



THE Hans India



We will move court again to resist voter deletions: Didi
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday hit out at the BJP and the Election Commission over voter deletions during the SIR exercise and said her party will move a court again to resist the removal of electors from the rolls. **P6**

Together, let us empower our Nari Shakti!
In the coming days, India will be immersed in a festive season, with celebrations taking place across the length and breadth of the nation. The people of Assam will mark Rongali Bihu while Odisha will celebrate Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti. **P4**

Centre lining up Rs 2.5-L-Cr guarantee scheme for MSMEs
The government is considering a Rs 2.5 lakh crore credit guarantee scheme to support businesses, particularly MSMEs, hit by the ongoing West Asia crisis, sources said. **P7**

Atlee unveils 'RAAKA', Allu Arjun roars
In a blockbuster announcement that has set the Indian film industry abuzz, Icon Star Allu Arjun, acclaimed director Atlee, and entertainment giant Sun Pictures, led by Kalanithi Maran, have unveiled the much-anticipated title of their mammoth project. **P8**

Simultaneously published from Hyderabad | Warangal | Tirupati | Vijayawada | Visakhapatnam | Khammam | Kurnool | Delhi: RNI No: DELENG/2017/74095
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WINDOWS

Saradha scam accused Sen gets bail

KOLKATA: The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted bail to multi-crore Saradha ponzi scam accused Sudipto Sen in the last two of the 300-odd criminal cases against him, paving the way for his release from jail after 13 years. A division bench of the high court granted bail to Sen in two cases pertaining to the Barasat police station in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Sen has already been granted bail in all the other cases registered against him, including four criminal cases by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Monsoon plan: LG, CM visit Vasudev ghat

NEW DELHI: Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday visited Vasudev ghat along the Yamuna bank to take stock of summer and monsoon preparations of the government. During the visit, Sandhu said that he has discussed with the chief minister that the entire cabinet will be involved. He also said that with summer approaching, there are challenges related to water, followed by the monsoon, which has its own issues like cleanliness.

Dr Ambedkar's statue desecrated

MUZAFFARNAGAR: A statue of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar was desecrated by unidentified individuals on Wednesday to allegedly create tension at the Vehlana village here, police said on Wednesday. After receiving information about the vandalism, police rushed to the scene and started an investigation, Circle Officer Siddharth Mishra said, adding that the damaged statue has been repaired. Meanwhile, security has been tightened in the village, and extra police have been deployed as a precautionary measure. CCTV has also been installed, the officer said, adding that the police are trying to arrest those who were involved in the act of damaging the statue.

Minor held for raping 13-yr-old girl

LUCKNOW: Police said on Wednesday that a 17-year-old boy was taken into custody for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl in Lucknow's Ashiyana area. The incident occurred on Tuesday evening when the victim, who knew the accused, was led to a secluded spot, the police said.

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

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

Ceasefire sealed, civilization 'saved'

DUBAI/TEHRAN

IRAN, the United States and Israel reached a tentative, two-week ceasefire Wednesday in the war that tore across the Middle East and disrupted the global energy market, with US President Donald Trump pulling back from his threats to destroy Iranian "civilization." But questions emerged over what appeared to be dueling proposals to halt the fighting, with Iran insisting it would control and charge ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz as well as enrich uranium. Trump initially said Iran proposed a "workable" 10-point plan that could help end the war he launched with Israel on Feb. 28. But he later called the plan fraudulent without elaborating. Trump has said ending Iran's nuclear program entirely was a key point of the war. Israel backed the US ceasefire with Iran but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday it doesn't cover fighting against Hezbollah in Lebanon, which continued through the morning. That

US, Israel and Iran agree to a 2-week ceasefire as Trump pulls back on his threats; Trump says moment could mark new 'Golden Age' for Mideast; Democrats call for removal of Trump; push back from some Republicans too; Trump warns of 50% tariffs on nation supplying arms to Iran; Iran confirms participation in Pak-hosted peace talks with US

contradicted comments from Pakistan, a key mediator that said talks over cementing a peace plan would begin as soon as Friday in Islamabad. Pakistan also said the ceasefire began immediately, while Iran launched attacks on Gulf Arab states and Israel soon after. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has confirmed Tehran's participation in Pakistan-facilitated peace talks with the US in Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday. The talks will



be held on Friday. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said passage through the strait would be allowed under Iranian military management. It wasn't clear whether that meant Iran would completely loosen its chokehold on the waterway

Trump in a social media post declared the ceasefire agreement a "big day for World Peace" and that the US "will be helping with the traffic buildup in the Strait of Hormuz." "There will be lots of positive action!" Trump predicted in his

post. "Big money will be made. Iran can start the reconstruction process. We'll be loading up with supplies of all kinds, and just hangin' around" in order to make sure that everything goes well. I feel confident that it will." Trump's message on his Truth Social website signals Washington's concern about Iran maintaining its chokehold over the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which 20% of all oil and natural gas passes in peacetime. Trump's threats of wiping out the "whole civilisation" in Iran drew strong condemnation from Democrat leaders, who called for his "immediate removal" and a push back from some Republicans who hoped and prayed that the remarks were "bluster". US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on Wednesday claimed that Tehran begged for a truce. Trump warned that any nation providing military weapons to Iran will face an immediate 50 percent tariff on all goods exported to the United States.

Will 'dig up' uranium buried in Iran: Trump

DUBAI: President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the United States would cooperate with Iran to excavate and remove enriched uranium buried during joint US-Israeli strikes last summer.

In a social media post, he emphasized that there would be no further uranium enrichment and claimed the material has remained untouched since the June attacks.

Iran claimed a 'historic victory' after the US agreed to a two-week ceasefire.

Foreign Affairs Expert Robinder Sachdev said that Trump's warning on Iran that its entire civilisation "will die" if a deal was not made raised the stakes for



the US President to take severe steps against the Islamic Regime, which pressured him to take a step back and lead to the ceasefire deal.

Maria Zakharova, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, says the United States and Israel

Iran declared victory by waging asymmetric war; US-Israel suffered 'crushing defeat' in Iran, Russia's Foreign Ministry; 'Trump's statements on Iran pressured him to step back'

there was no military solution to this situation or any attempt to establish order in the region," she said on Sputnik radio.

'Caring for Indians my responsibility'

No gas, fuel paucity; saw 95% online LPG bookings: Govt

NEW DELHI

ABDUL Majid Hakeem Ilahi, Representative of Iran's Supreme Leader in India, on Wednesday said that when the conflict intensified, Iran also worked closely with the Indian embassy in Tehran to support students and visitors.

Ilahi, in a conversation with ANI, said that taking care of Indian brothers and sisters is his responsibility. "When this conflict intensified, I worked to ensure about 3,000 students from Tehran and other cities, mostly in medical sciences,



were moved to safe accommodations. We also worked closely with the Indian embassy in Tehran to support students and visitors. About 400 visitors were provided with accommodation and meals before I supported their travel to Armenia and then back to India. Taking care of our Indian brothers and sisters is my responsibility," he said. The Indian Ministry of

Petroleum said that there is sufficient availability of liquefied petroleum gas and other fuels such as petrol and diesel despite tensions in West Asia. About 95 percent bookings of LPG cylinders are being made online and 91 percent of the refill deliveries are ensured through the delivery authentication code, which reflects that there was no diversion in deliveries.

LDF eyes hat-trick

Assam to vote in high-stakes polls on Thursday; BJP aims hat-trick, Congress eyes wrestling power; 9.50 lakh voters to decide fate of 294 candidates in Pandy; all arrangements in place

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala is all set for a crucial Assembly election on Thursday, with 2.71 crore voters poised to cast their franchise in a decisive contest that will test the ruling LDF's bid for a third consecutive term, the opposition UDF's comeback prospects, and the NDA's push to open its account in the state. After nearly a month of intense campaigning, the southern state will go to the polls in a single phase, with voting to be held from 7 am to 6 pm across all 140 constituencies where 883 candidates are in the fray. The electorate comprises 1.32 crore men, 1.39 crore women and 273 transgender persons, along with over 2.42 lakh overseas voters, underlining the scale of the electoral exercise, according to Election Commission figures. The contest, though triangular, is rooted in Kerala's traditionally bipolar political landscape, where power has largely alternated between the LDF and the UDF. The high-stakes elections to the 126-member Assam assembly will

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



be held on Thursday, with most seats slated to witness a direct contest between the BJP-led NDA and the opposition coalition helmed by the Congress. The BJP is eyeing a third straight term in power in these elections, while the Congress is looking to wrest the state, from where it was ousted in 2016. Around 9.50 lakh voters will decide the electoral fate of 294 candidates in the Assembly elections in Puducherry on April 9 and all arrangements have been made for smooth conduct of polls, CEO P Jawahar said here on Wednesday.

Seven gang-rape schoolgirl in Bareilly

BAREILLY: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by seven people in a cafe here in the Bhojipura area, police said on Wednesday. On April 2, the girl was on her way to school when she was forced by one of the accused to ride on his bike to the cafe, where other people were already present. Deputy Superintendent of Police (North) Mukesh Chandra Mishra said the student was allegedly threatened with the circulation of a video of an earlier sexual assault. According to an FIR lodged at Bhojipura Police Station, the accused were identified as Asad Haider alias Karan, Chand, restaurant owner Saifi, Samir Ahmad, Banti, and two unnamed persons. Mishra said that on March 19, Asad had taken the girl to a room above the 'Saifi Cafe' and sexually assaulted her, filming the act in the process. He allegedly threatened to circulate the clip on social media if she told anyone. The DSP said that on April 2, the girl was on her way to school to collect her mark sheet when Chand stopped her and warned that if she did not meet Asad, he would post the video online. He took the girl to the cafe where she was raped by the accused. The girl came home with the help of a passerby in a state of distress. Mishra said she hid the incident from her family for two days out of fear, and spoke up only after relatives noticed her deteriorating condition.



Court grants divorce to rape convict Narayan Sai's wife

INDORE: An Indore family court has granted a divorce decree to the wife of Narayan Sai, rape convict and jailed son of self-proclaimed godman Asaram, and ordered him to pay her a permanent maintenance of Rs 2 crore within three months, the woman's lawyer has said. Narayan Sai is lodged in a jail in Surat district of Gujarat after being sentenced to life imprisonment in a rape case. The court's order of April 2 dissolves his 18-year-old marriage, Anuragchandra Goyal, the lawyer representing Narayan Sai's Indore-based wife, Janaki Harpalani, told reporters on Tuesday. Goyal said his client had filed a divorce petition in the local family court in 2018, alleging mental cruelty and other charges against her husband, and seeking a lump sum maintenance of Rs 5 crore.

High lead levels found in soil near battery recycling units: Study

NEW DELHI

A new study has found high levels of lead contamination in soil near battery recycling units across Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, raising concerns about public health and environmental safety.

The analysis, 'Soiled with Lead: from Battery Recycling,' was carried out by Toxics Link, an environmental research and advocacy organisation, and published on Wednesday. The authors

- The authors examined 23 soil samples collected near lead-acid battery recycling units in selected cities, including locations close to residential areas, local communities, and primary schools
- Unexpectedly, higher average lead levels were detected in samples collected from authorised recycling units (formal units) compared to those collected from the unauthorised units

examined 23 soil samples collected near lead-acid battery recycling units in selected cities, including locations close to residential areas, local communities,

and primary schools. "All samples showed evidence of widespread lead contamination ranging from 100 parts per million (ppm) to 43,800 ppm," said the analysis. With reference to the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025, the findings indicated that 52 per cent (12 out of 23 samples) of the collected soil samples contained lead concentrations exceeding the 5,000 ppm benchmark for a Hazardous Contami-

nated Site. Also, 31 per cent of the samples surpassed the permissible limits for industrial areas as prescribed in the rule. "Unexpectedly, higher average lead levels were detected in samples collected from authorised recycling units (formal units) compared to those collected from the unauthorised units," said the study. Lead-acid batteries have been around for more than 150 years and are used in automobiles, backup power



systems such as inverters, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), telecommunications, and railway networks.

LG terminates services of two govt staffers over terror links

The dismissals were carried out under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution as part of the administration's "zero-tolerance to terror" policy, aimed at rooting out militant elements from government institutions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

JAMMU and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday terminated the services of two government employees for their alleged links with terror outfits, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen, official sources said.

The dismissals were car-

ried out under Article 311(2) (c) of the Constitution as part of the administration's "zero-tolerance to terror" policy, aimed at rooting out militant elements from government institutions. Sinha had recently observed that he will not rest until "the last thread of the terror cancer is torn from the body of government machinery". He had also vowed that security



agencies would "completely, decisively and permanently end the scourge of terrorism".

One of those dismissed, Farhat Ali Khanday, a Class-IV employee in the education department in Ramban district, was allegedly working for Hizbul Mujahideen and using his government position as a cover to revive militant activities and build networks in the region, they

said. According to sources, Khanday first came under the radar of security agencies in 2011 during investigations into a hawala network involved in distributing funds to families of militants.

He was arrested the same year but later secured bail and allegedly continued his activities. Investigations revealed that he remained in contact with militant net-

works and acted as a facilitator. A chargesheet was filed against him in a special court in 2022, they said. "We didn't know that Farhat was working for Hizbul Mujahideen until April 2011. His name came out during the interrogation of a Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist, who was nabbed by Jammu and Kashmir Police for distributing terror money to seven terror-

ist families. Police picked up Farhat and put him behind bars, but in October 2011, he managed to get bail and continued his terror activities," official sources revealed. The second employee, Mohammad Shafi Dar from Bandipora, was working in the rural development department and had been appointed on compassionate grounds, officials said.

AAP govt burdening Pb with Rs 1,500 crore loan: Oppn

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia slammed the Bhagwant Mann government, questioning its financial priorities and claiming that a fresh borrowing has been undertaken at a time when the state is already under significant debt

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

OPPOSITION parties' leaders targeted the AAP government in Punjab over the state's debt, accusing it of further burdening the state's finances by taking an additional loan of Rs 1,500 crore. Expressing concern over the "rising debt", they claimed that the fresh borrowing of Rs 1,500 crore would take the total outstanding debt to more than Rs 4 lakh crore.

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia slammed the Bhagwant Mann government, questioning its financial priorities and claiming that



the fresh borrowing has been undertaken at a time when the state is already under "significant debt". In a statement, Majithia alleged that instead of focusing on

fiscal discipline or reducing liabilities, the government continues to "rely on loans, thereby pushing Punjab deeper into financial stress". Majithia further criticised

the AAP government, stating that the party had come to power with a promise to reduce Punjab's debt and not to impose any additional financial burden on the state.

However, he alleged that in the last four years, the government has done the opposite by continuously taking loans. "This approach has not only increased the debt but has also weakened Punjab's economic position," he claimed. Stating that Punjab was once considered a prosperous state, Majithia said the current financial trajectory has pushed it towards "economic distress". He alleged that instead of making

Punjab "rangla" (vibrant) as promised, the government's policies have made it "financially strained". Congress MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa also slammed the AAP government over fresh borrowing, alleging that the Bhagwant Mann government is "pushing Punjab towards a financial emergency".

Development works have stalled, and the debt burden per citizen has risen to over Rs 1.26 lakh, he claimed in a statement. Randhawa claimed the state's debt has increased by more than Rs 1.33 lakh crore during the tenure of the AAP government.

Mysterious illness in Raj: 5 children die in five days

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

FIVE children, including two siblings, have died within five days from a mysterious illness in Rajasthan's Salumber district, officials said on Wednesday. The children, aged between two and four years, reportedly developed symptoms such as fever and vomiting and died within 24 hours, they said.

The cases were reported from Lalpura and Ghata villages in the Lasadiya subdivision, where health department teams have been deployed to collect samples and monitor the situation.

Officials identified the deceased as Deepak (4), his brother Laxman (3), and Seema (4) from Lalpura village, and Rahul (4) and Kajal (2) from Ghata village. Eight other children are currently undergoing treatment at



hospitals in Salumber and Udaipur, officials said. Additional District Magistrate Dinesh Rai Sapela said screening of residents was carried out in the affected villages, which have over 560 households.

"Medical teams have conducted screening and any person showing symptoms will receive treatment," he said, urging villagers to immediately visit the nearest health centre if children show any signs of illness.

Chief Medical and Health Officer Mahendra Parmar

said samples have been sent to RNT Medical College for testing, and the exact cause of the illness will be known only after reports are received. As a precautionary measure, teams from the animal husbandry department also sprayed disinfectants in cattle sheds in Ghata village. Local MLA Thawarchand Damor visited the affected area and reviewed the situation with officials. He urged residents to seek immediate medical attention after the onset of symptoms and to avoid superstition.

Nine arrested for vandalising liquor vend in Mathura

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MATHURA

NINE persons, including women, were arrested and sent to jail for allegedly vandalising a liquor shop here while protesting against its opening, police said on Wednesday. According to police, the incident took place on Monday in Bharatia village under Baldev police station limits, where a government-approved composite liquor shop had recently been opened.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (Mahavan Circle) Shweta Verma said a large number of villagers, including women, gathered and stormed the shop in protest. They allegedly forced the closure of the outlet and created a ruckus for several hours. The protesters allegedly entered the shop, damaged several liquor bottles and also broke the CCTV camera installed on the premises, police said. On a complaint lodged by the shop operator, police registered a case and arrested nine persons -- five men identified as Shyamveer, Satto, Rishipal, Vijendra and Vikas, and four women. They were produced before a magistrate and sent to jail, Station House Officer Pushpendra Singh said. Police are examining CCTV footage and video recordings of the incident to identify other individuals involved in the alleged vandalism and further arrests are likely, officials said.

Crop loss due to unseasonal rains

Yogi directs officials to ensure compensation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW

EXPRESSING deep concern over the damage caused to rabi crops due to unseasonal rains, hailstorms, and incidents of fire in some areas, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday directed officials to ensure immediate compensation for farmers. Chairing a high-level review meeting in the morning, the chief minister said, "It is natural for farmers to feel worried in such adverse circumstances, and the state government stands firmly with them with full commitment," according to an official statement.

The chief minister directed that an accurate, fair and time-bound assessment of losses for every affected farmer and sharecropper be conducted, and immediate compensation be ensured. He said that effective coordination should be established at the district level among revenue, agriculture, and other departments concerned, and surveys should be completed quickly and reports sent to the government without delay, so that relief distribution is not held up. He also asked the officials to maintain active coordination with insurance



companies to ensure quick settlement of crop insurance claims. Officers have been instructed to directly reach out to farmers and ensure they receive the benefits of insurance schemes, so that maximum relief can be provided. Directing the Revenue Department, the chief minister said, "Adequate funds should be immediately made available to each district from the State Disaster Relief Fund.

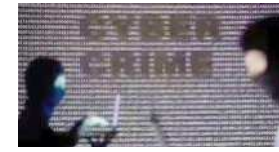
District magistrates must ensure that assistance is provided to affected farmers in a prompt and transparent manner. Relief camps should be set up wherever required, and mandi committees should also extend all possible support to farmers."

UP police bust cyber fraud racket in Kanpur; arrest 19

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KANPUR

THE Uttar Pradesh Police on Wednesday claimed to have busted an inter-state cyber fraud racket, arresting 19 youths from a village here, officials said. The arrests were made during a search operation by the cyber crime branch and special operations group (SOG). Based on intelligence inputs the team carried out the operation, sealing all entry and exit points of the village.

Commissioner Raghuraj Lal said the accused were part of a well-organised network that duped hundreds by posing as facilitators of government welfare schemes. "The gang used fake documents and mule bank accounts to siphon off money from unsuspecting victims," he told PTI. During the



search, police recovered multiple mobile phones, forged documents, details linked to government schemes, and evidence of mule accounts used to route illicit funds. Police officials suspect the network has inter-state links and may have defrauded victims on a large scale. The situation grew tense in the village in Revna area as locals gathered at the spot, prompting the deployment of additional forces to maintain order. Locals said that using loudhailers, police warned the accused to surrender or face strict legal action.

All 19 accused are being interrogated and will be produced before a local court.



Fresh snowfall in higher reaches of Himachal

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

SEVERAL high-altitude areas of Himachal Pradesh experienced fresh snowfall on Wednesday, while moderate to heavy rains lashed the mid and lower hills, bringing down temperatures. The local MeT department has issued a yellow warning for light to moderate rain at isolated places, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds reaching 40-50 kmph in parts of Mandi, Kullu and Shimla districts on Wednesday, officials said.

Rohtang Pass, the tribal areas of Lahaul and Spiti, and Kufri on the outskirts of Shimla town were among the places that received fresh snowfall, while Shikari Mata temple in Mandi district, located at an altitude of 11,000 ft,

also witnessed intermittent snow, which is unusual in the month of April, they said.

Orchardists and farmers expressed concern over the weather, saying snowfall and stormy conditions during April would damage apple and stone fruits as well as standing wheat ready for harvest. Gondla and Kufri recorded 4 cm and 1.4 cm of snowfall, respectively, with Rohtang Pass and Shikari Mata temple covered in a white carpet. Moderate to heavy rainfall was recorded in most parts of the state, with Sangrah receiving 65 mm, followed by Rajgarh 60 mm and Chauri 52.6 mm. Minimum temperatures dropped by a few notches, with Tabo recording the lowest at 0.1 degrees, followed by Kukumseri at 0.6 degrees and Kalpa at 3 degrees.

2019 minor's rape-murder case

HC sets aside death sentences to two in Pb

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

THE Punjab and Haryana High Court has set aside the death sentences awarded to two men in a 2019 rape and murder case of a seven-and-a-half-year-old girl in Ludhiana's Doraha. The HC also remand-

ed the case back to the trial court, asking it to begin the trial from the stage of recording the statement of the accused and a fresh judgement be passed.

"It is not a case where the trial court had put all the incriminating circumstances to the accused," observed the bench of Justices Anoop

Chitkara and Sukhvinder Kaur in the April 6 order. The trial court in 2023 had awarded capital punishment to the two men in the rape and murder case.

The case has its genesis in an FIR registered in March 2019. According to the prosecution, the victim, whom the court affectionately referred to

as 'Laadli', was allegedly abducted by her cousin on March 9, 2019 in Doraha in Ludhiana. He was later joined by the co-accused and both of them raped her in an uninhabited godown. Subsequently, they strangled her and also inflicted brick blows on her head, which resulted in her death.

Haryana man launches 'AI Selfie with Daughter' campaign

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH

SUNIL Jaglan, who launched the "Selfie with Daughter" campaign years ago to combat female foeticide and promote gender equality, has now unveiled the "AI Selfie with Daughter" initiative. A former Sarpanch of Bibipur village in Jind, he said the idea is to use Artificial Intelligence to evoke the deep, unconditional bond between parents and daughters.

"AI Selfie with Daughter will not only create an emo-

tional bond with daughters but will also generate positive feelings towards girl child education, health, safety and rights," he said. Jaglan (43), a father of two daughters, Nandini (14) and Yachika (12), said the "Selfie with Daughter" campaign traces its roots to 2015 when he clicked a selfie with his daughter Nandini in Bibipur village in Haryana and shared it online to raise awareness against female foeticide.

He said he never imagined it would become a worldwide movement. The initia-

tive soon grew into a global movement and received praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including mentions in the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the campaign and mentioned it in his Mann Ki Baat programme. The Prime Minister's mention helped popularise the campaign globally for daughters," said Jaglan. Building on that success, Jaglan said the new AI-driven campaign allows parents, especially those without daughters, to create a vir-

tual image of a daughter using AI tools and pose for a "selfie" with her. "This is not just technology, but emotion meeting innovation," he said. "Using any AI image generator, parents who do not have a daughter can now bring their dream daughter to life..." said Jaglan. He said the campaign could also encourage social change by inspiring people to value daughters, support their education and well-being, and reconsider harmful practices like female foeticide. Participants can upload their AI-generated selfies on

'Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the campaign by Sunil Jaglan and mentioned it in his Mann Ki Baat programme. The Prime Minister's mention helped popularise the campaign globally for daughters'

the campaign website, selfiewithdaughter.org, name their virtual daughter, and share messages as #AISelfieWithDaughter, #AISWD, #AIDaughter, along with



reels. Jaglan said the best entries will be recognised on June 9, along with a pan-

chayat where every household participates. He urged parents to join the campaign

and celebrate the idea that "a daughter lives not just in our homes, but in our hearts."

Surprise inspection at GST office reveals lapses; CM seeks records

The sudden inspection led to visible disruption within the office, as several officials and employees were caught off guard. A number of senior officers were absent from their seats during working hours, prompting immediate questioning



HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

CHIEF Minister Rekha Gupta carried out an unexpected inspection of a GST office near the Delhi Secretariat on Wednesday, bringing to light serious lapses in punctuality and administrative functioning. The visit was part of an effort to tighten discipline across government departments and improve efficiency in public

offices. The sudden inspection led to visible disruption within the office, as several officials and employees were caught off guard. A number of senior officers were found absent from their seats during working hours, prompting immediate questioning. The Chief Minister took a strict stance, seeking explanations from the available staff, but expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of clear responses.

Arriving at the GST office at

11 a.m., Gupta inspected multiple sections, including wards and officers rooms. Several important sections appeared deserted, with empty chairs even after official reporting time. The situation raised concerns about adherence to office timings and accountability in handling public work. She stated that any delay or negligence affecting public services would not be accepted. Beyond attendance, the inspection also focused on the

office's internal management and infrastructure. The Chief Minister noted disorganised conditions, including old files stacked in corridors and poorly maintained facilities. She reprimanded concerned officers, stressing that inefficiency and mismanagement would invite strict consequences. Reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy, she warned that disciplinary action would be taken against those failing in their responsibilities.

During the visit, Gupta directed the department head to immediately submit detailed biometric and manual attendance records for the past few months. She ordered that officials found absent without valid reasons or prior notice should face salary deductions along with action under service rules.

BJP accused of obstructing water plans; AAP questions shift in Haryana's stand

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday launched a strong attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), alleging that it deliberately caused water shortages in the national capital to gain political power. His remarks came as the BJP-led government is now taking steps to procure additional water for Delhi from Haryana.

Bharadwaj claimed that several attempts by the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government to source water from Himachal Pradesh were repeatedly blocked by the BJP-led governments in Haryana and at the Centre. He said that despite the existence of a memorandum of understanding between Delhi and Himachal Pradesh, the pro-



cess was obstructed at every stage, preventing the capital from securing additional water supply.

He alleged that these actions were part of a larger strategy to create difficulties for Delhi residents, particularly during peak summer months when water demand is at its highest. According to him, people were made to struggle for wa-

ter while such efforts were deliberately stalled.

Highlighting what he described as a contradiction, Bharadwaj pointed out that the same Haryana government, which had earlier created hurdles, is now willing to supply water to Delhi after the BJP assumed power in the capital. He said this shift raises serious questions about

the motivations behind earlier decisions.

Bharadwaj further criticised the BJP and the central government, describing their approach as anti-people and claiming that their actions would be remembered negatively. He alleged that the handling of the issue reflected a pattern of prioritising political interests over public welfare.

Tweets by journalist Ayyub derogatory, communal: HC

Petitioner Amita Sachdeva said she is a devout follower of the Sanatan Dharm, and on her complaint, a magisterial court had already directed the registration of an FIR while holding that the journalist's tweets prima facie disclose cognisable offences under the Indian Penal Code

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Wednesday termed certain tweets by journalist Rana Ayyub "highly derogatory, inflammatory and communal" as it sought her stand on a petition seeking removal of the allegedly objectionable content from social media.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, who was hearing a lawyer's petition alleging that Ayyub's tweets insulted Hindu Deities and "revered historical figures", observed that even an FIR was also directed to be registered against her in relation to the tweets and called upon the Centre, Delhi Police and X to "work in tandem" and "do the needful in 24 hours". "Let the matter be called the day after. Action is necessary in view of the highly derogatory, inflammatory and communal tweets by respondent no. 4 (Ayyub), pursuant to which FIR has also been directed against respondent no. 4 by a court of competent jurisdiction," the court ordered. Observing that the "matter requires consideration", the court issued notice to the Centre, Ayyub as well as X on the petition seeking the immediate removal of the "highly derogatory, in-



flammatory, and communal tweets" by Ayyub. The court also made Delhi Police a party to the case.

Petitioner Amita Sachdeva said she is a devout follower of the Sanatan Dharm, and on her complaint, a magisterial court had already directed the registration of an FIR while holding that the journalist's tweets prima facie disclose cognisable offences under the Indian Penal Code. The plea said the petitioner approached X's resident grievance officer as well as the Grievance Appellate Committee for the removal of the content.

However, the committee declined to grant relief, stating the matter was sub-judice, it added.

The petitioner said the continued public availability of the tweets has caused continuing and direct injury to her religious sentiments and violated her fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 21 (Right to life and liberty) and 25 (Freedom of religion) of the Constitution.

CM Shri school admissions to begin from April 13

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

ADMISSIONS to the CM Shri Schools in Delhi will open on April 13 for Classes 6 and 9, and on May 7 for Class 11 for the 2026-27 academic session, according to the Directorate of Education. Admit cards were distributed on Wednesday for the entrance examinations.

The tests for Classes 6 and 9 will be conducted in the last week of March, while the examination for Class 11 is scheduled for May, the DoE said in a public notice issued on Tuesday. The results for Classes 6 and 9 will be announced on April 30, and the results for Class 11 will be released on May 25.

Only residents of Delhi who studied in a recognised school in the national capital during the 2025-26 academic session are eligible to apply, a circular issued by the education department stated.

According to the department, 50 per cent of the seats

are reserved for students who have passed Classes 5, 8 and 10 from Delhi government schools. The remaining seats are open to other eligible applicants who meet the residency and schooling criteria. The entrance examination will be objective and OMR-based. Class-wise syllabus details and a sample OMR sheet will be available on the department's website to familiarise applicants with the format.

The question paper for Class 6 will be bilingual, while those for Classes 9 and 11 will be in English. There will be no negative marking for the Class 6 exam, but it will apply to the tests for Classes 9 and 11.

The maximum marks for the Class 6 examination are 300, while the tests for Classes 9 and 11 will carry 400 marks each. The CM Shri Schools, an initiative of the Delhi government, aim to provide education with modern infrastructure, updated curriculum and holistic learning practices.

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Despite Tehran's claims, it is 'goals accomplished' for the US and Israel

AN interesting aspect of the war in West Asia is that now both sides can declare victory—with some justification. From the perspective of the United States and Israel, the primary objectives were met in the first few days—many of them within hours, when the belligerent allies eliminated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a section of the political and military top brass. While the Iranian armed forces are resisting the US-Israeli attacks, their capabilities have been seriously degraded. The Iranians may have shot down US aircraft but that is an exception rather than the rule; they have control over their airspace. US President Donald Trump has already claimed victory.

He wrote in a social media post, "The reason for doing so [accepting Pakistan-brokered ceasefire] is that we have already met and exceeded all Military objectives, and are very far along with a definitive Agreement concerning Longterm PEACE with Iran, and PEACE in the Middle East. We received a 10-point proposal from Iran, and believe it is a workable basis on which to negotiate (sic)"

Iran's 10-point conditions that the US finds "workable" include: non-aggression; continuation of Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz; acceptance of enrichment; lifting all primary sanctions; lifting all secondary sanctions; termination of all Security Council resolutions; ter-

mination of all International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors resolutions; payment of compensation to Iran; withdrawal of US combat forces from the region; and cessation of war on all fronts, including against the heroic Islamic Resistance of Lebanon. This gives Iran reason to claim that it has been able to withstand the sustained assault by the world's mightiest military, in alliance with the regional power, Israel, for more than a month. Trump's vow to bomb Iran's power plants and send the country "back to the stone ages" notwithstanding, Tehran's enemies have not been able to force open the Strait of Hormuz. Trump's warnings became chillier; just before 12 hours of his

ultimatum expired, he posted a warning on social media: "A whole civilization will die tonight." The clerical regime, however, refused to blink, leading to a two-week ceasefire. If the war ends after the culmination of the ceasefire on as-is-where-is basis, it will be a victory of the US-Israeli alliance, for they will have militarily truncated a powerful regime in the Middle East which has been spreading jihad all over the world. Regime change would have been the icing on the cake, but Trump would still be happy because he achieved the goals with negligible American casualties. Ditto with Israel. Iran, on the other hand, has lost the deadly nuclear and other capabilities, which it had till a few

months ago. Rebuilding degraded military capabilities, restoring deterrence, and reviving its nuclear programme—if it chooses to do so—will require time, resources, and a degree of strategic patience that may test the regime internally. The economic toll, compounded by sanctions and wartime destruction, will further constrain its options. In this sense, even as Tehran claims moral and political victory, it does so from a position of significantly diminished capacity. What remains uncertain is whether this uneasy equilibrium marks the beginning of a more stable regional order—or merely an interlude before the next, perhaps more dangerous, confrontation.

MEDLEY



LETTERS

Custodial deaths: Punish the Doc and judicial officer

THE verdict of the trial court in the case of custodial deaths in Sathankulam is widely welcomed. Police taking the right to brutally and beating the accused to death is sending the wrong message. Meanwhile, the doctor who had issued a false 'fit for remand' certificate and the judicial officer who had, in a mechanical manner, permitted remanding the two persons should also be treated on par with those who beat the innocents to death.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur-515004

Traditional alternatives more healthier

A PROPOS "Be warned: Soft drinks are silent killers" (April 8, 2026). The lure of fizzy drinks in summer is undeniable, yet their hidden cost to health is sobering. Clever advertising sells them as instant refreshment, but what they truly deliver is a cocktail of sugar, acids, and chemicals that quietly erode wellbeing. Obesity, diabetes, and dental decay are not distant risks, but everyday realities fuelled by these so-called coolers. The irony is that traditional alternatives like buttermilk, lemon water, and tender coconut are not only healthier but far more suited to our climate. If everyone treats soft drinks as indulgences rather than staples, we may reclaim both health and common sense before the silent killers claim more ground.

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

Fruit juices are a better option

A PROPOS "Soft drinks and the illusion of cooling relief" (THI, April 8), the concern about rising consumption of such drinks, especially during summer, is well founded. Many continue to see these beverages as harmless, overlooking their long-term health impact. Awareness alone is not enough. Schools and public institutions should actively promote healthier alternatives like water and fresh juices. Local campaigns, especially in smaller towns, can help change habits gradually. At the same time, ensuring easy access to safe drinking water is essential. A combined effort by authorities, industry, and consumers can lead to more responsible choices and better public health outcomes.

Abbharna Barathi, Chennai-600023

Better late than never

WITH reference to the article "Polavaram: Decades of delay, emerging progress and the road ahead" (THI, April 8), the renewed momentum is encouraging, but persistent gaps in planning and execution remain a concern. Large projects cannot afford repeated disruptions caused by weak coordination and irregular contracting. Clear timelines, stable funding, and strict oversight are essential. Land acquisition and rehabilitation must be handled with greater sensitivity and speed. Regular public updates can improve accountability and confidence. Technical monitoring should be strengthened to avoid costly damage to structures. If managed well, Polavaram can still deliver its intended benefits without further slippage or escalation.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

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BENGALURU ONLINE

Are rebels rallying behind HD Kumaraswamy?

BENGALURU: The political heat around the by-elections in Davanagere South and Bagalkot has intensified, with both Congress and BJP leaders aggressively campaigning on the ground. However, what has caught political observers' attention is the visible shift of several BJP rebel leaders, who appear to be aligning more closely with HD Kumaraswamy rather than the party's state leadership.

Senior leaders considered part of the rebel camp, including Ramesh Jarkiholi, GM Siddeshwar, Kumar Bangarappa and B P Harish, have largely stayed away from campaigning alongside BJP state president BY Vijayendra. While some leaders have maintained distance altogether, others have been seen sharing the stage with Kumaraswamy during campaign events, sparking speculation within political circles. Notably, these rebel leaders have openly expressed reservations about accepting Vijayendra's leadership. Earlier, Basanagouda Patil Yatnal had been vocal in his criticism of the B.S. Yediyurappa family, which eventually led to his expulsion from the party on charges of anti-party activities. Despite his expulsion, Yatnal has continued to campaign in Bagalkot in support of BJP candidate Veeranna Charantimath, though he has also kept his distance from the Vijayendra camp. A similar pattern is visible with Ramesh Jarkiholi, who has participated in campaign activities but avoided sharing platforms with Vijayendra, instead appearing alongside Kumaraswamy. This trend has added fuel to ongoing discussions within the BJP about internal divisions and leadership acceptance.

Amid these developments, there is renewed speculation that in the event of the BJP returning to power in the state, Kumaraswamy could emerge as a Chief Ministerial candidate under a potential alliance arrangement. While the Yediyurappa faction has not endorsed such a possibility, the rebel camp has remained non-committal, indirectly giving rise to interpretations that they may be open to Kumaraswamy's leadership.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

Together, let us empower our Nari Shakti!



NARENDRA MODI

IN the coming days, India will be immersed in a festive season, with celebrations taking place across the length and breadth of the nation.

The people of Assam will mark Rongali Bihu while Odisha will celebrate Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti. In West Bengal, Poila Boishakh will usher in the Bengali New Year and in Kerala, Vishu will be observed with immense enthusiasm. Tamil Nadu will celebrate Puthandu, while in Punjab and other parts of Northern India will rejoice Baisakhi, which will usher in a spirit of hope and positivity. I convey my best wishes to all those across India and the world on this festive occasion. May these auspicious occasions bring happiness and prosperity to everyone.

Furthermore, on April 11, we will commence the 200th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Phule and on the 14th, India will pay homage to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on his Jayanti. In addition to these spe-

cial occasions, when the spirit of renewal fills our hearts and minds, our nation stands at the threshold of another historic occasion. It is an opportunity to deepen the foundations of our democracy and to reaffirm our collective commitment to equality and inclusion.

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 understatement. It is a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across India. It is an affirmation of a principle that has long guided our civilisational ethos, that society progresses when women progress.

Women constitute nearly half of India's population. Their contributions to our nation are vast and invaluable. Today, India is witnessing remarkable achievements by women across every field. From science and technology to entrepreneurship, from sports to the armed forces and from music to arts, women are at the forefront of India's progress.

Over the years, sustained efforts have been made to create an enabling environment for their empowerment. Greater access to education, improved healthcare, enhanced financial inclusion and better access to basic amenities have strengthened the foundations of women's participa-



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 understatement. It is a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across India. It is an affirmation of a principle that has long guided our civilisational ethos, that society progresses when women progress.

tion in economic and social life. Yet, their representation in the world of politics and legislative bodies has not always been commensurate with their role in society. This is particularly unfortunate because when they participate in administration and decision-making, they bring along experiences and insights that enrich public discourse and improve the quality of governance.

It is imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and Assembly elections to various states in the coming times are conducted with women's reservation in place.

Over the decades, there have been repeated efforts to provide women with their rightful place in democratic institutions by the previous governments. Commitments were made; bill drafts were introduced but they never saw the light of day. But the broad consensus

has remained that women's representation in legislative bodies must increase. In September 2023, Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam with the same spirit of consensus. I consider it to be among the most special occasions of my life.

This opportunity to ensure women's reservation also resonates deeply with the spirit of our Constitution. The makers of our Constitution, notably the distinguished women members of the Constituent Assembly, envisioned a society where equality is both enshrined and realised in practice. Strengthening women's participation in legislative institutions is an important step towards fulfilling that vision. It reflects our commitment to building a society where every citizen has an equal stake in shaping the nation's destiny.

This is a moment that

cannot be deferred any longer. Every delay in advancing women's representation is, in effect, a delay in strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of our democracy.

For decades, the need for greater participation of women in legislative institutions has been acknowledged, discussed and reaffirmed. To postpone action now would mean extending an imbalance that we already recognise and have the capacity to correct. At a time when India is moving forward with confidence and purpose, it is essential that our institutions reflect the aspirations of all citizens, especially those who form half our population.

Timely action will not only honour long-standing commitments but also ensure that the momentum of progress is sustained. This is truly a historic opportunity to make our democracy

more representative, responsive and future-ready.

This moment calls for collective action. It is not about any one government, party or individual. It is about the nation recognising the importance of this step and coming together to realise it. It is what we owe to our Nari Shakti.

That is why the passage of a bill for women's reservation should reflect the broadest possible consensus and be guided by the larger national interest. Such opportunities call upon us to act not for ourselves, but for future generations. They remind us that the true strength of a democracy lies in its ability to evolve and to become more inclusive over time.

As we approach this historic Parliament sitting, I appeal to all Members of Parliament, across party lines, to come together in support of this important step for the women of India. Let us seize this opportunity with a sense of responsibility and purpose. Let us act in a manner that reflects the highest traditions of our democracy.

India has always shown that when it comes to matters of national importance, it can rise above differences and act with unity. This is one such moment.

Let us move forward together and strengthen Constitutional values and empower our Nari Shakti for national progress.

(The writer is the Prime Minister of India)

Indian marriages undergoing major transitions from the ritualistic 'arranged' concepts



DR MOHAN KANDA

THE Karnataka Legislative Assembly recently passed the 'Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (Eva Nammava Eva Nammava) Bill, which pointedly states that "the consent of parents, family, caste, or clan is not necessary once two adult individuals agree to go into wedlock. The phrase 'Eva Nammava Eva Nammava' dates to the philosophy of the 12th century social reformer Basavanna. It is a part of one of his 'vachanas', that translates to ".....do not ask who he is, who he is, who he is....."

"Say he is our own, he is our own, he is our own."

Lord Koodalasangama, say he is a son of your house,"

That message of inclusivity highlighted the need for inclusivity, in the context of Basavanna having facilitated a Dalit man's marriage to a Brahmin woman that led to an intense social turmoil and violence.

increase in violence, harassment, threats, and ostracism, perpetrated in the name of caste, hierarchy, honour and custom. It also notes that such crimes disproportionately affect women. The step was necessitated by the fact that the state had witnessed several hate crimes against such couples in the recent past. In a particularly heinous instance of honour related violence, a 20-year-old woman was killed in a gruesome manner by her father for marrying a Dalit man.

Many countries have also put in place legislation banning forced marriages and facilitating inter - faith or inter-caste unions.

Interestingly, the legislation is in sharp contrast to a recent proposal of the government of Gujarat, which requires couples wanting to register their marriages to submit identity documents of their parents, accompanied by a declaration that the parents have been kept informed.

What happened in Karnataka is only one manifestation of the ongoing worldwide transformation in the concept of marriage. From having, earlier, been a social or family obligation based on traditional grounds, such as caste, religion, or family status, the institution of marriage is increasingly being viewed as a matter of personal choice, emotional compatibility, and individual autonomy. There is, in evidence, a global decline in traditional matchmaking, even in traditional conservative societies.

Another emerging feature of marriages is that couples are prioritising education and ca-



Provisions that envisage providing protection to couples engaged in inter-caste relationships, and facing ostracisation or violence, are undoubtedly welcome. What is of essence, however, is how effectively such noble intentions are translated into concrete actions, especially against the background of crimes against such couples having continued in the past, existing laws notwithstanding.

reers over early marriages and marrying later in life, allowing more time for personal choice. Marriages are increasingly being seen as a partnership or companionship rather than merely instruments of procreation of financial stability, like love marriages and self-choice weddings. Consequently, there is a welcome and rapidly decreasing value being attached to factors like caste, religion, and, most importantly, the practice of demanding and accepting dowry. The classical and age-old belief was that marriages are made in heaven or that they are divine, predestined and ordained by fate rather than mere coincidences.

Even in traditionally conservative cultures, including in the Middle Eastern countries and parts of Asia, a growing number of women are seen fighting for the right choice in marriages and opposing forced

unions. This is evident in India too. While the practice of arranged marriages has not disappeared altogether, a hybrid variety of what are called - 'arranged with choice' are becoming increasingly common.

Interestingly, a novel concept of a 'trial' for a marriage is also gaining popularity in certain urban settings, a sort of live - in relationship as a prelude to a permanent relationship by way of marriage. In the changing ambience of marriages, one also sees a reduction in the stigma attached to divorce and remarriages. In a manner of speaking, it is almost as though lifelong love and heterosexual marriages are about as obsolete as a horse and carriage.

One way of looking at the emerging scenario is that the world community is amid a transition to a brave new world of intimacy. It is against such a background that one must view

the significance of the events in Gujarat and Karnataka.

Provisions that envisage providing protection to couples engaged in inter-caste relationships, and facing ostracisation or violence, are undoubtedly welcome. What is of essence, however, is how effectively such noble intentions are translated into concrete actions, especially against the background of crimes against such couples having continued in the past, existing laws notwithstanding. An even more pertinent issue arises in the present context, as caste consolidation rather than annihilation is very much in evidence, not merely in the way partners are chosen in marriages, but also the way candidates are picked by political parties and voted to positions of authority by the electorate.

The situation gets curiouse and curiouse when one notes the fact that Karnataka is yet to roll back the controversial law of 2022, dealing with freedom of religion and ushered in by the then BJP government. Some way forward suggestions establishment of specialised fast-track courts to deal exclusively with honour killings to ensure swift justice and prevent delays, by bringing in an amendment to the Special Marriage Act, 1954 to shorten the registration period in order to protect couples from potential threat surveillance and introduction of a provision in the 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita' law clearly defining what honour killing is and specifying punishments.

Matrimonial advertisements in newspapers are a popular, traditional way to find partners, widely used for their broad

reach and credibility. Leading newspapers offer dedicated weekly supplements for matrimonial classifieds. A very sensible suggestion by an elderly friend (who, incidentally, is happily married) is that it might be worthwhile putting in place a mechanism which will function as an advisory arrangement, to couples intending to get married. An agency or a set of experts, in other words, to counsel them about the pros and cons of the proposed union, before it is formalized by a ceremony or a registration. That way, it is felt, they will make an informed entry into the era of married life, with their eyes wide open. Even the central and state governments will do well to think in terms of creating an environment which enables such arrangements to be formed and to function, together with creating a regulatory mechanism to ensure that they are not misused.

Some examples from my personal experience reinforce the validity of the issue under discussion. My marriage and those of some of my friends and relatives have also been a sort of mixed bag in this context. Usha and I got married through an 'arranged-but-confirmed-by-choice' mode. One of my nephews married his paternal uncle's daughter, which, in fact, is frowned upon in the Hindu religion. Another friend is the happy result of a Christian-Muslim marriage. And by God's grace, all the unions have resulted in pleasant and well-adjusted relationships.

(The writer was formerly Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

Atchannaidu for demand-based, sustainable farming

- Agriculture minister urges farmers to adopt demand-driven crops and organic farming for better incomes and soil health
- Warns against excessive chemical use; govt offering training, subsidies, and dedicated markets for organic produce
- Highlights success of Maruteru paddy varieties; calls for village-level awareness and alignment with changing food habits

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

AGRICULTURE minister K Atchannaidu called upon farmers to shift towards demand-based crop cultivation and adopt sustainable farming practices to improve incomes and protect soil health.

Speaking at a Kisan Mela at the agricultural research station in Maruteru of Penumantra mandal in Achanta constituency of



Agriculture minister K Atchannaidu inaugurated Kisan Mela at the Maruteru Agricultural Research Station in West Godavari district on Wednesday.

West Godavari district on Wednesday, the minister said organic farming offers higher returns with lower input costs while ensuring healthier food for consumers. The event focused on the theme 'Changing Climate Conditions-Sustainable Paddy Cultivation.'

The minister inspected laboratories at the research station and interacted with scientists to understand

the latest developments in paddy varieties.

He also visited stalls set up by Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University and private companies, showcasing modern farm machinery and technologies.

Addressing the gathering, he expressed concern over the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which he said is

degrading soil quality and increasing cultivation costs.

He stated that the government is providing training, subsidies and marketing support to encourage farmers to shift towards organic farming. Steps are also being taken to establish dedicated markets to ensure better prices for organic produce.

He noted that paddy varieties developed at the

Maruteru research centre are achieving high yields in several states across the country and appreciated the efforts of agricultural scientists. With changing food habits among people, he advised farmers to align crop choices with market demand.

He directed officials and scientists to create awareness at the village level about suitable crops for different regions. Rajya Sabha MP Paka Venkata Satyanarayana stressed the importance of soil testing awareness among farmers and said interlinking of rivers in the state would help address irrigation challenges.

District collector Chadavada Nagarani said a target of 7.25 lakh metric tonnes has been set for rabi procurement in the district.

Achanta MLA Pitani Satyanarayana, Tanuku MLA Arimilli Radhakrishna, Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University vice-chancellor Dr R Sharada Jayalakshmi Devi, Horticulture University vice-chancellor Dhanujaya Rao were among those present.

Botcha flags Rs 20,500 cr debt gap, seeks Gov's intervention

- Opposition leader in Council in a letter to the Governor alleges that finance dept understated borrowings for 2024-25 and 2025-26 by omitting key components
- Claims actual liabilities are Rs 81,082 cr versus the reported Rs 60,485 cr, citing CAG-audited accounts
- Accuses govt of hiding off-budget loans and inconsistent reporting, urging transparency to restore public trust

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

EXPRESSING concern over debts mobilised by the NDA government, particularly in the past two years, YSRCP MLC Botcha Satyanarayana dashed off a letter to Governor S Abdul Nazeer alleging that the state finance department presented inaccurate details regarding government borrowings for 2024-25 and 2025-26 in the Legislative Council.

Satyanarayana said the response given by the principal finance secretary to a 'starred' question in the February 2026 session understated the actual borrowings, omitting 'key' components.

The leader of Opposition in Legislative Council requested the Governor's intervention in



YSRCP MLC Botcha Satyanarayana

convincing the state government to provide the real picture of the data to the legislature. "The finance department stated that total borrowings for 2024-25 were Rs 60,485 crore. However, the CAG-audited finance accounts clearly indicate that the actual net liabilities are about Rs. 81,082 crore. This leaves a gap of more than Rs. 20,500 crore which needs attention," he demanded.

Pointing out that three major components would have possibly been omitted, the MLC said, "Borrowings under Ways and Means Advances from RBI were not included, even though they have been classified as internal debt in official records. Net liabilities under public account such as deposits and reserve funds were excluded. Also, adjustments related to GST compensation loans were reduced without valid justification."

He underlined that when the fiscal deficit itself is over Rs 81,000 crore, presenting a much lower borrowing fig-

ure paints a 'different' picture of the state's finances. "Such omissions create a false impression that the government's debt burden is lower than it actually is," he criticised.

Raising another issue, Satyanarayana said the government's claim that there were no off-budget borrowings in 2025-26 is incorrect. "Government backed corporations like MARKED and Civil Supplies Corporation have been allowed to raise loans with state guarantees. These entities depend on government support and such borrowings clearly fall under off budget liabilities as per Government of India guidelines," he said.

Pointing to alleged inconsistency in the finance department's approach, Satyanarayana said that when details were sought for borrowings from 2014-2024, both public debt and public account were included. However, public account was excluded in the past two years. He expressed that this raises serious concerns.

Stating that officials are expected to present facts in a transparent manner, he stressed that any deviation from this principle affects the credibility of the finance department and weakens public trust. The MLC requested the Governor to intervene and ensure corrective action is taken with immediate effect.

ELEPHANT RAIDS

Solar fencing brings hope to farmers in Chittoor region

- Tirupati East forest division installed a hanging solar-powered fence covering about five kilometres in Pulicherla mandal

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

FARMERS across several mandals of the erstwhile Chittoor district are beginning to see hope after years of crop destruction caused by recurring elephant incursions, with forest authorities rolling out a solar-powered fencing system aimed at keeping herds away from agricultural lands.

For nearly a decade, villages located along forest fringes in Pulicherla, Somala, Sadam, Palamaner, Punganur and Kallur mandals have witnessed frequent elephant movement. The animals often strayed into cultivated fields, damaging crops across vast stretches and destroying farm equipment, leaving cultivators struggling with mounting losses. The persistent threat forced many farmers to either reduce cultivation or shift to less vulnerable farming practices.

In an effort to address the issue, officials of the Tirupati East forest division have installed a hanging solar-powered fence covering nearly five kilometres, stretching from



Gantavaripalle village in Pulicherla mandal up to the Kallurghat road. The project, implemented at a cost of Rs 49 lakh, has been completed and is set to undergo trial operations shortly. Forest authorities noted that a similar fencing system introduced earlier in the Palamaner range had yielded positive outcomes.

Elephant activity has been particularly intense in villages such as Pathapeta, Palem, Devalampeta, Kammappalle, Rayavaripalle, Challavaripalle and Ellankaviripalle. Farmers in these regions reported heavy losses to crops including paddy, tomato, brinjal and banana. Mango orchards and fodder crops were also affected, prompting several cultivators to cut down on agricultural operations due to uncertainty and financial strain.

Forest department officials said the solar fence installed earlier along the forest boundary at Palyam in Pulicherla mandal has begun yielding

favourable outcomes. In the month following its installation, elephant herds attempting to enter nearby farmlands have reportedly turned back upon reaching the barrier, providing relief to local farming communities.

Officials explained that the fencing system operates using solar-powered batteries to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply. During summer months, when elephants frequently venture out searching for food and water, power is maintained round the clock. The fence delivers a mild, non-lethal electric shock that deters the animals without causing harm. In the monsoon season, however, the power supply will function between 6 pm and 6 am, aligning with peak elephant movement hours.

Forest authorities expressed optimism that the new measure would significantly reduce human-elephant conflict in the region and help farmers regain confidence in cultivation.

Focus on uninterrupted power supply, farmer welfare: Energy minister

Inaugurates APCPDCL corporate office in Vijayawada

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

ENERGY minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said the government's primary goal is to provide quality and uninterrupted power supply while enhancing services to the public.

The minister inaugurated the new corporate office of Andhra Pradesh Central Power Distribution Corporation Limited (APCPDCL) at Gunadala, Vijayawada, in the presence of MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLA Gadde Ramamohan Rao, energy special chief secretary K Vijayanand and CMD P Pulla Reddy.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister expressed happiness over the inauguration of the modern office, built at an estimated cost of Rs 35-40 crore with a total area of 65,000 square feet. He credited the collective efforts of the department staff for earning a good reputation for the power sector.

He said that construction of new substations is progressing rapidly across the state. Following the directions of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the government is focused on providing uninterrupted quality power supply without increasing electricity tariffs. He emphasised that there should be no power disruptions or low-voltage issues, and officials are working dili-

gently to achieve this.

The minister further stated that the department aims to improve public perception from the current 80 per cent to over 95 per cent. Under the PM Kusum scheme, tenders have been completed to provide free daytime electricity to farmers, and works will commence soon.

Highlighting achievements, he noted that the state has recorded unprecedented levels of power generation using modern techniques. By purchasing power during low-demand daytime and generating electricity during peak evening hours, the state is ensuring no shortages.

Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and pumped storage projects (PSPs) are being expanded, and tenders have already been invited at 10 locations for battery storage systems.

He also praised electricity staff for their tireless service during disasters. Recalling past floods and cyclones, es-



Energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar inaugurates the new corporate office of APCPDCL at Gunadala in Vijayawada on Wednesday

pecially in Visakhapatnam, he said around 1,500-2,000 personnel restored nearly 20,000 electric poles within 24 hours, ensuring quick restoration of power supply.

Vijayanand said that advanced, human-independent software is being used to ensure transparency in power purchase and sales. He added that the state successfully managed a record peak load of 14,009 mw this year and supplied 275 million units of power without interruption during the summer. The efficiency of APGenco plants has been increased to 85-90 per cent.

He further noted that the APCPDCL building has been developed with a 'Net Zero' concept, incorporating solar energy and green technologies to reduce power consumption and achieve carbon neutrality.

CMD Pulla Reddy urged discom officials to continue delivering better services to consumers.

He added that the state successfully managed a record peak load of 14,009 mw this year and supplied 275 million units of power without interruption during the summer. The efficiency of APGenco plants has been increased to 85-90 per cent.

He further noted that the APCPDCL building has been developed with a 'Net Zero' concept, incorporating solar energy and green technologies to reduce power consumption and achieve carbon neutrality.

CMD Pulla Reddy urged discom officials to continue delivering better services to consumers.

ASSAM POLICE FILES CASE

Pawan Khera moves HC seeking anticipatory bail

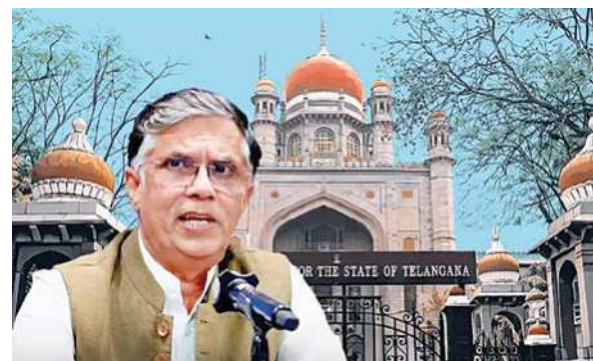
- The Congress leader on April 5 alleged that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit
- An Assam Police team had earlier visited the Delhi residence of Khera for questioning in connection with the case

HYDERABAD

CONGRESS leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday moved the Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a case filed against him by the Assam government against his allegations against Chief Minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

Khera, who showed his residential address in Hyderabad, requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest. The petition was filed on April 7. It will be taken up by the court on April 9. Khera named the DCP



of Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station and Telangana government as respondents to his petition. The case was registered in the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station against Khera under several sections of the BNS, including 175 (false statement in connection with an elec-

tion), 35 (Right of private defence of the body and of property) and 318 (cheating). The Congress leader on April 5 alleged that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit.

An Assam Police team had earlier visited the Delhi residence of Khera for questioning in connection with the case. Khera's advocate Ponnamm Ashok Goud told PTI that anticipatory bail was sought as the FIR copy has not been uploaded on police website as per Supreme Court's orders, and that the former's Delhi house was searched with an intention to arrest.

Sarma on Tuesday slammed the Congress for "not verifying" the documents based on which it brought allegations against him and his family. The CM asserted that Khera had "run away" to Hyderabad, but the Assam Police will "hunt him down even from 'patala' (netherworld)".

Jupally stands with commuters on crowded Metro

HYDERABAD

MINISTER for Tourism, Culture, and Excise Jupally Krishna Rao on Wednesday surprised everyone by travelling on the Metro rail in Hyderabad just like an ordinary commuter.

Breaking away from standard protocols, Krishna Rao boarded the Metro in a remarkably simple and unassuming manner.

He traveled from Erramanzil station to Miyapur by Metro to attend a private event in the city. Upon reaching the station, the Minister personally purchased a ticket and proceeded to the platform. As the train was heavily crowded, the Minister did not attempt to find a seat but instead traveled standing alongside his fellow passengers.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

INVITATION OF TENDERS

THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

Tender Notice No. 01/2026-2027 Date: 08.04.2026
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

| S. No. | Tender No. | Brief Description | Qty. | Closing Date |
|--------|------------|--|-------------------------|--------------|
| 01 | 07250346 | OVH KIT | 248 SET | 20.04.26 |
| 02 | 09262412 | PRESSURE REDUCING VALVE | 610 NOS | 29.04.26 |
| 03 | 77269028 | 6.2MM THICK CGRSP. T-6618 | 5000000 | 29.04.26 |
| | | RGC | NOS | |
| 04 | 77265034 | ANTI CREEP DEVICE (T-8782 & T-8783) | 1300 SET | 04.05.26 |
| 05 | 02261013 | V DEEP GROOVE AXLE PULLEYS COMPLETE SET | 808 NOS | 04.05.26 |
| 06 | 19250563A | OIL COOLING RADIATOR FOR CONVERTER/ TRANSFORMER | 21 NOS | 04.05.26 |
| 07 | 77269025 | RUNNING CONTRACT FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF METAL LINERS | 4212550 NOS 100000 PAIR | 05.05.26 |
| 08 | 02260000 | CARBON BRUSH FOR TM 4601 | 10950 NOS | 11.05.26 |
| 09 | 77269036 | 06MM THICK NCR GRSPS T-8779 | 834 SET | 11.05.26 |
| 10 | 77269004 | 10125MM O/R (CURVED) SWITCHES T-4219. | 160 SET | 14.05.26 |
| 11 | 08260022 | LOW MAINTENANCE LEAD ACID SECONDARY CELL | 10357 NOS | 14.05.26 |
| 12 | 77269003 | 11200 AM AM THICK WEB SWITCH. T-10071. | 20 SET | 18.05.26 |
| 13 | 08260023 | LOW MAINTENANCE LEAD ACID SECONDARY CELL. 80AH | 4574 NOS | 21.05.26 |

NOTE -1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
2. No Manual offer will be entertained.
1167/26

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1166/26

It felt like the Mumbai Indians lacked a bit of purpose and intent with the ball, and that certainly spilled over into the batting. It was always going to be a big task to score 151 in 11 overs. Young swashbuckler Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was "brilliant" against pace ace Jasprit Bumrah

- Anil Kumble

Vaibhav taking down Bumrah eased pressure, says Jaiswal

GUWAHATI

AMAZED by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's seemingly effortless takedown of Jasprit Bumrah, Rajasthan Royals batter Yashasvi Jaiswal said his 15-year-old opening partner eased the pressure on him in the 27-run IPL win over Mumbai Indians on a rain-soaked evening here. The talking point before the match was the first face-off between the redoubtable pacer and the teen sensation, and Sooryavanshi lived up to the hype, smashing

an incoming Bumrah 131kph delivery on middle and leg for a first-ball six over mid-on.

"First ball, he hit him for a six, and I told him to just keep playing his shots," said Jaiswal, who scored a 32-ball 77 not out to lift RR to 150/3 in the 11-overs a side match that was truncated because of inclement weather. Mumbai Indians, in reply, managed 123/9 to slump to a second loss on the trot, while Rajasthan Royals climbed to the top of the table with three wins from three matches.

Mahela concedes MI blown away by Sooryavanshi and Jaiswal magic; It felt like Mumbai Indians lacked purpose and intent with the ball: Kumble

The Bihar left-hander, who was signed by Rajasthan Royals for Rs 1.1 crore during the 2025 IPL mega auction. He had shown glimpses of his prodigious talent by becoming the youngest centurion in T20 cricket and the second-fastest in IPL history with a record-breaking

35-ball hundred against Gujarat Titans last season. On Tuesday too, he was in beast mode from the outset, even though Bumrah operating with the new ball. Sooryavanshi, who turned 15 a day before IPL 2026 began, went on to hit two of

his four sixes off the pacer in his opening over, setting the tempo early with a 14-ball 39. It made life easier for Jaiswal at the other end as their confidence soared, allowing them to target other MI bowlers like Deepak Chahar and Trent Boult who both leaked 22 runs in their respective overs. "Of course, Bumrah bhai is one of the legends, so if he's scoring against him, it's amazing. It made us feel that other bowlers we can also take down," said Jaiswal, who hit 10 fours and four sixes and anchored the

innings," Jaiswal said. are quite an opposition."

Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene admitted his side was blown off course by a blistering onslaught from Rajasthan Royals openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

It felt like the Mumbai Indians lacked a bit of purpose and intent with the ball, and that certainly spilled over into the batting. It was always going to be a big task to score 151 in 11 overs," said former India captain Anil Kumble.



Divya Deshmukh storms into joint lead

R Praggnanandhaa saw his title hopes take a major hit after a loss against Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri in the eighth round

PAPHOS

INDIAN chess sensation Divya Deshmukh pulled off a superb turnaround converting what looked like a certain draw into victory to climb into joint lead, while compatriot R Praggnanandhaa saw his title hopes take a major hit after a loss against Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri in the eighth round, leaving him almost out of contention for a top finish in the Candidates tournament here.

In the women's section, World Cup winner Deshmukh turned the tables on overnight leader Anna Muzychuk to jump into joint lead with four others including the Ukrainian on 4.5 points from what had seemed a difficult position to defend. Deshmukh did well to fight on and equalise and then capitalised on an unforced error by her opponent in the queen-and-pawns endgame to score a vital victory.

The other Indian, R.



Vaishali drew with Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan to join Deshmukh, Kateryna Lagno of Ukraine, China's Zhu Jiner and Muzychuk in the lead on 4.5 points after eight games. The event is wide open now with Jiner giving a knockout blow to the hopes of her Chinese compatriot Tan Zhongyi to move to 4.5 points while Kateryna defeated fellow Russian Aleksandra Goryachkina.

On a day when Uzbek Javokhir Sindarov just decided to consolidate his lead and drew with tail-ender Andrey Esipenko of Russia in the 'Open' section, Praggnana-

ndhaa, who had scored his sole victory over Giri in the first round, fell prey to some simple tactics from a seemingly equal position and lost his second game in the tournament.

Sindarov took his tally to 6.5 out of a possible eight and looks headed for victory as his lead now stands at a massive two points with six rounds remaining in the USD 700,000 prize money tournament that will also select the next challenger for reigning world champion D. Gukesh in the world championship match slated later this year.

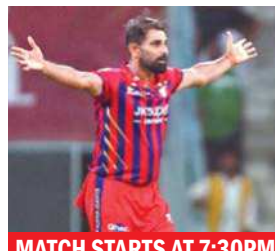
KKR brace for Shami challenge in LSG clash

TAPAN MOHANTA
KOLKATA

OUT of tune and bereft of ideas, Kolkata Knight Riders may ring in sweeping changes in search of their first win of the season when they face a Mohammed Shami-inspired Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, here on Thursday.

Shami is fresh from his outstanding 2/9 against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where he dismissed Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head in successive overs -- the same duo who had battered KKR the other day. The 'local' man Shami, a fine exponent of straight seam bowling and movement, will relish the conditions at Eden Gardens and could emerge as a key threat for a KKR who are yet to win after three matches. A glimpse of what to expect was seen on Monday when PBKS' Australian speedster Xavier Bartlett showed how effective straight seam bowling can be on a grassy Eden pitch, blowing away KKR's top order by dismissing overseas duo Finn Allen and Cameron Green in the space of three balls. From 16/2 in two overs, KKR were fortunate to escape with a point after their match against Punjab Kings was washed out.

Because of a trough stretching from Gangetic West Bengal to the Gulf of Mannar, rain has been a constant over the past three days and is forecast around late Wednesday and early Thursday. However, being a late 7.30pm start the match is unlikely to be affected much, which should lift the mood. Coming back to the contest, while Shami will be a major threat in the power play, tackling the rest of LSG's attack including Prince Yadav and mystery spinner Digvesh Rathi could also be decisive. LSG's strength lies in their power play bowling, something evident when they reduced both Delhi Capitals and Sunrisers Hyderabad to identical scores of 26/4 early on.



MATCH STARTS AT 7:30PM



Ayush stuns world No. 7 Feng in Asia Championships

NINGBO: India's Ayush Shetty stunned world No. 7 Lin Shi Feng of China in straight games to enter the second round of the men's singles competition at the Badminton Asia Championships here on Wednesday. World No 25 Ayush, who had won the US Open Super 300 title last year, registered a 21-13 21-16 victory in 51 minutes.

Lin raced to a 4-1 lead early on, but Ayush clawed back to level at 7-7 before gradually taking control to pocket the opening game. After the change of sides, the Chinese again moved ahead 4-1 and extended it to 12-9, but Ayush turned the tide with a six-point burst to surge to 18-13. Lin closed the gap to 16-18, but the Indian held his nerve to shut the door on his fancied opponent. Top stars such as PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy will begin their campaigns later in the day.

India go down 1-2 to Thailand

NEW DELHI: Rutuja Bhosale and Ankita Raina salvaged some pride with a consolation win in the doubles after Sahaja Yamalappalli's narrow defeat in the second singles as India went down against Thailand 1-2 in the rain-hit opening Asia/Oceania Group I tie of the Billie Jean King Cup here on Wednesday. A lot was riding on world No. 384 Sahaja as she resumed the match after it was halted due to rain on Tuesday evening.

However, the 25-year-old could not keep India in the hunt, losing 4-6, 6-1, 4-6 to Patcharin, ranked 449, in a match that lasted two hours and 25 minutes. Doubles pair of Bhosale and Raina then beat Thasaporn Naklo and Peangtarn Plipuech 6-3 6-4 in one hour and 11 minutes.

"We knew going into the match, Thailand is a very good team. We really have to play some good tennis. Unfortunately, we didn't do what we needed to do and lost 2-0. But nevertheless, it's a good thing that we won the doubles because it's still a long tournament ahead. And



every win matters," captain Vishal Uppal told reporters.

Earlier, resuming at 3-4 in the decider, Sahaja sent a forehand wide as Patcharin held serve to move 5-3 ahead. The Indian then held her serve after a Patcharin backhand slice found the net, narrowing the gap to 4-5. With the match on knife's edge, Sahaja produced some exceptional groundstrokes, dominating baseline exchanges. She even earned a break point when the Thai hit long. However, she faltered at the crucial juncture, sending a forehand and a backhand long to hand the advantage back. A miscued return on the next point ended her resistance.

We will move court again to resist voter deletions: Didi

Everything in my life began from here: Mamata after filing nomination for Bhabanipur seat;

KOLKATA

WEST Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hit out at the BJP and the Election Commission over voter deletions during the SIR exercise and said her party will move a court again to resist the removal of electors from the rolls. Her comments came after nearly 91 lakh voters' names were deleted from the electoral rolls following the completion of the Special Intensive Revision in the state.

"You will not be able to defeat the TMC by deleting names. We will move a court again to resist the exclusion of names," Banerjee said while attacking her principal challenger BJP over the roll revision exercise. Banerjee had in February argued in



the Supreme Court as she sought an intervention in the SIR process. The EC figures showed the total deletion of over 90.83 lakh names from the original voter base of 7.66 crore in October 2025. Criticising the poll panel over the SIR process, the TMC supreme said, "We will fight legally to get the names included on

the list as per the Constitution. If people cannot cast their votes, what is the need to frame the tribunal? And then you are saying that the list has been frozen. What is this? We will challenge it and try to understand it."

Turning her nomination filing for the Bhabanipur seat into a political counteroffen-

sive to the BJP's call for "paribartan", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee marched from her Kalighat residence to submit her papers, projecting the constituency as a "mini India" under siege of polarisation. "I was born and brought up here in Bhabanipur only. I stay here 365 days a year. My life, my work, my movements -- everything revolves around Bhabanipur."

Everything in my life began from here. I thank and salute the people of Bhabanipur," Banerjee said.

"People are allowed to eat eggs, fish, or meat in the BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. The same will happen here if the BJP comes to power," Banerjee claimed. PTI

CM Stalin on delimitation

'TN will not accept any decision taken without state's consent'

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Wednesday said the South demanded a fair delimitation and that the state will not accept any decision taken by the Centre on the subject without its consent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should not turn a "calm south into a storm", he cautioned, and posed a set of questions to the PM. "The Prime Minister must answer these fair and pressing questions raised by the people of the South," Stalin said in a post on 'X' with a headline "Delimitation Danger: Is India sliding into dictatorship?" The DMK chief sought to know why the Union BJP government was "shrouding the entire delimitation process in secrecy instead of coming clean on how it intends to carry it out."

"In 2001, former Prime Minister Vajpayee deferred delimitation for 25 years in the national interest. What is Prime Minister Modi's answer



to the just and reasonable demand of southern states to follow the same path today?" he asked in the post.

He questioned the timing of convening a special session of Parliament in the midst of five state elections and why the Union government brushed aside the fair and reasoned demand of Opposition leaders to hold the special session only after April 29. "What is it that you are trying to hide? Forcing through far reaching constitutional amendments without even convening an all party consultation is nothing short of dictatorship," Stalin claimed.

RSS files police complaints against Cong President

GUWAHATI: The RSS on Wednesday said it has filed complaints at two police stations in Assam against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for allegedly comparing the ideology of the organ-



isation and the BJP with a 'poisonous snake' at an election rally.

The complaints were filed to seek legal action over alleged "derogatory, provocative, and communally sensitive statements made during a recent election rally in south Assam, a RSS spokesman said. In the complaints, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh alleged that the Congress chief had made controversial remarks during an election rally in Nilambazar under the Karimganj South assembly constituency in Sribhumi district.

"If a poisonous snake is moving in front of you while you are offering namaz, you

must stop the prayer and rush to kill the poisonous snake first - that is what the Quran prescribes you to do. I tell you that the RSS and BJP are like that same poisonous snake," Kharge was quoted as saying in the complaints. The RSS expressed serious concern, claiming that such remarks were "inflammatory in nature and capable of inciting hostility, intimidation, and violence against workers and supporters of the RSS and the BJP."

The complaints pointed out that the statement constitutes a "corrupt electoral practice under Section 83 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and the remarks criminally intimidated the public and promoted enmity between supporters of different political and social groups."

Cong levels vote-for-cash allegations against BJP

PALAKKAD

CONGRESS alleged that Sobha Surendran, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate of the Palakkad constituency in Kerala, was "caught red-handed distributing" cash to voters ahead of April 9 elections to the state assembly.

Surendran denied the allegations, calling them "fabricated" to defeat her.

She alleged that a local Congress leader and a journalist of a TV channel were behind the allegations, and she would be filing a police



case against them. The BJP leader claimed that a video aired on TV channels, showing some women "offering something" to an elderly woman in her constituency, was wrongly projected by the Congress and the journalist to allege that she offered

money for votes.

Visuals aired on TV channels show a woman offering something to the elderly woman, and thereafter, another group goes to her and opens her hand to reveal a small roll of Rs 500 currency notes. Based on the video, it was alleged that the elderly woman was given money by someone in the BJP candidate's campaign team.

However, the elderly woman denied having received any money, but admitted to having asked for Rs 5,000 for buying medicines.

Kerala LoP urges EC to ensure smooth postal voting for govt staff

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, V D Satheesan, on Wednesday sought the EC's intervention to ensure that government employees can exercise their franchise without any hindrance through the postal voting process. In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner, CEC, Gyanesh Kumar, Satheesan said the issue has already been brought to the attention of the Kerala Chief Electoral Officer by postal voters from all 14 districts, but "no effective remedial measures have been implemented". Assembly polls for 140 constituencies in Kerala will be held on April 9. He said many such employees have also approached him, seeking assistance in resolving these difficulties.

Himanta using police to intimidate me: Khera

GUWAHATI: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday accused Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of "unleashing" the state police on him instead of addressing the opposition party's questions on multiple passports and foreign investments linked to the CM's wife. In a recorded video addressed to the CM from an undisclosed location, Khera said, "Our party had only asked you some questions. Why do you want to silence us? We have asked questions; give us the replies."

He added, "Instead of replying, you are hurling abuses at everyone, you have put police behind me. I am not afraid of them. But I am avoiding them as I have more questions to ask." Khera reiterated questions regarding a purported company registered in the US state of Wyoming in the name of Sarma's wife, Riniki



Assam Police book Pawan Khera for defamation, forgery, criminal conspiracy on complaint by CM's wife

Bhuyan Sarma, claiming that the official company website lists a London address as primary and two other addresses in

Dubai and Dhaka.

He said the London address is also linked with 'Bhuyan Properties Ltd', according to UK government records. Referring to his previous charge of Bhuyan Sarma possessing passports of Egypt and Antigua and Barbuda, and the golden visa of the UAE, Khera asked, "Did you or your agent or one of your family members use fake KYC documents to open these shell companies, buy properties?"

"It can be known only through investigation. You are in government, and you should probe these rather than trying to intimidate us," Khera added. Khera had brought the accusations against Bhuyan Sarma of possessing multiple passports and properties in foreign countries on April 5, which have been dismissed by the CM and his wife as false.

Rupee is stabilising around 92-93 against the US dollar. Because of global war-related headwinds and FI withdrawals, there was pressure, but despite these odds, the rupee will stabilise at these levels. One should not worry." -S Mahendra Dev, Chairman, EAC-PM

BIZ BRIEFS

ITC Hotels' milestone

ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) announced the Milestone 50th Hotel signing for the Welcomhotel brand in India with addition of new hotels in Shirdi and Bhubaneswar to the growing brand portfolio. The soon to open destinations for Welcomhotel brand include Gangtok in Sikkim and Bhopal & Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. ITC recently entered into definitive agreements with Sandy Resort Private Limited to operate their upcoming 73-room hotel in Shirdi.

New collection from Tanishq

Tanishq, a jewelry brand from the House of Tata, unveiled its latest launch, Hues, in the natural gemstone category. Hues collection reimagines the way gold is experienced this Akshaya Tritiya, moving beyond traditional, investment-led purchases to jewellery that is expressive and meant to be worn, the company said. The campaign for the new collection features Rukmini Vasanth, Tanishq's new face for South India. The new collection takes centre stage with a focused design language that celebrates contemporary colour stories in gold.

CAIA in pact with UniCAM

Chennai Amrita International Aviation College (CAIA), an aviation training institution, has established a strategic international collaboration with University College of Aviation Malaysia (UniCAM) to bring global aviation expertise directly to its campus. This initiative is designed to strengthen students' practical exposure, build confidence, and equip them with industry-relevant skills for global aviation careers. As part of this collaboration, the college hosted a four-day international training programme from April 6 to 9, 2026.

NDC celebrates diamond day

Natural Diamond Council (NDC) celebrated first World Diamond Day on April 8. The day was introduced by NDC as a global movement to recognise and celebrate the joy, passion, and community that natural diamonds inspire. Beyond their brilliance, diamonds represent memories, legacy, and the craftsmanship of a passionate industry that brings these stories to life, it said.

Quest Global's acquisition

Quest Global, a pure-play engineering services company, announced the acquisition of BITSILICA, an India-based semiconductor design services company. The acquisition will strengthen Quest Global's semiconductor offerings and expand its footprint in supporting global semiconductor customers. It will also accelerate the company's strategy to build full-stack capabilities from concept-to-silicon-to-software. With this acquisition, BITSILICA will also gain access to Quest Global's 25 years of deep domain expertise.

RBI hits pause amid oil surge, global uncertainty

RATE STEADY AT 5.25% | IRAN CEASEFIRE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR POLICY DECISION

MUMBAI: 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. The policy decision comes as a month and a half-long West Asia conflict has disrupted energy supplies, shot up crude oil prices and created fiscal and inflationary pressures for import-dependent nations like India.

This is the first monetary policy review after the government announced a fresh inflation target for the RBI last month. The government has asked the RBI to maintain retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side for another five years ending March 2031. Announcing the first bi-monthly monetary policy for the current fiscal, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has unanimously decided to retain short-term lending rate or repo rate at 5.25 per cent with a neutral stance.

The rate cut pause comes on the back of the consum-

er price index (CPI) based headline retail inflation that moved closer to the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent at 3.21 per cent in February.

Additionally, the rupee has depreciated by over 4 per cent since the war, which has consequences for pushing up import inflation. However, the rupee has appreciated by 50 paise to 92.56 against US dollar following announcement of the ceasefire by the US and Iran. Based on the recommendation of the MPC, the RBI reduced the repo rate by 25 bps each in February, April, and December 2025 and 50 basis points in June amidst easing retail inflation. India's retail inflation dropped to a historic low of 0.25 per cent in October 2025, marking the lowest level since the Consumer Price Index (CPI) series was introduced.

However, the rupee declined to historic low and crossed 95 against a dollar last month making imports costlier, raising fears of rise in inflation. Rupee touched a record low of 95.21 on March 30, 2026.

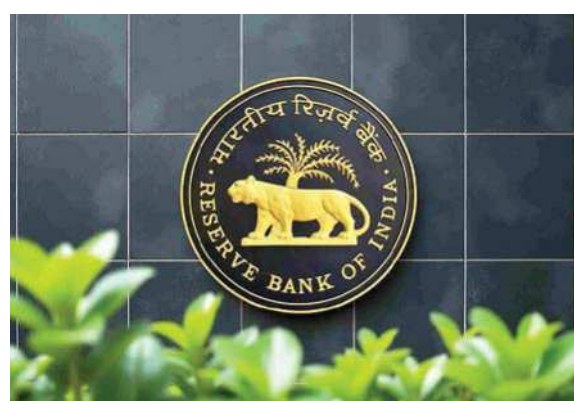
Both growth and inflation risks flagged

Trims growth view to 6.9% | Inflation at 4.6%, but risks ticking up

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday projected India's GDP growth at 6.9 per cent for FY27, lower than the estimated 7.6 per cent for FY26, citing elevated commodity prices and supply chain disruptions stemming from the West Asia crisis.

Unveiling the first bi-monthly monetary policy, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said merchandise exports could be hit by disruptions in key shipping routes and rising freight and insurance costs. However, domestic demand is expected to remain supported by strong services sector momentum, GST rationalisation, rising manufacturing capacity utilisation,



and healthy corporate and banking sector balance sheets.

"India's macroeconomic fundamentals exuded confidence with buoyant growth and low inflation, though conditions turned adverse in March due to intensifying geopolitical tensions," he said. The RBI

noted that higher input costs due to energy prices, along with supply chain constraints, could weigh on growth. Still, government measures to support exports and stabilise supply chains may cushion the impact. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) flagged downside risks to growth

"The ceasefire, to some extent, has been taken into account. The whole implications (will come later), but the ceasefire has been taken into account in the monetary policy decision



-Sanjay Malhotra, RBI Governor

HDFC Bank sound, no issues found

MUMBAI: THE Reserve Bank of India found no governance or conduct-related issues at HDFC Bank during its supervisory inspection, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said Wednesday. On resignation of HDFC Bank Chairman Atanu Chakraborty, Malhotra said "HDFC Bank is a Domestic Systemically Important Bank (D-SIB) with sound financials, a professional board, and competent management. Periodic assessments show no material concerns."

amid uncertainty over the intensity and duration of the West Asia conflict. For FY27, quarterly GDP growth is projected at 6.8 per cent (Q1), 6.7 per cent (Q2), 7 per cent (Q3), and 7.2 per cent (Q4).

On inflation, the RBI projected retail inflation at 4.6 per cent for FY27, within the target band of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). Quar-

terly projections stand at 4 per cent (Q1), 4.4 per cent (Q2), 5.2 per cent (Q3), and 4.7 per cent (Q4). The MPC observed that inflation remains below target but warned of upside risks from rising energy prices and potential weather-related food price shocks. Core inflation remains muted, though supply disruptions could create uncertainty.

Central bank plans to revise norms to free up board time

MUMBAI

IN a bid to promote ease of doing business, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Wednesday proposed to revise and rationalise guidelines to facilitate better utilisation of bank board's time and draft directions in this regard would be released shortly. The matters to be placed before the Boards of banks, along with their periodicity, are determined by the Boards themselves, guided by the seven broad themes prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank has also mandated certain policies and matters to be placed before the Board for approval, review, or information. "In an endeavor to enable Boards to utilize its time effectively, and to facilitate a more focused and qualitative engagement on strategy and risk governance, the Reserve Bank has undertaken comprehensive review and rationalisation of all such instructions. Draft directions in this regard will be issued shortly for public consultation," RBI said in its



The Reserve Bank has constantly endeavored to refine and strengthen its regulatory and supervisory framework while minimising compliance costs, through periodic evaluation of instructions for their continued relevance.

statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies.

The announcement comes weeks after HDFC Bank Chairman Atanu Chakraborty's abrupt resignation, citing ethical concerns. "Certain happenings and practices within the bank, that I have observed over the last two years, are not in congruence with my personal values and ethics. This is the basis of my aforementioned decision," Chakraborty had said in his resignation letter dated March 17. This is the first time that the part-time

chairman of HDFC Bank left mid-way raising concerns over its functioning.

Announcing the Monetary Policy Committee meeting outcome, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, "We had recently undertaken a detailed exercise, to consolidate over 9,000 regulatory instructions into 238 Master Directions. A similar consolidation exercise has now been completed for all our supervisory instructions."

The Reserve Bank has constantly endeavored to refine and strengthen its regulatory

and supervisory framework while minimising compliance costs, through periodic evaluation of instructions for their continued relevance. In furtherance of this objective, the Reserve Bank had undertaken a comprehensive consolidation exercise of the regulatory instructions, on an 'as is' basis, in 2025.

The exercise involved consolidation of more than 9,000 existing regulatory circular/guidelines into 238 function-wise Master Directions (MDs), specific to each category of regulated entity, the Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies said.

A similar exercise has now been carried out for the supervisory instructions, it said. Accordingly, the drafts of 64 Master Directions consolidating extant supervisory instructions on up to nine functional areas are being published today on RBI website for public comments, it added. To facilitate ease of doing business by MSMEs, Malhotra said, RBI proposed to dispense with the requirement of due diligence while onboarding them on TReDS platforms.

Adani's request for hearing in US SEC case allowed

NEW DELHI: A US court has granted billionaire Gautam Adani's request to schedule a hearing on his plea to dismiss a fraud case filed by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The Eastern District Court of New York approved a pre-motion conference, allowing Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani to argue for early dismissal of the complaint, potentially avoiding a prolonged trial.

The SEC's case, filed in November 2024 alongside a criminal complaint by the US Department of Justice, alleges the Adanis were involved in a \$250 million bribery scheme linked to solar energy contracts in India and



misled US investors during fundraising.

Adani's legal team has strongly denied the allegations, arguing there is no credible evidence of bribery and that US regulators lack jurisdiction. They contend the case represents an "impermissible extraterritorial application" of US securities laws.

Adani Green jumps over 11%

NEW DELHI: Adani Group stocks were in high demand on Wednesday, with Adani Green surging over 11 per cent, in tandem with a sharp rally in the broader equity market. A US judge granted a request from billionaire Gautam Adani to schedule a hearing in efforts to dismiss a US Securities and Exchange Commission fraud case, which he says lacks necessary jurisdiction as well as fails on multiple reasons.

HYUNDAI PRICE HIKE FROM MAY RUPEE JUMPS 47 PAISE

NEW DELHI: HYUNDAI Motor India Ltd on Wednesday said it will hike prices of its vehicles by up to 1 per cent across its portfolio from next month citing various cost escalations. The company has planned to increase the prices of its cars up to 1 per cent across the portfolio, effective May 2026, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

The price revision is attributed to a combination of various cost escalations, it added. The quantum of increase will vary based on the variants and models, HMIL said. "The company's endeavor is always to absorb rising costs to safeguard our customer from price fluctuations.

MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated 47 paise to close at 92.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump announced the suspension of military strikes against Iran for two weeks, and the Reserve Bank kept the key benchmark rate unchanged with a neutral stance. Forex traders said investor sentiment got a boost after Governor Sanjay Malhotra assured that the steps taken on forex do not constitute a structural change.

Women borrowers drive ₹76-L-cr credit surge

Digital push fuels women's financial inclusion | Women now hold 26% of India's total credit

NEW DELHI

WOMEN in India are no longer confined to small-ticket loans but are increasingly driving the country's credit growth by moving into retail and business lending, NITI Aayog CEO Nidhi Chhibber said.

A new report titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women and India's Evolving Credit Market" highlights a major shift in women's participation in the formal credit system, backed by digital public infrastructure and expanding financial access.

Speaking at the launch, Chhibber said economic growth strengthens when participation becomes broader, deeper and more efficient. She noted that women are increasingly shaping and benefiting from these changes.

"Women borrowers are moving beyond entry-level credit towards retail and business-purpose lending, indicating stronger financial capability and deeper economic integration," she said.

The report reveals that women borrowers now hold a credit portfolio of Rs 76 lakh



crore, accounting for 26 per cent of total system credit. This marks a sharp rise from Rs 16 lakh crore in 2017, reflecting a 4.8-fold increase in credit exposure.

The number of women actively using credit has also grown steadily, recording a compound annual growth rate of 9 per cent between 2017 and 2025.

Prepared under the Women Entrepreneurship Platform of NITI Aayog in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL and MicroSave Consulting, the report combines large-scale credit data with insights from rural women entrepreneurs.

Aviation stocks fly high: IndiGo ends over 8% higher

NEW DELHI: Aviation stocks ended sharply higher on Wednesday following a steep decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire. Easing of geopolitical stress led to a sharp fall in Brent crude oil prices, which tumbled 14.12 per cent to USD 93.95 per barrel. InterGlobe Aviation, the parent firm of IndiGo, jumped 8.16 per cent to settle at Rs 4,616.60 on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 10.98 per cent to Rs 4,737.40.

The stock of SpiceJet climbed 5 per cent to reach its upper circuit limit of Rs 11.14. "The rally was primarily driven by a sharp improvement in global sentiment following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran, which led to a significant cooling in crude oil prices and eased concerns around inflation and global growth," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Mudra democratises credit, drives inclusive growth: FM

NEW DELHI

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) will continue to empower entrepreneurs, making them active participants in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Marking the scheme's 11th anniversary, Sitharaman said PMMY has driven a "silent transformation", enabling crores of citizens to enter entrepreneurship with confidence. Launched on April 8, 2015, the scheme focuses on "funding the unfunded" by extending credit to those outside the formal banking system.

"Eleven years later, the scheme has been instrumental in reshaping the credit landscape for MSMEs and individual entrepreneurs,"



she said, adding that it has democratised access to finance by removing entry barriers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the scheme has redefined access to credit, empowering millions "with the confidence to dream and the means to fulfil it".

According to Sitharaman, over 57.79 crore loans amounting to Rs40.07 lakh crore have been sanctioned under PMMY so far. Nearly

two-thirds of the loans have gone to women entrepreneurs, while around one-fifth were extended to first-time borrowers, translating into 12.15 crore loans worth Rs12 lakh crore. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said PMMY has strengthened financial inclusion, especially among marginalised sections. Around 51 per cent of beneficiaries belong to SC, ST and OBC categories, while women account for 67 per cent. The scheme offers collateral-free loans of up to Rs20 lakh for non-corporate, non-farm income-generating activities through banks, NBFCs and MFIs. The finance ministry said MSMEs remain the backbone of the economy, driving balanced growth, while digital innovations are making credit access easier for small businesses.



Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas & Kavya Reddy's engagement was a grand affair

Young hero Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas and Kavya Reddy got engaged in a grand ceremony on Sunday at a spacious farmhouse in Shankarpally, Hyderabad.

Friends from the film industry, well-wishers, family members, and many celebrities participated in the ceremony.

At the engagement, the Sai-Kavya couple

wore customized jewelry reflecting their special bond. Enhancing their appearance, their engagement outfits were designed by Delhi-based renowned costume designer Abhishek Sharma. These looks, blending tradition with modernity, impressed everyone.

Photos from the engagement ceremony went viral on social media, with

fans and netizens congratulating the Sai-Kavya couple.

Sai Srinivas and Kavya Reddy's wedding ceremony has been named 'Srinivasakavyanam'.

The wedding ceremony will take place on April 29 in the divine Tirumala, one of the most sacred spiritual destinations, making it a truly memorable venue for their union.



'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' blends family crime comedy

The entertaining film 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' is currently making waves on Netflix, trending among the Top 5 titles and gaining massive appreciation from audiences. With its unique mix of humor, emotions, and a touch of crime comedy, the film is emerging as a refreshing watch in the OTT space.

Positioned as a light-hearted crime comedy thriller, the film smartly blends suspense with fun-filled moments, making it engaging for viewers of all age groups. While the narrative carries elements of intrigue and unexpected twists, it never loses its core essence of family entertainment. This rare balance is what makes 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' stand out. Audiences are particularly enjoying how the film keeps them hooked with its playful storytelling, witty dialogues, and entertaining performances, while also delivering subtle thrills. The crime angle is presented in a clean and humorous way, ensuring it remains suitable for family viewing without compromising on excitement. Social media is buzzing with positive responses, with many viewers calling it a "must-watch family entertainer with a twist." The film is being widely recommended for weekend viewing, especially for those looking for something different yet wholesome.



The success of 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' on Netflix once again proves that audiences are embracing content that combines laughter, suspense, and family values in a meaningful way. If you're in the mood for a light crime comedy thriller that you can enjoy with your entire family, 'Sampradayini Suppini Suddapoosani' is definitely the perfect pick right now.

Atlee unveils 'RAAKA', Allu Arjun roars

In a blockbuster announcement that has set the Indian film industry abuzz, Icon Star Allu Arjun, acclaimed director Atlee, and entertainment giant Sun Pictures, led by Kalanithi Maran, have unveiled the much-anticipated title of their mammoth project. AA22XA6 is now titled 'RAAKA'. The uniquely titled film is already generating massive excitement for the epic vision Atlee is set to bring to life.

In the first-look poster, Allu Arjun appears in a striking and unique avatar. He is seen bald, kohl-eyed, staring intensely into the camera, while sporting animal-like claws teased earlier. His forehead features markings reminiscent of Viking tattoos, adding to the intrigue.

Beyond this look, little is known about the film, including its cast and genre. Fans have reacted enthusiastically to the stunning transformation, with many calling it "jaw-dropping." Known for constantly reinventing himself, Allu Arjun once again proves his commitment to aligning with the grand vision of his director. This bold transformation has truly surprised everyone.

The first look sent shockwaves across the country, with fans celebrating the Icon Star's birthday with full energy and excitement. After keeping audiences waiting for nearly a year, Atlee and Allu Arjun have delivered a reveal that has heightened anticipation for what's to come.

Following the global success of 'Pushpa: The Rule', National Award-winning actor Allu Arjun is expected to bring his signature style to 'RAAKA'. Reports suggest that the film will be a major technical venture, with Atlee aim-



ing to create visual effects and world-building that rival Hollywood spectacles.

Director Atlee, known for massive blockbusters like 'Jawan', 'Theri', 'Bigil', and 'Mersal', joins forces with Sun Pictures, one of India's most influential media powerhouses.

Deepika Padukone stars as the female lead opposite Allu Arjun, marking their first collaboration. 'RAAKA' is poised to be a cinematic milestone, blending intense emotion, adrenaline-pumping action, grand visuals, and storytelling deeply rooted in Indian culture, with a global appeal.

Chai Shots brings back 'Rituraagalu' and new serials

At the 'Chai Shots Kitty Party' press meet, Chai Biscuit, a trendsetter in digital entertainment, shared exciting updates about its short-series OTT platform 'Chai Shots', which has already achieved significant success. Designed especially for smartphone audiences, 'Chai Shots' content has received an excellent response. Taking things a step further, the platform is now bringing both new serials and iconic Telugu shows to viewers.

Speaking at the event, Chai Shots co-founder Sharat Chandra said, "Hello everyone. We launched 'Chai Shots' in December, and at that time, we were still figuring out how to design the app and what kind of content to provide. Now, three months later, we've realized that nearly 70% of our audience is above 35 years of age. At Chai Biscuit, we are used to creating content for younger audiences. However, when we introduced TV serial-like content on 'Chai Shots', the response was amazing.

That's when we approached Ramani garu to scale this further. We have created around a dozen short serials with actors and directors currently working in television. Each episode is just two minutes long, with about 30 episodes per season. So far, we have released more than 15 short serials, and many more are on the way.

We have also started devotional shows. Along with cult serials like 'Rituraagalu', we are bringing more legendary Telugu shows to 'Chai Shots'. Our aim is to create a platform that blends the essence of TV and OTT. We have even recreated shows



like 'Pattakhima Pattu Saree', which many of us watched in our childhood. Produced with Hariteja garu, it will be aired daily at 1 PM. While people often ask, "Who watches TV anymore?", the emotions and drama in television remain timeless—and we want to bring that experience to our app." Anurag Reddy added, "During the pandemic, when no one was coming to the office, we started making one-minute videos, which evolved into micro-dramas. While Chinese and Korean content is being dubbed for Indian audiences, we already have incredible native content. We are bringing back cult Telugu serials like 'Rituraagalu'. Our goal is to promote stories rooted in our culture. 'Old is gold'—these timeless stories will entertain audiences again in a new format. Emotions never change; only their presentation does."

Writer Balabhadrapatruni Ramani said, "Sharath has already achieved great success with Chai Biscuit, and I believe he will achieve even more with

'Chai Shots'. Our team has been extremely supportive, and everyone—from actors and directors to technicians—is doing a fantastic job. We are committed to delivering quality serials in a short format, along with devotional programs that cater to senior citizens as well."

Actress Suhasini shared, "I was truly excited when Ramani told me about 'Chai Shots'. It was a unique experience to complete a series—something that usually takes two to three years—in just about an hour. I'm also involved as a producer. The acting process felt fresh, and the stories are very engaging. It's content that appeals to everyone, from children to adults."

Producer Nagababu said, "I thank Ramani garu for this opportunity. It was a wonderful experience to be part of this project. As a devotee of

Baba, working on devotional content brought me immense joy."

Producer Bharathi Krishna added, "Initially, we were a bit skeptical when Ramani garu approached us for short serials. But once we started working, it became an exciting journey. Hats off to Sharath and Anurag garu for their vision. It's encouraging to see devotional content gaining popularity again—even among the youth. This trend is only going to grow in the future."

'Thimmarajupalli TV' trailer releasing on April 9

'Thimmarajupalli TV', produced by actor Kiran Abbavaram under KA Productions in association with Sumaira Studios, will have its trailer released on April 9.

Encouraging new talent, Kiran Abbavaram is backing "Thimmarajupalli TV" under his banner KA Productions along with Sumaira Studios, with Teja Velpucharla serving as co-producer. The film introduces Sai Tej and Veda Jalandharr as lead actors, while V. Muniraju makes his directorial debut with this project.

Set against a village backdrop, 'Thimmarajupalli TV' is a period drama gearing up for a grand theatrical release on the 17th of this month. The makers recently shared an update confirming that the trailer will be released on April 9. The film has already begun generating positive buzz among movie lovers.



'Lenin' poster to be out on Akhil Akkineni's birthday

Manam Enterprises LLP and Sithara Entertainments' 'Lenin' is set to release on June 26: Akhil Akkineni's birthday special poster unveiled.

Young and dynamic actor Akhil Akkineni's upcoming film 'Lenin' has already created a strong buzz with its first single. The film stars Bhagyashri Borse as the female lead. Directed by Murali Kishor Abburu, 'Lenin' is shaping up to be a complete cinematic package filled with powerful emotions and engaging storytelling.

On the occasion of Akhil Akkineni's birthday, the makers unveiled a special poster wishing the actor a very happy birthday. In the poster, Akhil appears in a refreshing new look, with his charming smile adding warmth. The

much-anticipated film is scheduled for a theatrical release on June 26, 2026, with the date reaffirmed on the poster.

Directed by Murali Kishor Abburu, 'Lenin' is being crafted as a wholesome cinematic experience, promising a blend of strong emotions and compelling storytelling. The team assures audiences that the film will be presented in its finest form, delivering a memorable big-screen experience.

The film also features music by Thaman S, further enhancing its scale and appeal. Produced by Akkineni Nagarjuna and Suryadevara Naga Vamsi under Manam Enterprises LLP and Sithara Entertainments, and presented by Annapurna Studios, 'Lenin' promises to be a memorable big-screen spectacle.

