



# THE Hans India



**WOMENIA**  
**Ananya Panday on tackling exam pressure: 'They are a small part of a much bigger journey'**  
 The collaboration came to life with a special on-ground activity led by Ananya Panday, along with Nick's beloved characters Chikoo and Bunty. **P8**

**EDIT**  
**Together, let us empower our Nari Shakti!**  
 On the 16th of April, Parliament will be convened to discuss and pass an important bill that advances women's reservation. To describe this merely as a legislative exercise would be an injustice. It is a reflection of aspirations of crores of women across India. **P6**

**BUSINESS**  
**RBI hits pause amid oil surge, global uncertainty**  
 The Reserve Bank on Wednesday expectedly kept interest rates unchanged amid hopes of a global recovery on the back of ceasefire in the six-week-long US/Israel-Iran conflict. **P9**

**YOUNG HANS**  
**Crack NEET Chemistry with the right plan**  
 For students preparing for the NEET UG 2026, Chemistry often feels like a subject that sits between extremes. It is generally more manageable than Physics but not as straightforward as Biology. **P7**

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## Constitutional morality not a ground to decide essential religious practices: Centre

**NEW DELHI:** Constitutional morality can never be a ground for judicial review to decide essential religious practices and beliefs in a religion, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Wednesday while stressing that two previous verdicts on decriminalisation of consensual gay sex and adultery provisions based on this doctrine were "not a good law". A nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that constitutional morality is a "vague and subjective doctrine", and the judgements based on it coupled with the views of foreign legal experts and precedents cannot be a basis to test the correctness of religious beliefs in the country. Mehta submitted before the bench that the wrongly applied concept of constitutional morality by this court in some of the judgements later became the basis for deciding the 2018 Sabarimala case, permitting women of all age groups to enter the hilltop shrine in Kerala through the presiding deity Lord Ayappa is a Naisthika Brahmachari (perennial celibate).

# FRAGILE CEASEFIRE TAKES EFFECT

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON

IRAN, the United States and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire in an 11th-hour deal that headed off US President Donald Trump's threat to unleash a bombing campaign to destroy Iranian civilization. But hours after the announcement, Iran and Gulf Arab countries reported new attacks on Wednesday.

It was not clear if the strikes would scuttle the deal, which US Vice President JD Vance called "fragile." Even before the new attacks, much about the agreement was unclear as the sides presented vastly different visions of the terms.

Iran said the deal would allow it to formalize its new practice of charging ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial transit lane for oil. But the details were not clear, nor was it known whether vessels would feel safe using the channel or whether ship traffic had resumed. It also was unclear whether any other country agreed to this condition.

Pakistan, which helped to mediate the deal, said talks would begin in Islamabad on Friday and fighting would pause also in Lebanon, where Israel has launched a ground invasion against the Iran-

## US and Iran prepare for talks in Pak from tomorrow Much remains unclear and some attacks continue Oil prices plunge and shares jump on ceasefire plan

### ISRAEL STRIKES LEBANON

#### Iran threatens to exit truce deal

**TEHRAN:** Iran has reportedly told mediators that talks with US conditional and threatened to withdraw from the truce deal if the attacks on Lebanon continue. It has reportedly told the mediators that it will participate in talks in Pakistan only if the current ceasefire includes Lebanon.

backed Hezbollah militant group. Israel said it would not, and strikes hit Beirut on Wednesday.

The fate of Iran's missile and nuclear programs — the elimination of which were major objectives for the US and Israel in going to war — also remained unclear. Trump said the US would work with Iran to remove buried enriched uranium, though Iran did not confirm that.

Continued on Page 5



#### MOJTABA HELPED CUT TRUCE DEAL

**TEHRAN:** A defiant Iran and the most powerful nation in the world, the US, fighting for over a month, agreed to a ceasefire 90 minutes before Trump's "wiping out a whole civilization" threat was to end.

Continued on Page 5

#### Market cheers ceasefire

**Sensex zooms 2,946 pts**

**MUMBAI:** Indian stock markets extended their rally for the fifth straight session, with both the Nifty and the Sensex posting strong gains. The positive momentum came amid easing global tensions and steady domestic policy signals. The Nifty closed 3.78 per cent higher, gaining 873.70 points to end at 23,997.35. Meanwhile, the Sensex surged 3.95 per cent, rising 2,946.32 points to settle at 77,562.90.

Continued on Page 5

#### India welcomes US-Iran truce

**NEW DELHI:** India on Wednesday welcomed the temporary ceasefire between the United States and Iran announced by both sides and expressed hope in unimpeded freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

"We welcome the ceasefire reached and hope that it will lead to a lasting peace in West Asia. As we have continuously advocated earlier, deescalation, dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the ongoing conflict," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.



#### US V-P Vance, Ghalibaf to lead US-Iran talks

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

UNITED States Vice President JD Vance and Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf have been chosen to lead their countries' delegations in the peace negotiations in Islamabad on Friday, the Iranian semi-official news agency ISNA reported on Wednesday. The report also claimed that Iran's 10-point peace proposal framework, which US President Donald Trump previously claimed to be a "workable basis on which to negotiate," entails both Tehran's nuclear program and regional security, as well as lifting primary and secondary sanctions from Iran. Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said earlier that he had invited the American and Iranian delegations to hold talks in Islamabad this Friday, after they reached a two-week ceasefire agreement. **Cont'd on Page 5**

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#### HC quashes EC notification for Ponda bypoll

**PANAJI:** The Bombay High Court on Wednesday quashed the Election Commission of India's notification for the byelection to Ponda assembly seat in Goa a day ahead of polling, citing violation of the Representation of the People Act as the legislature's term is set to expire in less than a year. Thursday's election was thus cancelled even though postal ballots had already been cast, as the high court also refused to stay its judgement. While the ruling BJP termed the decision as shocking, the Congress accused it of conniving with the ECI to get the election cancelled by delaying the notification, and said it would file an appeal in the Supreme Court. A division bench of Justices Valmiki Menezes and Amit S Jamsandekar of the Goa bench of the High Court declared the March 16, 2026 notification "arbitrary".



#### Cabinet clears 12% hike in fertiliser subsidy

**NEW DELHI:** The Union government on Wednesday approved 12 per cent hike in subsidy for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers for Kharif 2026 season to Rs 41,534 crore in order to insulate farmers from rising global prices amid the West Asia conflict. The subsidy for P&K fertilisers for Kharif 2025 season was Rs 37,216 crore. The decision, taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, fixed subsidy rates effective April 1 to September 30, 2026. For Kharif 2026, the government has set subsidy for nitrogen at Rs 47.32 per kg (up from Rs 43.02 per kg in rabi 2025-26), phosphate at Rs 52.76 per kg against Rs 47.96 per kg, and sulphur at Rs 3.16 per kg against Rs 2.87 per kg. The potash subsidy has been held steady at Rs 2.38 per kg. Subsidy is extended across 28 grades of P&K fertilisers under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme, in force since April 2010.

#### HMDA looks to focus on completing infra projects

Mobilises Rs 3,278 cr from its first tranche of bonds



HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

THE Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), which used to play a key role in the development of the city by funding projects, is now seeking substantial funds to take up massive projects proposed by the state government. The HMDA has mobilised Rs 3,278 crore from its first tranche of bonds out of a total planned issue of Rs 4,999.87 crore.

The HMDA has maintained a strong financial position with diversified revenue streams, including development charges, building regularisation schemes, land auctions, and Outer Ring Road (ORR) Toll Operate Transfer (TOT) receipts. The HMDA has consistently generated revenue surplus with low debt

and maintained a stable credit rating. However, in view of several upcoming big projects, the authority has chosen to focus on funding for completing infrastructure projects.

The HMDA is offering 5 to 8 per cent interest to purchasers. The authority has the eligibility to procure Rs 19,999.99 crore in multiple tranches of its bonds by virtue of AA rating, with Rs 3,278 crore mobilised in the first tranche. According to a senior official, HMDA has several projects in the pipeline. Along with the two elevated corridors of Paradise to ORR near Shamirpet on the Rajiv Rahadari and Paradise to Dairy Farm road on the National Highway- 44, the state government has started the elevated flyover from the Integrated Command Control Center (ICCC) to Shilpa Layout.

Continued on Page 5



#### All set for polls in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry

**NEW DELHI:** Campaigning ended in Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, with voting set on Thursday for 296 seats. Officials received EVMs and other materials ahead of voting. Tamil Nadu votes on April 23, West Bengal on April 23 and 29 in two phases.

Polling will cover 140 seats in Kerala, 126 in Assam and 30 in Puducherry, with counting scheduled for May 4. A total of 1,849 candidates are in the fray, with key contests shaped by sharp political exchanges, development narratives and leadership face-offs.

In Kerala, the fight is primarily between the CPI(M)-led LDF, Congress-led UDF and BJP-led NDA, with top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan leading campaigns.

Continued on Page 5

#### NADERGUL LANDS

## Quick on feet, Ponguleti skewers Harish for hurling flimsy charges

- ▶ Revenue Minister targets Harish Rao
- ▶ Says 'no share, so allegations'
- ▶ Flays KCR and KTR
- ▶ Nadergul row escalates
- ▶ Blames BRS regime

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

REVENUE, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Wednesday alleged that former minister and BRS leader T Harish Rao is levelling allegations against him and other ministers because he did not receive any share in the Nadergul lands.

Addressing a press conference at the Secretariat, along with Ministers Ponnab Prabhakar, Seethakka and several MLAs and MPs, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy termed BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao as "Shakuni", T. Harish Rao as "Abaddhalarao," and BRS working president KT Rama Rao as "Dramarao," accusing



Minister for Information and Public Relations and Revenue Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, along with Minister Ponnab Prabhakar, addresses the media at the Secretariat on Wednesday

them of attempting to malign the Congress government with false claims. He alleged that the opposition leaders were trying to deflect attention from alleged corruption during their decade-long rule from 2014 to 2023.

Referring to the Nadergul land issue, Ponguleti stated that the land in Survey No. 613, measuring over 373 acres, had been under litigation for years, and that key transactions, including registration in favour of private firms and subsequent mutation, were carried out during the BRS regime in 2014 and 2016. He questioned the

opposition's attempt to link the current government to decisions taken during their tenure.

The Minister asserted that it was the present government that filed a counter-affidavit in the Supreme Court in 2026, claiming the land as government property and opposing its conversion. "We are fighting to reclaim government land, while they are spreading misinformation," he said. On the Vattinagulapally issue, Ponguleti described it as a private family dispute with no connection to the government.

Continued on Page 5

# ISRO sets 3 uncrewed missions ahead of Gaganyaan

HANS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU

INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V Narayanan on Wednesday said that three uncrewed missions are scheduled before the India's first human space venture Gaganyaan.

Talking to reporters after the inaugural session of the International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations, Narayanan said: "Based on the guidelines, direction and the announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are working on the Gaganyaan programme." "Before going

for the crewed mission, three uncrewed missions are targeted. So right now, we are working on the first uncrewed mission. All activities are going on well," he added.

The space agency chief further said that the time frame and everything else about the missions will be announced at an appropriate time. Underlining the importance of Spacecraft Mission Operations, Narayanan said, "Mission operation is an important activity in any space mission. The launch vehicle has to work for hardly 20-25 minutes. This mission operation activity has to continue for a long



time. When we talk about a communication satellite with a 15-year operation, continuously, this operation has to be done." Narayanan also cited the example of the Mars Orbiter

mission. "For example, our Mars Orbiter mission, almost 300 days, this operation had to be done to make the mission successful," he said.

He highlighted that in human spaceflight missions,

too, the mission operations are very critical, like any other important mission. Elaborating on the challenges, he said: "Challenges mean it is the first time you are going to accomplish this

mission. We have to do the human rating of the launch vehicle. Then a lot of new developments, including crew escape system, environmental control safety system, interfacing the human being along with the machine and software (are to be done).

About the event, the ISRO chief said: "Here the entire discussion is going to be on the mission operations, including all the new technologies. Around 400 papers are going to be presented and discussed. It will be highly useful for the students, start-up companies and also the engineers who are working in this area."

#### India withdraws bid to host climate summit

**NEW DELHI:** India has withdrawn its offer to host the United Nations annual climate Conference Of the Parties (COP33) in 2028, sources said on Wednesday. During his address at COP28 in Dubai in 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed India as the host country for COP33. Sources informed that the decision has been officially communicated to the concerned that India is withdrawing its bid to host COP33. There was no response from the Environment Ministry on the development. A questionnaire sent to the COP headquarters in Bonn also did not elicit a response.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
  
 Polls will be fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free... shall I also add voter-free?