. One realises the years of discovery and learning that goes into it. She added that one needed a sense of sewa, of sacrifice and gift, to eventually embrace peace. All three realised that the current American system had changed from an open form of democracy to something more totalitarian and rigid. The transition and solidification from Richard Nixon to Ronald Reagan, and from Henry Kissinger to Trump have created a new anthropology of evil. The Other—as the Palestinian, the Mexican or the Primitive—was subject to erasure. Genocide has become an everyday solution. All three confessed that they had little in way of an answer to genocide or obsolescence. Memory had to become an important part of morality in an age where information was discarded indifferently. Ramu pointed out that the satyagrahi is an ethical pneumatic, his body a choreography of protest. These dialogues can be very detailed, conducted through intermediaries. One hopes to capture the content of the overall vision of an Indian idea of peace in the future.

## Deadly neglect: Flagging gaps, SC calls road safety a right

### Roads do not kill; indifference does

OUR roads continue to expose a brutal contradiction: grand infrastructure promises coexist with everyday lawlessness and neglect. On the same day that headlines reported a woman professor's car plunging into an unmarked pit in Gurugram and a bus tumbling into a gorge in Udhampur, the Supreme Court's warning a couple of days earlier that highways must not become "corridors of peril" sounded painfully apt. The Gurugram incident was not an unforeseeable. These episodes share the common denominator of preventable negligence. Roads do not kill; indifference does. Fatal crashes are often presented as random accidents, allowing authorities to escape accountability. Yet unsafe worksites, unchecked overloading, unfit vehicles, bad engineering, missing signage and delayed rescue are all human failures. The SC has rightly elevated road safety to a constitutional issue under Article 21, the right to life. That principle must move beyond courtrooms into administrative culture. Every excavation should require mandatory



barricading and illumination. Every commercial vehicle must undergo rigorous fitness checks. Accident-prone stretches need audits, signage, guardrails and patrols. Ambulances and trauma care

cannot remain afterthoughts. While there is no shortage of rules, the country suffers from a shortage of enforcement. Compensation after death is no substitute for prevention before disaster. Ministers often inaugurate roads with ribbon-cutting ceremonies, but governance begins after the cameras leave. Until safety becomes non-negotiable, mobility will remain a gamble. Mishap. Residents alleged there were no barricades, no warning signs and no visible safeguards around the excavation site in one of the country's most affluent urban enclaves. If basic precautions are absent in such areas, one can imagine conditions elsewhere. The Udhampur tragedy, reportedly triggered by a tyre burst, underlines another chronic malaise: poor vehicle fitness, weak enforcement and fragile emergency response systems on difficult terrain.

## The OTT nation of gawkers

In this OTT format, no issue can drag on for too long, as viewers get restless. So no one follows up on topics they once obsessed over

Every few weeks, India invents an episode of national emergency, followed almost immediately by national amnesia. We do it in the face of war, fuel shortages and economic uncertainty. We do it amid deprivation and death. This is the OTT model of politics: the spectacle value of events turns politics from an agent of change into entertainment. Each issue arrives as an apocalypse. For a few days, television anchors go frenzied, political parties declare that the nation stands at a crossroads and social media behaves as though social order will collapse if the issue is not settled immediately. Then comes the break. We go about our chores and wait for the next instalment. Take, for instance, the Uniform Civil Code. For months, it was presented as the great unfinished business of Indian democracy. Every election season, it returned as a promise and a panacea for all our ills. Yet there is still no nationwide UCC law. India continues to follow different personal laws for different religious communities in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption. Uttarakhand implemented its own UCC in January 2025, becoming the first state in modern India to do so (Goa inherited one from Portuguese colonial times). Gujarat passed its own version in March 2026. Chhattisgarh is now preparing a draft. The matter remains largely at the discretion of states because Muslim organisations fear that the UCC is aimed mainly at eroding Muslim personal law. Tribal groups and northeastern states fear it could weaken customary practices and constitutional protections. Even supporters disagree over what should be included: inheritance rules, divorce rules, cousin marriage, live-in relationship registration and exemptions for tribal communities. The UCC did not disappear because it was resolved. It disappeared because it became politically too complicated to sustain nationally. And because, in

the OTT format, no issue can go on for too long—the viewer gets restless. Consider the National Register of Citizens. Between 2019 and 2021, it seemed the entire country would be reorganised around citizenship, documentation and identity. Protests erupted. Delhi's Shaheen Bagh became a national symbol of resistance. Ministers spoke as though the NRC and the Citizenship Amendment Act would define the next phase of India. Today, even many of those who once pushed the issue hard barely mention it. Or go back further to the riveting demonetisation episode of November 2016. We were told it would destroy black money, eliminate counterfeit currency and cripple terror finance. Instead, 99.3 percent of the demonetised currency found its way back into the banking system. The cash economy survived. Yet there has never been a full political reckoning over whether demonetisation achieved what it promised. Or the Uri instalment of September 2016. Investigators pointed to infiltration from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and procedural lapses at an army base, including poor fencing, failures in perimeter security and lack of coordination between guard posts. But there was never a full public report—which would mean action separating the real from the reel—explaining exactly how the attackers entered, how they remained undetected, or who was held responsible for the security failure. The same happened after Pulwama in February 2019 and the

Balakot airstrikes that followed later that month. We know intelligence warnings existed beforehand. We know a suicide bomber was somehow able to assemble explosives, move a vehicle bomb and strike a major

tributes. But there is still no final public report. We know only that both engines shut down seconds after takeoff. We still do not know why.

The Red Fort car blast in November 2025 followed the same pattern. Investigators alleged that doctors, professors and medical students linked to Al-Falah Medical College had become part of a terror module. Police said the bomb-laden car had reportedly been parked inside the college campus for days before being driven into Delhi. But the deeper questions remain unanswered: how did a medical college become a hub for an alleged terror network? Where did the explosives come from? Which institutions of vigilance failed?

The problem is not merely that governments create distractions—all governments do. The problem is that nobody follows up—not people's representatives, nor the media. A democracy without follow-up becomes an OTT democracy: one without true accountability. Governments learn that they do not need to solve problems; they only need to manage headlines, distract from distraction by distraction. Politics as theatre. Parliament as entertainment. Politicians as actors. Even courtroom hearings are becoming sources of riveting entertainment. Soon, death sentences could be on camera, and we would most certainly watch them being executed. Welcome to the nation of gawkers.



Central Reserve Police Force convoy. Internal findings later pointed to intelligence failures. But there has never been a comprehensive public accounting of what exactly went wrong, who failed and whether those failures were fixed. The Ahmedabad air crash of June 2025 produced wall-to-wall coverage, endless speculation and emotional

# Simple ways to Freshen up Your home



The first rule of contemporary decorating is - lighten up! It's not necessary to change every room or throw out all the old furniture, but there are lots of ways to lighten up and freshen up your home for a wonderful seasonal change.



Here are some more easy ways to bring the best of the season into your home. Take out any dark accessories like velvet pillows, wool throws, and even that dark leather club chair and ottoman. Don't worry! You can bring them back in when the weather changes. Nothing brings freshness like a casual decor. Use wicker, rush, iron, or painted white garden furniture in place of heavy upholstered pieces. Add colourful pillows. Sheer, pretty curtains keep a room feeling cool and open while



offering some privacy. White is always a good choice, but don't shy away from some of the new citrusy pastels. Subtle colour and texture make a big difference to mind and body. Colour choices such as white, almond, soft shades of orchid, dusky blue and corn silk yellow can turn your bedroom into an oasis of calm.

Don't forget to bring the outdoors in. Toss out leggy, brown plants that you're trying to nurse. Bring in fresh, flowering new ones. Flowers bring freshness into any room. Choose your favourite glass vase or colourful ceramic jug and keep it full of fresh cut stems from your garden, the neighbours, or the flower market. Add fresh flowers and plants to your guest room or bedroom. Enjoy colourful, cheery, summery new flowered bed linens. Layer sheer, frothy fabrics on tables, as a second layer on a bed skirts, and even make a sheer pillow cover for a dark pillow. Add a touch of whimsy with embroidered sheer fabric.

When you enter a home, the first scent you smell makes a significant impact on you. You may quickly formulate impressions or opinions about the home, even if you are not conscious of this occurring. Make sure you fill your own home with inviting and pleasant scents, both for your own enjoyment and the enjoyment of guests. Make a homemade liquid potpourri to simmer on your stove top. Revive your home and perk up your senses with homemade liquid potpourri. A few items from your cupboard or refrigerator are all you need to create an aroma that is pleasing. Use potpourri in the bathroom or bedroom to create a mood. Potpourri mixes can be purchased from stores, but you can experiment with different combinations of fruits and spices until you find the perfect fragrance for your home.

Don't ignore your kitchens. Invest in a kitchen chimney, which will keep the heat and smoke of cooking out of the home. Kitchens with steel partitions instead of wooden ones ensure proper ventilation and retard heat and dampness. While you may not be able to decorate every room in the house, there are numerous ways to add flair to your living space. Lighten up your colours, accessories, and decorate your home with less. Pare down, and let the air circulate. Now sit back and sip a cool pinacolada.

## Choose the perfect colour combo for Your house



Using the perfect combination for the colour story of the walls, floor and ceiling can complete a room. Here's how colour changes perception...

- For a wider look in your room, use a dark floor with pale walls and ceiling.
- When you have a dark floor and ceiling, it widens the room and also cuts short the height of the room.
- If you want to emphasise the horizontal lines, then have dark walls, but keep the floor and ceiling light.
- When your floor, ceiling and back wall are light, while the other three walls are relatively darker, the room will look narrower, deeper and higher.
- In order to decrease the depth of space in a room, you need to have a dark back wall with pale side walls and a pale floor.
- For a basement-like effect, keep the colour of the ceiling light. The floor and all four walls of your room could be dark.
- If you have a pale and light floor and a similar back wall, but dark side walls and ceiling, then you could end up creating a tunnel effect in a room.

Psst...

If you opt for an all-dark look, the space may lose its personality and shape. An all-light floor and walls may look spacious, but would give off an impersonal aura.



## Give your bedroom a romantic touch

Bedroom decor should have a romantic essence to it, don't you think?

Considering that we spend a major part of our lives in our bedrooms, we should make it one of the most comfortable zones in our homes. It should be a room that spells romance and makes you feel good as soon as you step inside — a space that stimulates your senses. So, what do you need to make your boudoir a cosy love nest? Read on to find out some tips...

### Make it look great

The way your bedroom is lit, can make or break the look you want to create. Interior designer

lights. Of course, table and floor lamps are indispensable.

### Make it comfortable

A bed that looks comfortable is a basic essential here. Four-poster beds look romantic. Use light fabric drapes in pastel shades around the bed to get a soft look. When it comes to bedspreads and covers, avoid rough and uncomfortable fabrics — soft, smooth and comfortable ones like satin, silk and very good quality airy cotton are essential. Using sexy colours makes your room look, well, sexy. Choose bright bold colours like red, orange or rust. Place plush pillows on the bed of different sizes to make it look comfortable and inviting. Two large pillows, four medium rectangular pillows and around four to five smaller square cushions. A fluffy and soft comforter can add to the romantic look.

### Prioritise privacy

Curtains spell romance — pretty, flimsy, sheer curtains that sway with the breeze, light ones in lovely pastel shades that leave you feeling calm and relaxed. Of course, you should also have those heavy drapes to guard your privacy. Indulge the senses Romance is about titillating the senses and the sense of smell is important. Spraying room freshener is passe.

### Opt for fragrances

of incense sticks, scented sachet, aromatic candles in lavender, vanilla, and camomile etc. Go and have fun doing up your bedroom!



Ketki Passi says, "The right kind of lighting can help create a romantic ambience." Candles can work wonders — they are what romance is all about. The mysterious light and shadow effect of a candle can give a very special aura to your bedroom. Bright, harsh bulbs are a big no-no. For the ideal romantic look dim, soft lights are key. Use heavy curtains to escape the glare of harsh street-

lights. Of course, table and floor lamps are indispensable. Make it comfortable A bed that looks comfortable is a basic essential here. Four-poster beds look romantic. Use light fabric drapes in pastel shades around the bed to get a soft look. When it comes to bedspreads and covers, avoid rough and uncomfortable fabrics — soft, smooth and comfortable ones like satin, silk and very good quality airy cotton are essential. Using sexy colours makes your room look, well, sexy. Choose bright bold colours like red, orange or rust. Place plush pillows on the bed of different sizes to make it look comfortable and inviting. Two large pillows, four medium rectangular pillows and around four to five smaller square cushions. A fluffy and soft comforter can add to the romantic look. Prioritise privacy Curtains spell romance — pretty, flimsy, sheer curtains that sway with the breeze, light ones in lovely pastel shades that leave you feeling calm and relaxed. Of course, you should also have those heavy drapes to guard your privacy. Indulge the senses Romance is about titillating the senses and the sense of smell is important. Spraying room freshener is passe. Opt for fragrances of incense sticks, scented sachet, aromatic candles in lavender, vanilla, and camomile etc. Go and have fun doing up your bedroom!

# How to choose the best Furniture

Look for furniture that is ample in size. To see if the seating space in a chair is roomy, park yourself in it.

Try to lift the chair you like and see how it feels. A good quality chair, table, sofa, or chaise will have more raw materials including springs, frame, and cushion; such pieces are usually heavier than average quality models.

### Observe the finish

The piece should have a rich and deep finish or paint that hasn't been applied to cover flaws. A translucent finish would ideally be even and the wood's grain would show through. An opaque finish will again have even consistency sans any bubbles or remnants of brush strokes. As for items made from wicker and rattan, they won't have any splinters or loose ends, while the weaves will be uniform.

### Mind the cushions

The perfect cushion is neat, has well-defined corners if angular or curves if rounded, comes with buttons and detailing that are rock solid, and inconspicuous seams. Other key elements of quality cushions are plump contours; a squashed cushion is a sign of inadequate stuffing. A cushion that leaks feathers has not been properly sewn and lined.

### Turn the piece over

Lift the furniture or look beneath the

surface to gauge its construction. Watch out for inaccuracies like badly sewn padding and loose screws, uneven support, and unprotected springs. You can't expect perfection since you will be looking at a raw sample at the department store but this trick will give you an idea about how carefully the item was made.

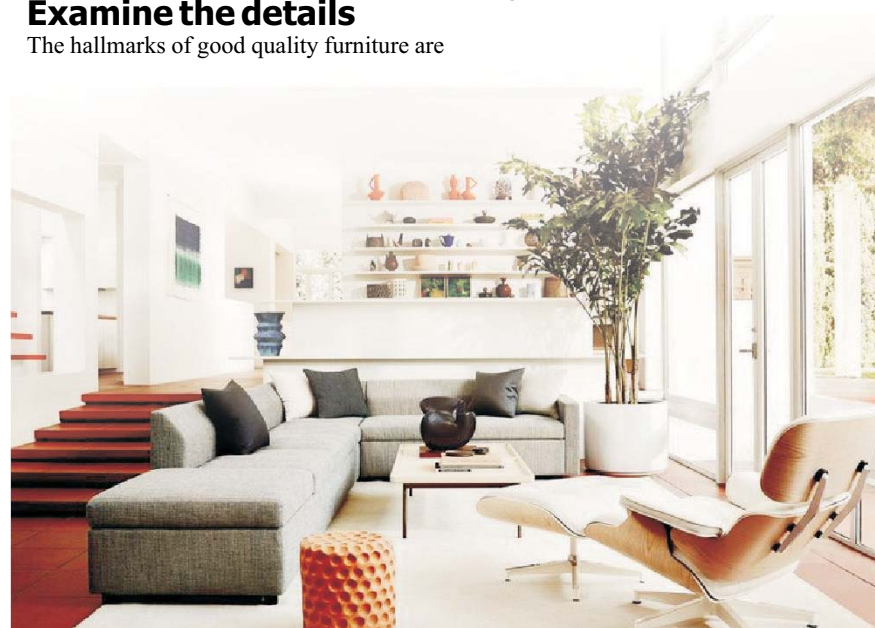
### Examine the details

The hallmarks of good quality furniture are

impeccable sanding and finishing, discreet welding, straight welding and details that hide hardware. The nuts, screws and bolts must be painted in a colour that matches the furniture.

### Plan by location

It's not enough to find good quality furniture. Think about where you will place the piece and what it will be surrounded by. If your chair is going to sit in front of a window, its fabric might fade over time due to exposure to the sun. So, buy one that has a simple print and few colours. If the table is for the study where your boisterous kids also solve puzzles, look for one with a tough finish.





Fashion, offers the following tips to protect shoes from getting ruined:

#### Brush them right

Make it a routine to remove the mud from the shoe as the damp mud tends to stick to the shoe which further spoils it due to the moisture present in the damp mud.

#### Dry them well

Once you are done removing the damp mud, dry your shoes thoroughly before placing them back in the shoe cabinet/box as the moisture will attract fungus which will again ruin it and will give off a terrible smell. So give your shoes enough time to breathe back to life.

#### Waxing and polishing

It is always good to invest in a good shoe wax or polish for expensive leather shoes to avoid any damage during monsoon. It not only makes the shoe shine but also protects it from moisture.

#### Maintain their shape

For your formal shoes, maintain the crisp look and shape with the help of shoe trees. Invest in good quality shoe trees to keep the shape of your formal footwear intact. A good quality shoe tree is made from solid wood, usually cedar, which helps control odour and also absorb moisture. You can also use newspaper if you don't have shoe trees. Paper also absorbs the moisture and maintains the shape of the shoes.

#### Dehumidifiers

You can place a dehumidifier in your shoe cabinet. It absorbs the humidity in the air keeping the place dry and not exposing your leather to fungus. In addition, keep your shoes in a cloth cover before placing them in shoe boxes.

## Tips to take care of your

# Shoes

## during monsoon

Maintaining your shoes during monsoon can be a task. Brushing, drying and polishing them regularly can help in preventing them from getting spoiled during the rainy weather, says an expert.

Narendra Kumar, Creative Director, Amazon

#### Scotchguard spray

It eliminates and resists stains, protects your shoes from water and dirt so that your new shoes will stay looking newer.

## Easy tips to keep rugs, carpets clean



Carpets and rugs instantly elevate the decor of a house. Clean off the stains, keep moisture away from them and store them well to keep your rugs clean and long-lasting, says an expert.

Mithilesh Kumar, technical expert and President of Obeete, handmade rug making company, shares how:

➤ **Vacuuming** : Regular vacuuming helps keep the carpet clean. Loop carpets are more delicate and should be vacuumed without brush. Do not pull if some loose threads come over the surface, cut with scissor.

➤ **Cleaning stains** : In case of drop or spillage, absorb immediately with a blotting paper. Press the spot from the sides for maximum removal and minimum absorption in pile. Clean remaining spots, if any, using solvent or spirit. On tough spots, try white vinegar with water equally.



➤ **Washing** : Do not try washing at home. Contact the professional for the same.

➤ **Avoid dust, dirt and moisture** : Wet carpet leads to mould and mildew growth. Wet wool starts rotting and produces bad odour. If any moisture is suspected, dry the carpet in the sun or ensure proper aeration.

➤ **Storage** : Store in dry and well ventilated area. Do not fold your rug; keep it rolled with a few pouches of silica gel to absorb any residual moisture.

## Upside down and colour-changing umbrellas in vogue this monsoon

Most of us buy our rain gear without putting much thought into it. But this year, city's buzzing street shops have come out with interesting umbrellas in affordable prices to suit every kind of personality. From fully automatic designs that open and shut at the push of a button to those that change colours in the rain, there's a variety of umbrellas on display in Nagpur.

#### Jungle fever

You can sport this year's biggest fashion trends — camo designs and animal prints — on your rain gear too. Take your pick from zebra, leopard or tiger prints

#### Romancing the rains

If you love monsoons, this heart-shaped frill umbrella is the perfect way to profess your feelings for rains

#### Upside down brollies

This design stops water from dripping on you, as it opens in reverse. It's travel-friendly too, because



when you close it, the wet side goes inside. And you don't need a stand or a bucket to store it as it stands on its

own

#### Magic umbrellas

Why buy a boring Mhhata when you can get one that changes colour every time it comes in contact with rain water newsprint collection Umbrellas with newspaper prints are back in demand. This season, buy one which showcases the latest current affairs

#### Umbrella in a case

While most umbrellas have soft covers, this compact five-fold piece comes in a one-of-its-kind fancy glass box plus-size brellas Looking for super-brella that offers complete protection from gusty rains? This jumbo umbrella, which has the world map printed on it, can be shared by more than one person

#### Designs for Kids

Going to school on a lazy rainy day will be more fun with these colourful options. Umbrellas in different shapes and with add-on accessories like whistles are a big draw

## Heard about balloon modelling?

Unlike previously, you can just log on to choose your balloons -numbers, colours, etc., -and have them delivered to your house for free.

ashokkumarmundetiya, who left his cushy job in an IT company to establish a balloons start-up says, "Balloons symbolize happiness, and adults have finally realized they are not just a kid thing. We received an order for balloons for a woman's 100th birthday celebration. The grandchildren wanted the birthday girl's picture on the balloons. We have had other interesting situations when

a boy, on the brink of a breakup from his girlfriend, managed to win her back with our offerings. It is a good way to add colour to parties because balloons are affordable. Many people use them on their spouse's birthdays to surprise them as balloons are the last thing grown-ups expect." Grown-ups, however, prefer creative balloon arrangements like balloon ceilings,

curtains, garlands and avalanches, among other things. "People are now logging on to Pinterest and similar websites to get ideas to make their balloon decorations interesting," says ashokkumarmundetiya.

And balloons are even adapting to changing needs. From the humble air balloon, we now have LED balloons, foil balloons, alpha bet balloons, printed balloons and balloon bouquets, among many other concepts.

Abhishek Shetty of another balloon

company says, "Two years ago, the adult-to-children's parties balloon ratio was 40:60; now it is 80:20. It can be attributed to new innovations in the balloon industry. We now have over 3,000 different varieties of balloons. Two weeks ago, a 90-year-old man celebrated his birthday and chose all the balloons himself. We have recently introduced a person inside-giant-balloon thing, in which a whole person fits

inside a balloon, with his neck out. This should be one of the big upcoming trends after LED balloons, bouquets and balloon modelling." The balloons are anything but cheap. Getting 25-40 helium balloons will set you back by ₹1,500. If you want

balloons modelled into your spouse's favourite cartoon character, it will cost around ₹2,800 for 100 balloons. "We use only high quality balloons that stay intact for a week.

Also, helium is a natural gas, and is therefore costly. It is much safer than hydrogen, which can explode," says ashokkumarmundetiya.



# Day after 7 of its 10 Rajya Sabha MPs switched to BJP, AAP says will seek their disqualification

**AAP seeks disqualification of seven Rajya Sabha MPs who joined BJP, citing anti-defection law and calling the move unconstitutional.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The AAP on Saturday said the party will write to the Rajya Sabha Chairman and the Vice President seeking the disqualification of seven of its MPs—who quit the party a day ago to join the BJP—from the Upper House.

Senior AAP MP Sanjay Singh told mediapersons that the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution recognises any kind of split, breakaway faction, or group in the Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha, two-thirds majority notwithstanding.

“Anti-defection law clearly states that no form of split is permissible in the Assembly, Rajya Sabha, or Lok Sabha... It does not carry any legal recognition, even if it’s a two-thirds majority... Therefore, the defection of these seven Rajya Sabha MPs from the AAP is entirely illegal, incorrect, unconstitutional, and against parliamentary rules,” he added.



“Even if the number rises from seven to eight members, it would still have no legal validity under the Tenth Schedule,” said Singh. “It has no legal recognition, and this has also been clearly established in the Shiv Sena case,” he added.

Seven of its 10 Rajya Sabha members, constituting two-thirds of the party strength in the Upper House, had crossed over to the BJP on Friday.

The seven MPs are Raghav Chadha, who was removed as the party deputy leader in Rajya Sabha three weeks ago, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Rajinder Gupta, Vikramjeet Singh Sahney, Swati Maliwal and Harbhajan Singh.

AAP Delhi president Saurabh Bharadwaj said the party was built by ordinary karyakartas and remains a party of ordinary workers. “Many leaders had come and gone,” he added. Admitting that it is a difficult time for AAP, he said, “The party has lost power in Delhi, leaders are being jailed, ED raids are taking place daily, and even the party office has been taken away by the government... In such circumstances, some people are bound to leave.”

Bharadwaj added, “...there is only praise and glorification of PM Modi everywhere. Despite this, the government remains uneasy, which is why raids are being

conducted daily in places like Bengal, Delhi, Chandigarh.”

The government, he said, is troubled by those who continue to ask questions. Addressing AAP karyakartas, he said, “The seven MPs who left had already stopped asking questions long ago, so their departure makes no difference. However, karyakartas who are asking questions must not stop... The BJP used to describe AAP as a tiny party, yet today it governs Punjab, which still troubles the BJP.” “Wealthy leaders may fear agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax department, but ordinary AAP karyakartas have little to fear, as they live modestly on their salaries. In fact, it is these ordinary karyakartas whom the Prime Minister fears the most,” he added. Bharadwaj further said that “those who faced ED raids were later inducted into the BJP”, indicating that people labelled corrupt.

## Man found hanging in ladies washroom at Delhi Metro station



New Delhi.(Agency)

A man was found dead inside a ladies washroom at Inderlok Metro Station in northwest Delhi, police said on Saturday. According to officials, a PCR call was received around 5:33 pm on April 25 reporting that a ladies toilet at the metro station was locked from inside and emitting a strong foul smell. A police team rushed to the spot and reached the Sulabh toilet complex within the station premises.

The washroom door was broken open, following which an unidentified male body, estimated to be around 40 years old, was found hanging inside. Prima facie, the deceased is believed to be the caretaker of the washroom facility.

A witness told police that the man was last seen nearly two days before the body was discovered.

The crime team inspected the scene and the body was later shifted to the mortuary at Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital for preservation. Authorities have initiated efforts to confirm the identity of the deceased with the help of metro officials. Police said proceedings under Section 194 of the BNSS have been initiated, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding the death.

## ED raids sevens locations in NCR in Rs 2,500 crore fraud case linked to Raheja Developers



New Delhi.(Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday conducted raids at multiple locations in the National Capital Region linked to Raheja Developers, its promoters and associated entities in connection with an alleged Rs 2,500 crore fraud involving delayed delivery of homes to nearly 4,500 buyers.

The searches were carried out at 7 locations, including Noida, Greater Noida, Sainik Farms and New Friends Colony, covering premises linked to Naveen Raheja, his son Nayan Raheja, other family members and company directors.

The investigation pertains to allegations that the developer collected around Rs 2,500 crore from homebuyers, particularly in its Raheja Revanta project, but failed to deliver flats within the committed timelines. The agency said it has found indications of fund diversion, financial irregularities and fraud under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It added that thousands of buyers have complained of non-delivery despite making substantial payments.

The ED registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) based on multiple cases filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police. According to officials, several FIRs have been lodged against Raheja Developers Ltd., its Managing Director Naveen Raheja and others under various sections of the IPC.

## Swiss flight aborts takeoff in Delhi, evacuated after engine scare; 6 hurt

New Delhi.(Agency)

A major fire scare engulfed Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport when smoke was observed coming out of one of the landing gears of a Swiss International Airlines (SWISS) aircraft operating a flight to Switzerland's Zurich early Sunday, sources said. Meanwhile, flames were seen near the other landing gear, they added. The situation prompted an emergency evacuation of the aeroplane.

At least six passengers were injured, the airline informed, adding that the aircraft's takeoff was aborted after an “issue occurred with one of the engines.” The incident took place on a runway when the flight was preparing to leave for its destination.

Smoke was suddenly seen coming out of the left landing gear, sources said. A full emergency was

**The incident took place when the aircraft was preparing to take off. A full emergency was declared at the airport at around 2 am. Multiple fire tenders were rushed to the scene of the incident, sources said.**



declared at the airport at around 2 am due to the incident. Multiple fire

tenders were rushed to the scene, sources said.

Purported videos of the incident are doing rounds on social media. One of them shows firefighters spraying water at the aircraft's body.

The SWISS aircraft, an Airbus 330-343, had 232 passengers and 13 crew members onboard.

**'AIRPORT OPERATIONS UNAFFECTED'**

“In the early hours of this morning, a full emergency was declared at Delhi Airport involving Swiss International Airlines flight LX 147 (DEL-ZRH) on Runway 28/10. All prescribed safety protocols were promptly executed, and passengers were safely evacuated. Airport operations remained unaffected,” the managing

authority of the IGI Airport said in a formal statement.

## Rs 16 crore cyber fraud ring busted in Delhi, two dummy directors held

**Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Hareshwar Swami said suspicious data linked the account of Messit Tradex Pvt Ltd—at a national bank's Bawana branch—to 336 fraud complaints across India, revealing its role in multi-layered money trails.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Police on Saturday claimed to have busted a major cyber fraud facilitation ring, arresting two dummy directors and uncovering Rs 16 crore in suspicious transactions funneled through a shell company in just eight days. The shell company's bank account was linked to 336 complaints of cyber fraud across multiple states in the country, officers said.

Police said that the case was registered under sections 112, 317(2), and 317(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), after analysis of suspicious mule accounts flagged on National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) and Indian Cyber

Crime Coordination Centre's Samanvaya Portal.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Hareshwar Swami said suspicious data linked the account of Messit Tradex Pvt Ltd—at a national bank's Bawana branch—to 336 fraud complaints across India, revealing its role in multi-layered money trails.

The arrested accused were identified as Sonu Kumar and Aminder Singh, who acted as dummy directors of the shell firm, officers said.

Police said that the seized evidence includes bank records, digital trails mapping NCRP complaints, fake Know Your Customer (KYC) documents, and proof of remote account control.



## Delhi behind the scenes: Police pink booth turns 'customer care' at Sarojini Nagar

New Delhi.(Agency)

At Sarojini Nagar Market, Delhi Police's pink booth isn't just fighting crime; it's refereeing fashion heartbreak. From “Bhaiya, size galat de diya” to “No exchange, madam!” standoffs, officers juggle more return requests than robberies.

Most complainants are from women, often backed by silent men burdened with umpteen shopping bags. Between snatching cases and billing battles, the real mystery remains: where does one return a bad shopping decision? With no official exchange policy, the pink booth has become part-time police post and full-time customer care, with few refunds and more drama.

**Treasure hunt: Dial M for missing numbers**

Once upon a time, tracking down a government school principal's phone number was a minor bureaucratic game: log onto the education department website & scroll patiently. However now, after the grand “revamp”, it



feels like a treasure hunt with no treasure. The numbers have vanished, perhaps in the name of digital minimalism.

**Kejriwal uncertainty on Bengal after Chadha shock**

Amid turmoil in the Aam Aadmi Party after the biggest-ever split, uncertainty looms large over Arvind Kejriwal's visit to West Bengal. Sources said that the AAP supremo may cancel his visit as his focus is on strengthening

the party during such a crucial phase when seven out of 10 Rajya Sabha MPs have switched sides.

The party had earlier announced that Kejriwal would visit the state at the invitation of West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and would campaign for the ruling party on April 26 & 27. On Wednesday, Kejriwal spoke to Banerjee over the phone and extended his “complete solidarity and support” to her.

The first phase of Bengal state assembly elections was held on April 23, the second phase for the remaining 142 of 294 seats in the state will be held on April 29.

**Article 'Catch 22' invoked with many interpretations**

What did the judge mean by saying they were in a “Catch-22” situation while hearing the excise case? The lawyers had a busy time deciphering the recusal judgement.

## Centre plans AI-driven study for accurate flood forecasting this monsoon

**The study will utilise flash flood data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to identify regions likely to experience sudden flooding.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Central Water Commission (CWC) has commissioned an internal study to forecast four weeks' advance floods in strategically important areas of the country, utilising Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI-ML) in the monsoon season, this newspaper has learnt. The study is designed to identify flood hotspots in advance, facilitating better preparedness and mitigation efforts.

Till now, CWC mostly depended on IMD's forecast, which is not effective in long-range forecasting. The internal study, referred to as



Extended Range Prediction (ERP), will be used for internal purposes, such as enhancing defence readiness and disaster mitigation in vulnerable regions like the Himalayan area. The ERP will operate for 4 weeks to precisely analyse and predict flood or glacial lake outbreak forecasts.

So far, the AI-ML model has been tested at 94 stations within the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Godavari river basins in 2025. Results indicate that 31 stations (23 in the Ganga basin, 9 in the Brahmaputra basin, and 1 in the Godavari basin) achieved an accuracy rate greater than 75% across all four weeks.

The study is expected to predict areas that may be affected by flash floods. Last year, the CWC model was applied to the transboundary Jaldhaka River basin from October 1-5, employing the Rainfall Runoff Inundation Model to forecast flash floods.

The study will utilise flash flood data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to identify regions likely to experience sudden flooding.

## Big tech layoff now funding AI expansion

New Delhi.(Agency)

Big technology firms are laying off employees big time and they are saying it is all about Artificial Intelligence (AI). The feared massacre is happening. But is it AI, or are these companies trying to keep their high profit margins by 'right-sizing'? The debate has erupted as Meta has just announced plans to lay off 8,000 employees globally, about 10 percent of its workforce, many of them from India. The company is also discontinuing 6,000 open jobs.

"We're doing this as part of our continued effort to run the company more efficiently and to allow us to offset the other investments we're making," Meta's chief people officer Janelle Gale told Bloomberg. The company spent \$72.2 billion on capital expenditures in 2025, or costs related to setting up data centers, buying start-ups and other AI infrastructure. That number is expected to climb to at least \$115 billion in 2026, Meta said in its January earnings report.

Meta is not the only tech biggie that is on an AI-related spree of spending and sackings. Oracle, founded by billionaire Larry Ellison, announced on 31st March he is cutting 20,000 to 30,000 employees. In February, Block, Jack Dorsey's company, cut more than 4,000 jobs, almost half the company's staff, in a major restructuring to integrate AI and create smaller, faster teams. Earlier in January, Amazon said it would lay off 16,000 workers, many of them from its India operations.

If the world is a global village, the integration is almost complete in technology. Thus, it is not surprising India is part of the bloodbath. TCS has claimed it has shed 12,000 employees world-wide since mid-2025, but ground reporting shows the figure is closer to 30,000. The company says shedding 2 percent of its workforce is to manage costs and to restructure in a period of global uncertainty.

## Hormuz disruption, \$100 oil pose risks to India's inflation, rupee: Union Bank

New Delhi.(Agency)

The ongoing West Asia conflict and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz are emerging as a major risk for the Indian economy, with elevated crude oil prices likely to pressure inflation, the rupee, and the current account, according to a report by Union Bank of India. The report titled 'From Hormuz to the Rupee: War, Oil and the Global Repricing of Risk' said that with the Strait of Hormuz "still functionally shut and Brent trading above \$100/bbl, the backdrop does not bode well for global or domestic macros and markets."

It added that "higher oil keeps inflation risk alive, delays central-bank easing, pressures current accounts, tightens financial conditions, and weighs on risk assets, especially in energy-importing economies," underlining the vulnerability of countries like India.

For India, which imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude oil, the impact is already visible. The report noted that the disruption in Hormuz flows has pushed oil prices above USD 100 per barrel, translating into a visible "energy tax" on the economy.

"As the escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict disrupted flows through the Strait of Hormuz, pushing Brent crude oil above \$100/bbl... this translated into a visible 'energy tax,' with the rupee sliding to record lows near 95 and equities correcting on CAD and imported inflation concerns," the report said.

The Indian rupee has remained under pressure amid these global headwinds. The report highlighted that the currency "exhibited a modest depreciation bias... as strong global dollar momentum, intermittent capital outflows, and elevated geopolitical uncertainties outweighed otherwise resilient domestic fundamentals."

Amid the pressure, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has stepped in to stabilise markets. The report noted that the central bank has taken multiple measures, including tighter forex exposure caps and liquidity support, while maintaining its policy stance.

## JP Morgan downgrades India equities to 'Neutral'; bets on Asia tech amid AI-led shift

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

Global brokerage firm JP Morgan has downgraded Indian equities to 'Neutral', citing rising macro risks, earnings pressure and limited exposure to new-age technology, even as it turns more bullish on Asian technology stocks led by Taiwan amid an accelerating artificial intelligence (AI) cycle.

In its latest Asia Equity Strategy report dated April 24, the brokerage said it is repositioning portfolios towards tech-heavy markets, noting that "we lower our allocation in Indian equities to Neutral," while upgrading technology and Taiwan in its regional allocation.

The shift comes as AI momentum strengthens across Asia. "There has been a sharp acceleration of gains across AI stocks in Asia this month," the report said, adding that improving developments around model capabilities, pricing and funding have "materially raised the future growth trajectory."

JP Morgan noted that the macro environment is also evolving, with risks of persistent inflation and slower growth shaping investment strategy. "From a macro perspective, this should most closely resemble another bout of 'stagflation'... investors should focus on non-economically sensitive structural growth opportunities," it said.

Against this backdrop, the brokerage flagged multiple headwinds for India. It said the downgrade reflects "elevated valuations relative to EM [Emerging Markets] peers, earnings risks, dilution concerns and limited exposure to next-gen tech."

On valuations, the report noted that while India's premium has moderated, it remains high. "India's premium to MSCI EM has compressed to 65%... but peers like Korea, Brazil and China still offer cheaper entry points," it said.

# 8th Pay Commission: Group C Level 1 employee lost Rs 25,000 during COVID-19 DA freeze

**A detailed breakdown now circulating among government employee groups shows exactly what that freeze cost a single Group C, Level 1 employee over those eighteen months. The number is Rs 25,224. For one person, at the lowest rungs of central government employment. And that figure does not include what pensioners lost, or what employees at higher pay levels absorbed.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit India in 2020, the central government made a decision that received little public attention but affected millions of people directly. It froze Dearness Allowance for all central government employees and

pensioners for eighteen months. No increases. No revisions. DA stayed exactly where it was while prices continued to rise around the people receiving it.

A detailed breakdown now circulating among government employee groups shows exactly what that freeze cost a single Group C, Level 1 employee over those eighteen months. The number is Rs 25,224. For one person, at the lowest rungs of central government employment. And that figure does not include what pensioners lost, or what employees at higher pay levels absorbed.

**What the data actually shows**

The breakdown covers three periods across the freeze window. In January 2020, a Group C Level 1 employee had a basic pay of Rs 18,000. Their Dearness Allowance at that point stood at Rs 720 per month — four percent of basic pay.



Their Transport Allowance was Rs 900, and the DA applicable on that transport allowance came to Rs 27 per month. This continued unchanged for six months through the first half of 2020.

The July 2020 DA revision — which should have taken effect automatically based on Consumer Price Index movements — was frozen. Under normal circumstances, DA would have been revised upward. Instead it stayed at Rs 720. The same employee

who should have received a higher allowance continued receiving Rs 720 for another six months.

By January 2021, the basic pay had moved to Rs 18,500 — the annual increment applied as normal — but DA was still frozen at the old rate. The January 2021 revision, which again should have triggered an increase, did not happen.

DA in this period was Rs 2,035 per month when it was eventually unfrozen, but the months during which it remained frozen meant that the employee never received the difference for those periods.

Across the entire eighteen-month window, the total DA that was withheld from this single employee added up to Rs 24,090. The DA on transport allowance that was also withheld came to Rs 1,134. Combined, the grand total of what one Group C Level 1 employee did not receive because of the freeze was Rs 25,224.

## Work more than 8 hours? Your boss legally owes you double pay under new Labour codes

New Delhi.(Agency)

India has introduced four new labour codes that bring together 29 older laws into a single, simplified framework. The goal is to make doing business easier while also strengthening protections for workers. These four codes cover wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety.

Among the most practically important changes are the rules around working hours, overtime, and what employers are legally required to pay when employees work beyond standard limits.

The new codes establish that the normal working hours for employees in factories and similar workplaces are eight hours per day and 48 hours per week. These limits are not new in principle — Indian labour law has long had protections around working time — but the new codes consolidate and standardise them across industries and types of establishments that were previously governed by different rules.

The eight-hour and 48-hour limits are designed to protect workers' health, ensure adequate rest, and maintain a basic standard of work-life balance. They set the boundary beyond which additional compensation becomes mandatory.



**What counts as overtime and what you get paid for it**

Any work performed beyond the standard eight hours in a day or 48 hours in a week is classified as overtime under the new codes. Two important conditions apply to overtime work. First, the employer must obtain the employee's

consent before asking them to work extra hours. Overtime cannot simply be imposed. Second, the employer is legally required to pay double the standard wage rate for every hour of overtime worked.

This means if your normal hourly rate works out to Rs 200, every overtime hour must be paid at Rs 400. The double-rate requirement is a statutory obligation, not something an employer can negotiate away or replace with compensatory time off unless the employee specifically agrees.

**Who is not covered by overtime pay rules**

Not every employee is entitled to statutory overtime under the new codes. The rules draw a distinction based on the nature of the work a person does.

Managerial and administrative employees are generally not classified as workers under the relevant provisions. Because they fall outside the legal definition of worker, the overtime pay entitlement does not apply to them in the same way.

## Small hydro power scheme prioritises reliable power generation in challenging terrains

New Delhi.(Agency)

With an outlay of Rs 2,584.60 crore aimed at adding 1,500 MW of new capacity, the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme (2026-31) prioritises reliable, decentralised power generation, especially in challenging terrains where other renewable sources face limitations, an official fact-sheet said on Sunday. The small hydro power (SHP) scheme marks a decisive policy intervention by the government to harness the unique strengths of small hydropower in the country's clean energy journey.

As of early 2026, approximately 5,171 MW (around 24.5 per cent) has already been harnessed, demonstrating steady progress.

The remaining over 15,960 MW represents a substantial opportunity for accelerated development through focused policy support and public-private collaboration, said the official statement.

Recognising this strategic importance, the Union Cabinet has approved the scheme that will support small hydro projects (between 1-25 MW capacity) to come up in different states.

The scheme will especially benefit hilly and northeastern states with high potential for such projects. The scheme aims to unlock approximately 1,500 MW of new SHP capacity, with a strong focus on hilly regions and the North Eastern States rich in untapped small hydro potential and often constrained by energy access challenges.

"By promoting decentralised and locally generated power, the scheme seeks to deliver reliable electricity to remote and difficult-to-access regions while reducing dependence on conventional fuels," according to the government.

The scheme is expected to attract investments of around Rs 15,000 crore in the small hydro sector.

It will also promote the use of indigenous plant and machinery, contributing to the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat while boosting local manufacturing and supply chains. To ensure long-term sector growth, the scheme provides support for the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for a minimum of 200 projects.

## 10 years of RERA: Some hits, many misses

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA) is completing 10 years of regulating India's real estate sector on 1 May 2026, with the twin objectives of protecting homebuyers' interests and promoting transparency. Introduced after a series of projects collapsed and developers were accused of duping buyers, RERA ushered in several key reforms, including mandatory project registration, escrow requirements mandating 70% of buyer funds be set aside for construction, and quarterly updates on construction progress. It also required developers to disclose project details and laid down penalties for delays beyond stipulated timelines.

However, RERA has its shortcomings, and questions are often raised about whether the law is fully meeting its objectives. The Supreme Court recently made sharp observations on



the functioning of RERA, questioning whether the law has drifted from its original purpose of protecting homebuyers and instead become a shield for defaulting builders. Experts also point to weak enforcement, low recovery rates and developers often ignoring penalties due to reliance on slow-moving state mechanisms.

**Major hits**

Despite these shortcomings and wide differences in implementation across states, experts and developers say the Act has played a significant role in formalising the real estate sector.

Ankita Sood, National Director-Research at Knight Frank India, said RERA's biggest achievement has been bringing much-needed transparency, accountability and structure to India's real estate market.

"Before 2016, the industry was largely fragmented and unorganised, with limited oversight. The Act helped formalise the ecosystem, discouraging fly-by-night developers and effectively straightjacketing the industry, leading to consolidation in favour of larger, more credible developers. Earlier, markets such as NCR were plagued by project defaults, litigation challenges and liquidity stress. However, with the introduction of RERA, the overall health and credibility of these markets have improved significantly," Sood said. Ensuring timely delivery and providing for a refund clause have strengthened buyers' position in property transactions.

# Fed meet, Q4 earnings, US-Iran tensions likely to drive stock market this week

New Delhi.(Agency)

A mix of global and domestic triggers, including the upcoming US Federal Reserve policy decision, ongoing earnings season, geopolitical tensions and crude oil price movements, are expected to guide the Indian stock market in the coming week after benchmark indices ended lower.

Indian equity benchmarks, the Sensex and Nifty, closed in the red after two straight weeks of gains, weighed down by rising geopolitical tensions and cautious commentary from major IT firms.

The Nifty declined 1.87 per cent to settle at 23,897.95, while the Sensex dropped 2.33 per cent to end at 76,664.21.

Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that on the upside, immediate resistance is placed at 24,000, followed by 24,150 and 24,350 levels.

"On the downside, support is seen at



23,800 and then at 23,700. A decisive break down below 23,500 could trigger further downside pressure," an analyst said.

Going ahead, investors will closely track the outcome of the upcoming meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee scheduled for April 28-29.

Markets are widely expecting the US Federal Reserve to keep interest rates unchanged for a third consecutive meeting, after pausing rate action in January and March following earlier rate cuts.

Back home, the fourth-quarter earnings season will gather pace, with more than

200 companies set to announce their results for the quarter ended March 31, 2026.

Investors will watch corporate commentary closely for cues on demand outlook, margin pressures and sectoral trends, particularly after subdued guidance from IT majors in recent weeks.

Geopolitical developments will also remain on the radar, especially the ongoing tensions linked to the US-Iran situation.

Fresh remarks by Donald Trump regarding engagement with Iran have added to uncertainty, keeping global markets on edge.

Any escalation or de-escalation could have a direct bearing on investor sentiment. Crude oil prices are another key variable influencing market direction. Prices remained volatile during the week, with supply concerns and hopes of renewed US-Iran talks driving fluctuations.

## Short news

## Pooram heralding ceremony held amid heat and lingering grief in Thrissur

THRISSUR.(Agency)

In keeping with tradition, despite a pall of sorrow following the Mundathicod blast, hundreds of devotees thronged the Thekkinkad Maidan in Thrissur on Saturday to witness the ceremonial Pooram heralding ceremony — 'vilambaram'.

Braving the intense summer heat, people watched in awe as tusker Ernakulam Sivakumar, carrying the idol of Neythalakkavu Bhagavathy, opened the doors of the Thekke Gopura Nada of Sree Vadakkunnathan Temple.

As per tradition, once the Thekke Gopura Nada is opened by Neythalakkavu Bhagavathy, the Pooram festivities — which last more than 30 hours — commence.

For local residents, the eve of the main Pooram is the day they visit the 'Chamayam' exhibitions of the Thiruvambady and Paramakkavu factions and assess the parasols and caparisons. Each year, both factions prepare new caparisons to be used for the main elephant carrying the idol, while the older ones are polished to retain their golden sheen.

Local residents, 'desakkar', said they are eager to celebrate the festival with all its rituals, as the Pooram cannot be cancelled once the flag is hoisted.

"Pooram is an emotion. Anyone who has experienced it once will be drawn to it every year. Despite the heat, we came to Thekkinkad Maidan because we could not stay at home," said Krishnan, who came with friends to watch the vilambaram.

## Kerala rolls out plan to mitigate heatwave effect

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

Amid soaring temperatures, and heatstroke claiming lives in the state, the government on Saturday issued a set of directives to mitigate the effects of heatwave conditions, especially in public places that are most vulnerable.

The directives, including curbs on public programmes, were issued following a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and attended by ministers, top bureaucrats and the State Police Chief.

On Saturday, the state reported three suspected sunstroke cases, including two deaths. A 70-year-old man, who was living alone, was found dead in the compound of his house in Pattambi in Palakkad in the afternoon. In another suspected sunstroke case, an 85-year-old man was found dead in his farmland at Kunnikode in Kollam. According to officials, the exact cause of death in these cases can be confirmed only after autopsies.

Meanwhile, the high-level meeting has decided to ensure availability of drinking water, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and heatwave-related first aid facilities in public places such as markets and bus stands. Facilities to provide shade from the sun will be set up on a temporary basis at public places and the stoppage duration at traffic signals will be curtailed by district collectors if required in consultation with the police and traffic management authorities.

## KSEB asked to ensure uninterrupted supply

"Strict restrictions will be imposed on public programmes, selection trials, day camps and sports programmes during heatwave warning periods," the chief minister's office said in a statement.

## Telangana govt initiates L&T Metro control, names new board

BENGALURU.(Agency)

With the Telangana government initiating the 100% takeover of L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited (L&TMRHL), it has issued orders nominating senior officials to the company's Board and approving share allotment to nominee directors and shareholders post-acquisition.

Chief Secretary K Ramakrishna Rao has been appointed Chairman.

The orders were issued based on proposals submitted by Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) for the nomination of directors to the Board of L&TMRHL following the acquisition and for allotment of shares to nominee shareholders.

HMRL Managing Director Sarfaraz Ahmad has been appointed Managing Director, while Joint Managing Director Shivendra Pratap will serve as JMD.

The other directors include MAUD Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan; Special Chief Secretary (Transport, Roads & Buildings) Vikas Raj; Principal Finance Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania; Director General of Police B Shivadhar Reddy; HMDA Metropolitan Commissioner Sarfaraz Ahmad; HMWSSB Managing Director K Ashok Reddy; and TGSPDCL Chairman and Managing Director Jitesh V Patil.

The government also approved allotment of shares post-acquisition to nominee directors, including K Ramakrishna Rao, Sarfaraz Ahmad, Jayesh Ranjan, Vikas Raj, Sandeep Kumar Sultania and Shivendra Pratap, along with the Government of Telangana.

# In 1st election after SIR, local bodies to test ground for 2027 Gujarat Assembly polls

Register 100% turnout in Sunday's poll, CM urges voters

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

NINE NEW municipal corporations and a new district will be among the 393 local self-government bodies in Gujarat that will go to polls on Sunday across over 9,000 seats that will be held simultaneously.

This is the first election being held after the state government raised the quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC) to 27 per cent (%) from the existing 10% where over 700 seats have declared uncontested winners, majorly from the BJP. The number of uncontested seats is more than three times higher than the previous elections to these bodies held in 2021.

While BJP is in power in a majority of these bodies, having claimed a vote share of over 50% in the previous elections, its main challengers are the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

This is also the first election being held after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) where



Gujarat reported 68.12 lakh (or 13.4%) voters deleted from the electoral rolls which was the highest among the states that went under the revision in the second phase.

As per the final electoral roll — a total of 4.18 crore voters — 2.16 crore male and 2.02 crore females and 965 others are expected to cast vote to elect new local bodies.

In a video message on Saturday, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel appealed to the public to register a 100 per cent turnout in the elections

on Sunday, polling for which will begin at 7 am and go on till 6 pm.

The entire election process will be held through EVMs. "For these elections, fresh EVMs were purchased including 52 CUs (control units) and nearly 60,000 BUs (ballot units)," the State Election Commission authorities said.

The BJP is viewing these elections as a bellwether for the Assembly elections due next year. Party sources said that apart from feeling the pulse of the public, it will also give a sense of the "dissent" within that manifest in several BJP candidates contesting as Independent candidates after being "denied" tickets. "For us, these elections are of immense importance. It will set the tone for the Assembly elections and the distribution of power among the ranks will be done after these elections. As it is the major way for the party to give electoral power to its ranks at grassroot level," a party source said.

## Death while boarding: Gujarat HC rejects Railways 'no ticket' defence, upholds aid to family

Dismissing an appeal of the Indian Railways against the compensation on the ground that the deceased had "no ticket" to board the train he slipped under, the HC said that the absence of a ticket could not defeat a legitimate claim under the law.

Vadodara.(Agency)

In a ruling that underscores the risks faced by passengers navigating through crowded railway platforms to switch between trains, the Gujarat High Court has upheld the compensation awarded by the Railway Claims Tribunal to the kin of a migrant worker from West Bengal, who died while attempting to board a train during a one-minute platform transfer window at Ahmedabad station in June 2024.

Dismissing an appeal of the Indian Railways against the compensation on the ground that the deceased had "no ticket" to board the train he slipped under, the HC said that the absence of a ticket could not defeat a legitimate claim under the law.

In a judgment delivered on Friday, Justice JC Doshi of the Gujarat HC rejected the argument put forth by the railways that the victim was not



a "bona fide passenger" since no ticket for the second leg of his journey could be recovered. The railways had also submitted that the CCTV footage showed the victim boarding a moving train. The HC, however, found that the circumstances—tight timing between trains and prior valid travel—made it unreasonable to deny his status as a legitimate passenger.

The appeal was filed by the general manager of

the Railways, challenging the judgement and order dated August 12, 2025, of the Railway Claims Tribunal, Ahmedabad Bench, which had awarded a claim of Rs 8 lakh to the kin of the Amalkumar Dey.

As per the facts of the case, an incident had occurred on June 3, 2024, when Dey—who had arrived on Platform no. 3 of the Ahmedabad railway station from Shalimar (West Bengal)—was trying to catch a connecting train to Gandhidham from Ahmedabad that was departing Platform no. 4. The HC, in its judgment, noted that the train from Shalimar had arrived on Platform no. 3 around 9:21 am, while the train from Platform no. 4 was leaving the station around 9:22 am. The Railways, in its submission before the HC, emphasised the fact that the deceased had not bought a ticket for the train departing Platform no. 4 and had also been captured in the CCTV footage.

## CBI flags 'structured network of middlemen' in alleged bribery case against DIG Bhullar

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Citing electronic evidence, incriminating documents and communication analysis, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has told the special CBI court that its probe has revealed "several meetings, negotiations of favours, and alleged delivery of illegal gratification... took place within the jurisdiction of Chandigarh," pointing to "a structured network of middlemen facilitating bribery and suspect criminal misconduct by multiple unknown public servants".

The submissions came in an application moved by the CBI seeking permission to take over electronic devices, original documents and cash seized earlier during trap proceedings in the case registered against former Punjab Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Harcharan Singh Bhullar.

The application was allowed by the Special CBI Court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Bhawana Jain on Friday. A detailed order is yet to

be released.

In its application, the agency stated, "the electronic evidence, incriminating documents, communication analysis and disclosures indicate that several meetings, negotiations of favours, and alleged delivery of illegal gratification involving accused persons and other



suspect public servants/private individuals took place within the jurisdiction of Chandigarh".

It further added, "the above findings indicate a structured network of middlemen facilitating bribery and suspect criminal misconduct by multiple unknown public servants".

The CBI submitted that the present enquiry was registered on February 19 against unknown public servants and private individuals on the basis of a complaint by a CBI inspector. It said the case is an offshoot of an earlier trap case registered in October 2025, wherein a middleman was allegedly caught red-handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5 lakh on behalf of then DIG Bhullar.

According to the application, "substantial incriminating material has surfaced indicating the existence of independent corruption-related transactions" involving several unknown public servants and private individuals. The agency further told the court that "digital forensic analysis of seized electronic devices, interrogation disclosures, and documentary material... prima facie indicates that they were engaged in facilitating undue favours from senior public servants of various departments of the Punjab government in lieu of illegal gratification".

## Telangana HC upholds arrest of doctor in surrogacy case by ED

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

The Telangana High Court has dismissed a writ petition filed by fertility specialist Dr Pachipala Namratha challenging her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), while granting her liberty to pursue remedies before the Special Court.

A Division Bench comprising Justice P Sam Koshy and Justice Narsing Rao Nandikonda refused to interfere with her arrest on February 12, 2026, and the subsequent remand orders passed by the Special Sessions Judge for PMLA cases at Nampally.

Dr Namratha, currently lodged in Chanchalguda Central Jail, had alleged that her arrest violated Section 19 of the PMLA and constitutional safeguards under Articles 14, 21, and 22. Her counsel argued that the ED acted mechanically without valid "reasons to believe" based on credible material, rendering the arrest arbitrary and illegal.

However, the ED countered that its action was backed by substantial material, including multiple FIRs, financial records, statements under Section 50 of PMLA, and evidence of alleged illegal surrogacy practices and child trafficking linked to her fertility centre. The bench held that judicial review in such cases is limited to examining legality and procedural fairness, not reassessing evidence or conducting a "mini-trial." It further said arrest under the PMLA requires not trial-level proof, but material with a rational nexus to the alleged offence. The court also rejected claims of "mechanical remand," observing that remand courts are only required to form.

# NETS OVER 50% PROFIT: Small farmer from Tarn Taran builds 1-Cr flower farming model

Jalandhar.(Agency)

Twenty-five years ago, when Jarnail Singh, now 45, a small farmer, ventured — as an experiment — into floriculture on just his two kanals of land he had, he had not imagined that in years to come, through his enterprise, he would be able to turn it into a flourishing business with Rs 1 crore per annum turnout, with his profit margin exceeding 50 per cent.

Life was tough when Jarnail first thought of taking a leap towards floriculture, leaving traditional wheat and paddy cultivation behind, but over the past 25 years, this farmer from Jagatpura village under Ghadiwindblock of Tarn Taran district expanded his flower cultivation to nearly 25 acres — leasing 20 acres — and turned it into a business generating over Rs 1 crore annually — and what went into was relentless hard work and determination to

succeed with a vision of a bright future. A matriculate by education, Singh considers his father his inspiration. The father would accompany him to the Punjab Agricultural University's (PAU) Kisan Melas (Farmers' Fair) in Ludhiana and had a keen interest in vegetable cultivation, especially onion.

"After my schooling, as a teenager, I started with marigolds on just two kanals using seeds sourced from PAU. Over time, I realised the potential of flowers compared to traditional crops like wheat and paddy," Singh said.

Today, Singh cultivates flowers on around 25 acres for almost eight months. Nearly 20 acres he has taken on lease for Rs 65,000 to Rs 70,000 per acre annually. Despite the high lease cost and labour-intensive cultivation,

floriculture proved profitable over the years.

His main crops include varieties of marigold such as Jaffri or Jafri Gaianda (marigold) in

gaianda (during summer). He sources varieties, such as Laddu gaianda, from Kolkata while he prepares the nursery of Jaffri and Guldaudi.

Explaining the cropping cycle, Singh said Laddu gaianda is sown around February and the first harvesting starts in April, which goes on till the beginning of July, while Jaffri marigold is planted in September and becomes ready for first harvesting between October and November, coinciding with peak festive demand, and which goes on till January, and then the same fields are used for growing Laddu gaianda. "Timing is crucial as prices are highest during festivals like Dussehra and Diwali," he added.



red, yellow and orange shades, along with seasonal cultivation of chrysanthemum (guldaudi) in white and yellow and Laddu

## NEWS BOX

## India bounce back with dominant 3-0 win over Ukraine in Uber Cup Finals



Horsens. (Agency)

India's women's team responded strongly after their opening loss, registering a commanding win over Ukraine in their second Group A tie at the Uber Cup Finals on Saturday. The victory keeps India's campaign alive ahead of a crucial final group-stage clash. After going down 2-3 to hosts Denmark in their opener, India needed a solid performance to stay in contention. They delivered just that, sealing the tie with victories in all three singles matches to take an unassailable 3-0 lead.

### INDIA DOMINATE SINGLES TO SEAL TIE

The charge was led by 18-year-old Unnati Hooda, who set the tone with a straight-games win over Polina Buhrova. Hooda edged a tight contest 21-19, 22-20 in 46 minutes, showing composure in key moments.

Tanvi Sharma then had to dig deep in the second singles. After taking the opening game comfortably, she was pushed to a decider by Yevheniia Kantemyr. However, Sharma regained control in the third game to seal a 21-12, 17-21, 21-10 victory in a 49-minute battle.

Devika Sihag wrapped up the tie in the third singles, overcoming Mariia Stoliarenko in straight games. She clinched a hard-fought first game before closing out the match 23-21, 21-13 in 38 minutes.

With the tie already decided, the remaining two doubles matches became inconsequential.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR INDIA

The win puts India back in the mix after a disappointing start to their campaign. Ukraine, who had also lost their opening tie 0-5 to China, are now virtually out of contention for a quarterfinal spot. With only the top two teams from each group progressing, India's qualification will now hinge on their final group-stage encounter. They face a tough test against China on Monday, a match that is likely to decide their place in the knockout rounds.

## Chennai keep waiting on MS Dhoni as Gujarat mount comeback bid

New Delhi. (Agency)

After a couple of thrilling encounters on Saturday, the stage is set for Super Sunday, promising an action-packed finish to the weekend in IPL 2026. The Gujarat Titans take on the Chennai Super Kings in the first game of the day at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, followed by a clash between the Kolkata Knight Riders and the Lucknow Super Giants at the Ekana Stadium.

The Super Kings are brimming with confidence after their record win over the Mumbai Indians. The Titans, meanwhile, have lost two matches on the trot and will be eager to bounce back. In the second game, the Knight Riders will look to build on their recent win, while the Super Giants find themselves in a precarious spot. On a four-match losing streak, Rishabh Pant's men are in desperate need of a turnaround. However, with KKR also struggling for consistency, LSG will fancy their chances of arresting the slide.

### WILL MS DHONI RETURN?

The Super Kings have played half their matches in IPL 2026, but there are still no signs of MS Dhoni for now. Dhoni has been dealing with a calf issue, which has kept him out of action. Earlier, batting coach Michael Hussey had said that the Super Kings are willing to wait until Dhoni is fully fit, especially given the need for quick running in the closing stages of an innings.

The Super Kings are currently placed mid-table and have managed a solid turnaround after starting their campaign with three consecutive losses. They are now in contention for a top-four spot. The spin duo of Akeal Hosein and Noor Ahmad has been outstanding, while Anshul Kamboj leads their wicket-taking charts.

Sanju Samson will once again be key, having already notched up two centuries this season. As for the Gujarat Titans, they had built momentum with three straight wins before suffering back-to-back defeats that have put them under pressure. Shubman Gill has delivered with the bat, but questions remain over his effectiveness as a T20 captain as the team looks to steady itself.

### CAN KKR EXACT REVENGE ON LSG?

Kolkata Knight Riders snapped their winless run with a victory over Rajasthan Royals and will now look to exact revenge on Lucknow Super Giants. Earlier, KKR had slumped to a three-wicket defeat at the Eden Gardens, where Mukul Chaudhary's unbeaten 54 helped LSG snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

# Avinash Sable may skip 2026 Commonwealth Games after knee injury

**Avinash Sable has said he may miss the 2026 Commonwealth Games as he recovers from a serious knee injury. His decision will depend on whether he can regain full fitness rather than merely qualify.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

India's top steeplechaser Avinash Sable has admitted he is still uncertain about competing at the 2026 Commonwealth Games, as he continues his recovery from a serious knee injury. The 30-year-old made it clear that he would rather skip the event than participate without being at his best. Speaking to Sportstar, Sable stressed that full fitness remains his priority, especially with the Commonwealth Games approaching fast.

"If everything goes well, then I feel I can be in

the shape I was in (four years ago). But if everything doesn't go well, if I'm not fully fit, then even if I qualify for the Indian team, I'd rather skip the Commonwealth Games. I don't want to go to the Commonwealth Games just to participate," Sable said.

He also provided an update on his recovery and current fitness levels.

"I returned to training in January this year. Earlier this month I went to Ooty for some high-altitude training, but I felt a lot of tightness in my body after. I felt I was lacking strength, so I came to IIS to improve. Right now I'm still not at 100 per cent. I think I'm at about 70-80 per cent of where I was," he added. Sable's cautious approach reflects the long road back he has faced since his injury, with the focus firmly on regaining peak condition rather than rushing into competition.

### HOW DID AVINASH SABLE GET INJURED?

Sable's setback dates back to July 2025 during



the Monaco Diamond League, where a fall during the race led to a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus in his right knee.

The injury required surgery and a lengthy rehabilitation period, effectively disrupting his 2025 season. Since returning to training in January 2026, Sable has been gradually building back towards competition fitness, though he admits he is still short of his peak. The challenge has been particularly evident in the steeplechase discipline, where repeated

landings after hurdles continue to cause discomfort, slowing his progress.

### WILL SABLE RUN IN ASIAN GAMES AND CWG?

Sable's immediate target is to assess whether he can reach competitive standards in time for the major events this year.

The 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow are scheduled from July 23 to August 2, while the Asian Games 2026 in Aichi-Nagoya will take place from September 19 to October 4.

Four years ago, Sable made history by winning a silver medal in the 3000m steeplechase at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, becoming the first Indian to achieve the feat. That performance set a high benchmark, one he is not willing to compromise.

For now, his participation in Glasgow remains uncertain, with fitness and performance standards taking priority. The Asian Games, with a slightly longer timeline, could offer a more realistic target if his recovery continues on the right track.

## Iga Swiatek retires ill in Madrid Open title defence against Ann Li

Madrid. (Agency)

Iga Swiatek retired from her Madrid Open third-round match against Ann Li on Saturday after falling ill during the decider, ending her title defence in the Spanish capital. The fourth-ranked Pole, champion here in 2024, withdrew with Li leading 7-6 (4), 2-6, 3-0. Swiatek later revealed she had been battling a stomach virus for the last two days and had hoped she could still find a way through despite feeling "terrible".

The retirement marked Swiatek's earliest exit in five appearances in Madrid and opened up the draw further, with Li moving into the last 16 for a meeting with Leylah Fernandez.

### WHY DID SWIATEK RETIRE FROM MADRID OPEN?

Swiatek was broken and, with Li 2-0 up, called for a medical timeout and had her vitals checked. She returned to court and tried to break back, but Li held serve for a 3-0 lead, after which Swiatek decided she could not continue. Swiatek first left the court for treatment during the deciding set, with the illness affecting her as the match wore on. The problem was later described as a viral illness, with Swiatek saying she had been dealing with a stomach issue for two days before the match. For Li, the result stands as the second top-10 win of her career and sends her into the fourth round in Madrid. For Swiatek, it is an abrupt end to a tournament she



34th-ranked Li in the round of 32. Li took the first set 7-6 (4) before Swiatek recovered to level the match by winning the second 6-2. The contest shifted again early in the third set.

won last year, with her title defence cut short by illness after she had fought back from a set down to stay in the match.

## RR need to think if Riyan Parag is right captain: Sehwaq's brutal take after SRH loss

**Virender Sehwaq questioned Riyan Parag's captaincy after RR failed to defend 228 against SRH. He said the tactical calls and Parag's batting slump now leave the management with a decision to make.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Virender Sehwaq questioned Riyan Parag's captaincy after RR's loss to SRH on Saturday, April 26, saying the team management would need to introspect and decide whether he is the right choice to lead the side. Sehwaq's criticism came after RR failed to defend 228 at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, with SRH chasing down the target with nine balls to spare.

Sehwaq said Parag's tactical decisions were a major issue, pointing to the limited use of frontline spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Ravi



Bishnoi, who bowled only one over each. He also said Parag's poor run with the bat this season could be affecting the way he is leading the team.

Parag used eight bowling options, including himself, during the innings, but Sehwaq felt RR did not give their main spin bowlers enough time to recover after expensive first overs. Jadeja conceded 11 runs in his only over, while Bishnoi went for 16. Sehwaq said both bowlers should have been given another over and that Parag would need to think about his decisions as captain going forward.

"Ravi Bishnoi bowled one over, and Ravindra Jadeja also bowled only one over. Neither of them are bad. They were not given a

chance to bounce back after their first over. Sometimes they get hit, but you should at least try them out for a second over. Who will get you the wickets if not them? Part-timers only come in thinking that how can he get through the over. Riyan Parag will have to think about his captaincy, and the management will have to think whether he is the right captain for them," Virender Sehwaq said.

### PARAG'S STRUGGLES WITH THE BAT

Parag's struggles with the bat also continued against SRH, as he was dismissed for seven off nine balls. In the IPL 2026 season, the RR skipper has scored 88 runs from eight matches at a strike-rate of 112.82 and an average of 12.57. Sehwaq said that if a captain is not scoring runs, it affects decision-making on the field.

"If I am a captain, and I am not scoring runs, 100 percent it will affect my captaincy. I will be thinking about my runs, and also thinking that Vaibhav Suryavanshi scored 100 runs off 36 balls, and even though I am senior and experienced, why am I not scoring runs like that?" said Sehwaq.

## Has Mohamed Salah played his last game for Liverpool? Arne Slot reacts

**Arne Slot says it is too early to know if Mohamed Salah has played his final Liverpool match after the Egyptian limped off with a hamstring injury against Crystal Palace. Salah will leave Liverpool at the end of the season.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Liverpool manager Arne Slot said the club will have to wait and see whether Mohamed Salah has played his final match for Liverpool after limping off during the win over Crystal Palace. Salah suffered a left hamstring injury and was taken off in the 59th minute against Palace.

The Egyptian has already announced that he will leave the Merseyside club at the end of the season and now faces a race against time to be fit for Liverpool's final match of the campaign against Brentford on May 24. Speaking after the Palace win, Slot said Liverpool would need to assess Salah's condition before making a call.

"It's too early to say but we all know Mo and how hard it is for him to leave the pitch," Slot told Match of the Day. "For Mo to leave the pitch, it shows you something but we have to wait and see how bad it is." Salah was able to leave the pitch on his own, though he did so slowly, taking a moment to acknowledge all corners of Anfield with applause. Slot said he felt the possibility of it being the Egyptian's last appearance for the club may

have been on Salah's mind as he came off. "My honest answer is yes, the way he came off," Slot told Sky Sports. "It went through his mind because there are only a few weeks



to go but we are hoping he plays for us again." He added: "You have tests to do and then we have to wait for the prognosis."

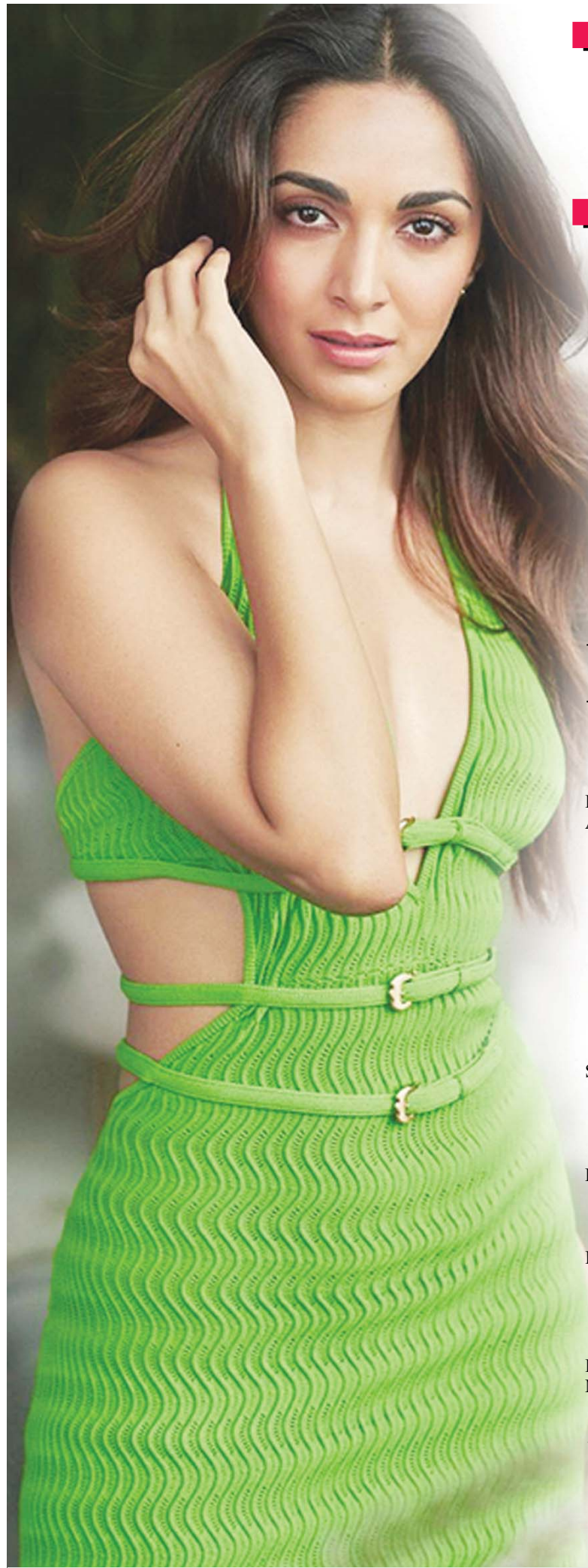
### 'SALAH HAS PLAYED HIS LAST

### LIVERPOOL GAME'

Egypt national team director Ibrahim Hassan claimed that Salah has played his final game for Liverpool after what he feels is a hamstring tear. "He has suffered a hamstring tear and will require four weeks of treatment," Hassan told Reuters.

Hassan, however, said that he believes Salah will be available for the World Cup 2026.

Since arriving at Liverpool in 2017, Salah has won two Premier League titles, the Champions League, FIFA Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup, FA Cup, two EFL Cups and the Community Shield. With 257 goals in 435 matches for the Reds, Salah is third on Liverpool's all-time scorers list, behind Ian Rush and Roger Hunt, as uncertainty remains over whether his appearance against Palace was his last for the club.



# Kiara Advani

**Rushes Home After Work, Tells Paparazzi, 'Mujhe Meri Family Ke Paas Jaana Hai'**

**B**ollywood actress Kiara Advani never fails to make heads turn every time she steps out in the city. Last night, she was spotted by the paparazzi as she wrapped up her professional commitments and headed home in a hurry. The actress, who has been balancing her busy schedule, appeared eager to return to her family and was seen quickly making her way to her car when paparazzi captured the moment. She refused to pose for the paps, and explained that she has to head back home to be with her husband Sidharth Malhotra and their daughter Saraayah.

#### Kiara Advani Says 'Family Ke Paas Jaana Hai'

A video shared by the paparazzi shows Kiara Advani heading out after finishing her work for the day, and heading back home. She walked quickly towards the car, while the paparazzi requested her to pose for pictures. As she sat in the car, she politely told the paps, "Abhi mujhe meri family ke paas jaana hai. (Right now, I have to go to my family)." She acknowledged the photographers, but did not stop for an extended interaction, and quickly waved goodbye.

She looked absolutely stunning in a black co-ord set and had dark sunglasses on. Check out the video below!



Kiara and Sidharth, who got married in 2023, welcomed their first child, a baby girl, on July 15, 2025. They shared the delightful news on Instagram with a heartwarming pink announcement card that read, "Our hearts are full and our world forever changed. We are blessed with a baby girl."

In November last year, the couple shared a joint post on Instagram, announcing their daughter's name. They wrote, "From our prayers, to our arms our divine blessing, our princess, Saraayah Malhotra सरायह मल्होत्रा," along with a folded emoji and a red heart emoji. Along with this, they shared an adorable picture showing their hands gently holding baby Saraayah's tiny feet, wrapped in white crocheted socks.

#### Kiara Advani On Embracing Motherhood

Meanwhile earlier, in a conversation with Vogue India, Kiara spoke about embracing motherhood and said, "I've never been more ambitious. Motherhood expands you. The fire within you becomes more focused."

When I'm with Saraayah, I'm really with her. When I bathe her, I notice everything—her eyelashes, her tiny fingers, her giggles. These micro-moments feel so precious. I want that realness for Saraayah. I want her to feel grass under her feet, stain books with crayons, run outdoors till her cheeks turn pink." Kiara is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'Toxic' starring Yash. The film is set to release on June 4.

**'Don't Want To Marry Any Politician Ever': Parineeti Chopra's Old Clip Reappears Amid Raghav Chadha's BJP Move**



**P**arineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha, the most loved couple in town, continue to win hearts with their adorable bond and frequent public appearances together. Her politician husband has been hitting headlines ever since he announced his exit from the Aam Aadmi Party and his entry in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on April 24. The news has taken the internet by storm as he joined the party along with Swati Maliwal, Harbhajan Singh, Sandeep Pathak, Ashok Mittal, Rajinder Gupta, and Vikram Sahney. Amid his political move, an old video of Parineeti has now surfaced online where she can be heard saying that she will never marry a politician.

During the promotions of one of her films with Sidharth Malhotra, the actress was asked about celebrities she would marry. After mentioning a Hollywood actor, she was asked about politicians. She had said, "The problem is I don't want to marry any politician. There are too many good options but I don't want to marry any politician ever."

She had shared what she was looking for in an ideal partner. Parineeti Chopra had said, "He should be funny, he should smell good and he should respect me. My love for travel, love for water, the ocean, diving, whatever, and they should just be a self-made person. I love men who have self-worth, who have made their lives themselves."

Interestingly, Parineeti and Raghav, who studied together at the London School of Economics, went out on dates before sealing the deal in September 2023. The couple opted for an intimate wedding ceremony at The Leela Palace in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The ceremony looked all things dreamy. Parineeti added a special touch as she walked down the aisle to a personalized song she sang herself for Raghav. She even wore a pastel-coloured Manish Malhotra lehenga with intricate hand embroidery and a long veil that notably featured "Raghav" embroidered in Hindi. These tiny details made their day extra special.

**Akasa Singh To Marry Soon? Cocktail 2 Singer Likely To Tie The Knot With Her Boyfriend**



**S**inger Akasa Singh is once again making headlines, this time for reports surrounding her personal life. If reports are to be believed, the singer is likely to get married soon. While there has been no official confirmation from Akasa or her team, several media reports claim that she is all set to marry her boyfriend soon, whose identity has not been disclosed as of now. Sources close to the celebrity claim that Akasa doesn't want to reveal the name of her would-be husband and wants complete privacy till the wedding rituals are done. Reportedly, she has also left Mumbai for the North side of the country for the wedding venue. Interestingly, Akasa was recently also spotted in Mumbai shopping for lehengas.

Meanwhile, Akasa is also enjoying professional success with her recent track Jab Talak from Cocktail 2. The song has been receiving attention and Akasa has lent her voice for actress Kriti Sanon in the film.

Cocktail 2 is positioned as a spiritual sequel to the 2012 hit Cocktail, which starred Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone, Diana Penty. The film has been shot across multiple locations, including Sicily in Italy and several places in Delhi and North India such as Chhatrapur, Gurugram and South Delhi. The film is directed by Homi Adajania, produced by Maddock Films and written by Luv Ranjan. It is scheduled to release in theatres on June 19.

#### Who Is Akasa Singh?

Akasa Singh is a singer who is known for her work in Bollywood and independent pop music. She rose to fame as a contestant on India's Raw Star judged by Himesh Reshammiya. She made her Bollywood debut with the hit song 'Kheech Meri Photo' from Sanam Teri Kasam. Akasa then gained massive popularity with independent tracks like 'Naagin' and 'Thug Ranjha'.

# Priyanka Chopra

**To Be Honoured At Gold Gala 2026 With Global Vanguard Honor**

**G**lobal stages, big names, and a celebration of influence... one of the year's most high-profile cultural gatherings is gearing up once again. And this time, an Indian star is set to take centre stage in a big way. Priyanka Chopra will be among the key honorees at the upcoming Gold Gala 2026, organised by Gold House. The annual event, now in its fifth edition, celebrates leading voices from the Asian Pacific and multicultural communities across industries, especially entertainment.

The gala is scheduled to take place on May 9, where Priyanka will receive the Global Vanguard Honor. She will be honoured alongside martial arts icon Jet Li, who will receive the Gold Legend Honor, and actor Simu Liu, who is set to be recognised with the Gold

Mogul Honor. Other names on the honoree list include Charles Melton, Eileen Gu, and Revathi Advaiti. Announcing the event on Instagram, Gold House shared, "What began as a community milestone has become the definitive worldwide Asian Pacific cultural convening—and this year, it goes even further." The post further added, "Over 650 leaders across industries will gather to honor this year's theme: A New

Gold World—a call to build shared abundance in an era increasingly defined by division."

The evening will also feature a packed line-up. Comedian Bowen Yang is set to open the gala with a monologue, while actors Asif Ali, Saagar Shaikh, and Poorna Jagannathan will kick off the second half. Singer Hayley Kiyoko will perform, and speakers at the event include EJAE, Theresia Gouw, HUMAN MADE, Tejasvi Manoj, Jen Lee, and Brett Bolton.

Priyanka's recognition comes amid her busy run in international projects. In 2025, she featured in Prime Video's Heads of State and The Bluff, the latter of which she also produced. Over the years, she has built a strong Hollywood portfolio with films like Baywatch, The Matrix Resurrections, and Love Again.



NEWS BOX

### Iran's Araghchi expected to revisit Pak after Oman talks amid stalled US negotiations

**World. (Agency)**  
Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is expected to return to Pakistan after completing his visit to Oman, before heading onwards to Russia, news agency Reuters quoted Iranian media reports, as regional diplomacy intensifies over the ongoing conflict. Araghchi departed Islamabad earlier without any visible breakthrough in discussions with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and senior officials. He arrived in Muscat later on Saturday for the second leg of his regional tour.

During his stop in Pakistan, Araghchi held separate meetings with Army Chief Asim Munir and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, focusing on bilateral ties and evolving regional dynamics. He also conveyed Tehran's position on the conflict, which Iran blames on actions by the US and Israel. Araghchi called his Pakistan visit fruitful and added that he had outlined Iran's position on permanently ending the war and placed the ball in Washington's court, questioning whether the US was truly serious about diplomacy.

**TRUMPCALLS OFF US ENVOYS' VISIT**  
In a parallel development, US President Donald Trump cancelled a planned US delegation visit to Pakistan, citing frustration with Iran's hardline stance. He suggested negotiations could continue remotely and asserted that Washington "held all the cards."

"I've told my people a little while ago they were getting ready to leave, and I said, 'Nope, you're not making an 18-hour flight to go there. We have all the cards. They can call us anytime they want, but you're not going to be making any more 18-hour flights to sit around talking about nothing,'" he said. Meanwhile, Araghchi is expected to meet senior Omani officials in Muscat, with talks likely to cover both bilateral relations and broader regional developments.

### Hamas operatives, including Oct. 7 infiltrator, killed in Gaza strike: IDF

**World. (Agency)**  
The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it eliminated several Hamas operatives in a targeted strike in central Gaza, identifying the group as a cell planning "imminent" attacks against Israeli troops deployed in the area. According to the IDF, the operation was conducted earlier this week by forces under Southern Command, acting on intelligence from the Israel Security Agency (ISA). The military said the strike focused on a Hamas unit actively preparing near-term attacks on Israeli forces, underscoring what it described as an ongoing threat on the ground. Among those killed was Hazem Rami Ali Aidi, whom the IDF identified as a Hamas cell commander who infiltrated Israeli territory during the October 7 massacre. Israeli authorities have consistently prioritised individuals linked to the October 7 attacks, describing them as key targets in the broader campaign against Hamas.

The strike also killed Ibrahim Mansour, described by the IDF as a Hamas platoon commander who led repeated attacks against Israeli troops during the war. The military said Mansour played a central role in efforts to rebuild Hamas's operational strength and reconstitute its capabilities, actions it claims violated ceasefire arrangements.

Maher Tantawi, an operative in Hamas's military intelligence unit, was also among those killed. The IDF said his work involved intelligence activities used to plan attacks against Israeli forces.

### Palestinian local polls offer Gazans first voting opportunity in years

**World. (Agency)**  
Palestinians voted in local elections on Saturday that for the first time in two decades include Gaza and are a gauge of the political mood as Israel's government seeks to destroy any future for a Palestinian state.

The West Bank-based Palestinian Authority has said it hopes the inclusion of the Gazan city of Deir al-Balah will reinforce its claim to authority over the territory from which it was ousted by Hamas in 2007.

Some Gazans, who are struggling to meet their basic needs in the devastated enclave, welcomed the opportunity to vote.

"As a Palestinian and a son of the Gaza Strip, I feel proud that after this war the democratic process is returning," said voter Mamdouh al-Bhaisi, 52, at the Deir al-Balah polling station.

Turnout, however, was low, at 22.7% in Deir al-Balah and 53.44% in the West Bank, according to official figures. Counting began immediately, and results are expected later on Saturday or Sunday, they said.

Hani Al-Masri, a political analyst in the West Bank, said the low turnout in Gaza showed the ongoing humanitarian crisis meant voting was not a priority and that people were focused on survival rather than political processes.

In the West Bank, the turnout also reflected the impact of a boycott by some factions, Masri said.

Casting his ballot in a polling station in the Al-Bireh area, near Ramallah, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said that eventually elections would be held across the Gaza Strip when conditions allow.

"Gaza is an inseparable part of the state of Palestine. Therefore, we have worked by all means to ensure that elections take place in Deir al-Balah to affirm the unity of the two parts of the country together," he said.

# Shooter fired at Secret Service agent: What went down at White House press dinner

**A gunman opened fire outside the White House press dinner and was taken into custody. The breach triggered panic, evacuations and a sweeping security lockdown at the venue.**

**World. (Agency)**  
A heavily armed gunman carrying a shotgun attempted to breach a security checkpoint at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday night (US time), firing at a Secret Service agent outside the venue before being overpowered and taken into custody,

officials said. The agent was struck at close range but survived due to a bulletproof vest and is in "good shape", US President Donald Trump said later, describing the response as swift and decisive.

**BREACH ATTEMPT OUTSIDE, CHAOS INSIDE**  
According to officials, the suspect charged toward the main screening area at the Washington Hilton — from a distance of about 50 yards — carrying multiple weapons and opened fire as he tried to break through security.

An FBI official confirmed the attacker fired at a Secret Service agent, who was hit in protective gear and not injured. Closed-circuit footage later released showed the suspect running rapidly through the checkpoint before being "totally subdued and under control" by responding personnel, Trump said.

**PANIC INSIDE BALLROOM AS GUESTS TAKE COVER**  
As gunshots rang out outside the ballroom, chaos erupted inside the packed hall hosting over 2,600 guests. Attendees

screamed "Get down, get down!" and dived under tables, while waitstaff fled toward the exits. Armed Secret Service agents in combat gear stormed the venue, some taking positions on stage and pointing rifles into the crowd.



Trump and First Lady Melania Trump ducked behind the dais before being rushed offstage. At one point, Trump briefly stumbled while being escorted but was quickly helped up by agents.

Security personnel also forced senior officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, to the ground as part of emergency protocols.

**TOP LEADERS EVACUATED, EVENT SCRAPPED**  
All protectees, including Vice President JD Vance, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and other senior officials, were evacuated safely.

There were no reported injuries among attendees. Trump remained backstage for about an hour as the situation was stabilised. The dinner, a marquee Washington event, was eventually cancelled, though Trump later said it could be rescheduled.

**SUSPECT IN CUSTODY, PROBE UNDERWAY**

Authorities confirmed the suspect is in custody. Law enforcement officials have identified him as 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen from Torrance, California, though formal confirmation is awaited.

## How the South Korean wave is shaping young Indians and what India must refuse to copy

**World. (Agency)**  
When Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood beside South Korean President Lee Jae-myung at their joint press statement in New Delhi on April 20, he said something that stopped the room. Not about trade. Not about semiconductors or shipbuilding, though those conversations happened too. He said: "K-pop and K-dramas are getting extremely popular in India. Similarly, the recognition of Indian cinema and culture is growing in Korea too."

That is not a throwaway line. That is an acknowledgement that a cultural revolution has already happened, quietly and rapidly, on the phones of 300 million young Indians. And it deserves a clear-eyed look at what that revolution has given India, what it has taken, and what India must absolutely refuse to import along with it.

**The numbers tell the story**  
According to the Overseas Hallyu

Survey published by the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, Indian fans spend an average of 18.6 hours per week consuming Korean content, including K-dramas, K-pop and Korean variety shows. That figure makes India one of



the heaviest consumers of Korean content anywhere in the world, ahead of countries far closer to the Korean peninsula.

The content itself is not difficult to understand. K-dramas like Crash Landing on You, Squid Game,

Vincenzo, Bloodhounds and Business Proposal, all of them available dubbed in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, cracked something that Indian television had been trying to crack for decades. Tight writing.

High production values. No filler episodes. Stories that actually end. These shows did not merely entertain Indian audiences. They rewired viewing expectations entirely. Netflix understood this before most governments did. It invested aggressively in Korean content and the returns were global.

The recently released Made in Korea on Netflix, a Tamil-language coming-of-age drama, is a piece of soft power packaged as entertainment and delivered to 300 million Indians already primed to receive it. Korea did not need a diplomatic strategy to get inside Indian living rooms. It sent a streaming platform instead.

## At least 13 people killed, 17 injured in explosives attack in Colombia

**World. (Agency)**  
An explosive device killed 13 people traveling on a bus in southwestern Colombia on Saturday, an attack the country's army chief described as a "terrorist act" that also left at least 38 injured as violence linked to drug trafficking in the region escalates.

Octavio Guzmán, the governor of the region of Cauca, said on X that the device was set off while the bus was traveling along the Panamerican Highway in the municipality of Cajibío. Five children were among the injured, Cauca Health Secretary Carolina Camargo told Noticias Caracol, a TV news program.

Gen. Hugo LÁpez, commander of Colombia's Armed Forces, told a news conference that it was a "terrorist act"

and blamed the network of a man known as "Ivn Mordisco" — one of Colombia's most wanted figures — and the Jaime Martínez faction. Both



are dissidents of the now-defunct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia that operate in the region.

Neither Ivn Mordisco nor the Jaime Martínez faction abide by the peace agreement signed with the state in

2016. Colombian President Gustavo Petro condemned the attack on X.

"Those who carried out the attack and killed seven civilians — and wounded 17 others — in Cajibío — many of them Indigenous people — are terrorists, fascists, and drug traffickers," he wrote.

The attack is the latest in a spate of explosions that have attempted to target public infrastructure. At least 26 incidents have taken place in the past two days in southwestern Colombia, which LÁpez said has only affected civilians. They included a shooting at a police station in the rural area of Jamundi, and an attack on a Civil Aviation radar facility in El Tambo, where authorities took down three explosives-laden drones earlier on Saturday. No one was hurt.

## I guess, I was the target, not first time: Trump recalls assassination attempt

**World. (Agency)**  
US President Donald Trump said "I guess" when asked whether he was the intended target of a man who charged a security checkpoint at the White House Correspondents' Association annual dinner, after a shooting scare triggered panic and a massive security response.

Trump and First Lady Melania Trump were rushed out of the venue on Saturday night after loud bangs rang out, sending hundreds of guests diving under tables. Attendees froze before screams of "Get down, get down!" echoed through the hall, as heavily armed Secret Service agents stormed the dining area.

The incident comes after two assassination attempts on Trump in 2024 during his reelection campaign. In July 2024, he was shot and wounded in the upper ear during a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, while the gunman was killed by security personnel.

According to officials, a man armed with multiple weapons, including a shotgun, attempted to breach security near the event's main screening area. An FBI official said the suspect fired at a Secret Service agent, but the bullet struck protective gear and the agent was not harmed. Trump later said one officer was shot but saved by a bulletproof vest and is now "in great shape." Trump said the suspect charged a security checkpoint and was "totally subdued" by security personnel. He added that the suspect is from California and described him as "probably a lone shooter," saying authorities believe he was a "lone wolf actor," though the investigation is ongoing.

The President said he and the First Lady were "very quickly rushed off the stage," adding that Vice President JD Vance and other officials were present and safely secured. He praised the response of the Secret Service and law enforcement, calling it "incredibly acted upon."

Trump urged Americans to resolve differences peacefully, saying the event had brought together people from across political ideologies. "In light of this evening's events, I ask that all Americans recommit with their hearts to resolving our differences peacefully," he said.

Acting US Attorney General Todd Blanche said the probe is ongoing and charges will be filed shortly, with law enforcement working on search warrants. The FBI's counter-terrorism unit is leading the investigation, examining ballistics including a long gun and shell casings, and conducting witness interviews. FBI Director Kash Patel said agents responded rapidly alongside other agencies and secured the scene, urging anyone with information to come forward. Trump said the venue was "not a particularly secure building" and stressed the need for enhanced security infrastructure, including a proposed "war room" with drone-proof and bulletproof glass.

**Hayam El Gamal and her children, aged between 5 and 18, were detained on Saturday — less than 48 hours after being freed following more than 10 months in immigration detention. The family, which lives in Colorado, had been released on Thursday under a court order.**

**World. (Agency)**  
An Egyptian woman and her five children were again taken into US immigration custody by US authorities just days after a federal judge ordered their release after

more than 10 months of immigration detention, lawyers said. Hayam El Gamal and her children, aged between 5 and 18, were detained on Saturday — less than 48 hours after being freed following more than 10 months in immigration detention. The family, which lives in Colorado, had been released on Thursday under a court order.

According to their legal team, the family was re-detained while complying with a routine check-in requirement at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office in Denver. Lawyers said authorities then attempted to deport them, placing the family on a plane bound for Michigan and potentially onward to an undisclosed international destination.

An emergency motion filed by the family's attorneys temporarily halted the deportation, with a federal court intervening before the flight could proceed, lawyer Eric Lee said. According to Reuters, the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS), in a statement, defended its actions, saying the family was being afforded "full due process." The Department cast the judge who ordered the family's release as an "activist judge" who is "releasing this terrorist's family onto



American streets AGAIN." "We are confident the courts will ultimately vindicate us," the DHS' acting assistant secretary, Lauren Bis, said. The DHS did not explain why the family was

re-detained so soon after the court order. The family had initially been taken into custody in June last year, marking one of the longest immigration detentions involving a family in recent years. Their detention followed charges against El Gamal's ex-husband, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, who is accused of attempted murder, assault and a federal hate crime in connection with a firebombing incident in Boulder, Colorado.

Authorities have previously said they were examining whether the family had any prior knowledge of the attack. El Gamal, who divorced Soliman after his arrest, has condemned the incident and maintained that neither she nor her children were aware of any such plans. The case comes amid a broader crackdown on immigration under US President Donald Trump, which the administration has defended as necessary for national security. Critics, however, argue that such actions raise serious concerns about civil liberties and the treatment of families within the immigration system.