

"The IPL has started exactly how I expected it to, with flatter pitches and high-scoring games. As always, it's interesting to see how the old school superstars like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli perform, but I think this youngster for Rajasthan Royals, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, is the one to watch in the opening few weeks." - Graeme Smith, South African batting great

**Asian Boxing C'ships**

**Indian women top medal charts with 4 gold**

Ulaanbaatar(Mongolia): The Indian women's team delivered a historic performance at the Asian Boxing Championships 2026, finishing on top of the medal charts with a total of 10 medals, including four gold, two silver, and four bronze, underlining their dominance at the continental stage.

Under the stewardship of head coach Santiago Nieva, every member of the women's team returned home with a medal, stamping their authority on the continental competition. With Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh in attendance, Minakshi Hooda (48kg) got



things going by claiming the first gold of the day with a commanding 5-0 victory over Mongolia's Nomundari Enkh-Amgalan. Preeti (54kg) continued her sensational run, defeating Chinese Taipei's Huang Hsiao-wen, a three-time world champion and Tokyo 2020 Olympic bronze medallist, by a unanimous 5-0 decision to secure

the top podium finish. Priya (60kg) added to India's gold tally with a clinical 3-0 win over North Korea's Won Un-gyong in the final. Arundhati (70kg) also impressed, registering a 4:1 victory against Kazakhstan's Bakyt Seidish to clinch gold in her category. India added two silver medals to its tally, with Jais-

mine (57kg) finishing runner-up after a strong campaign, while Alfiyan Pathan (80+kg) also secured silver following her final bout. Earlier in the week, two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen (54kg), Ankushita Boro (65kg), Lovlina (75kg) and Pooja (80kg) had settled for bronze medals after semifinal exits. Having confirmed 16 medals, the most of any nation in this edition, India will be looking to finish the tournament strongly, with two men's boxers - Vishwanath Suresh (48kg) and Sachin Siwach (60kg) - in their respective finals on Friday.

**TG finishes runner-up in national gymnastics**

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

THE Telangana gymnastics team delivered an impressive performance to secure second place overall at the Level-wise Boys & Girls National Gymnastics Competition 2026 held in Delhi at The Gymnastic Academy. The team clinched a remarkable tally of 25 silver medals and 2 bronze medals across events, including table vault, uneven bars, balance beam, and floor exercise.

In Level 1, gymnasts Hiya Yadav, Pranavi Shah, Anshul Yadav, and Adwait Akula showcased strong performances. Level 2 saw notable contributions from Manvi Reddy,



Myra Mandava, and Chokkarapu Loukya Virat, while higher levels featured standout efforts from Inara Rukmini, Simone Pestonji, and Khushi Rai.

The team was felicitated in Hyderabad in the presence of Priyanka, an international gymnast, national champion, and judge.

**Dist chess selections from April 11**

HYDERABAD: The Telangana State Chess Association will conduct Hyderabad and Rangareddy district Under-7 and Under-11 boys and girls selection tournaments on April 11 and 12 at Lal Bahadur Stadium, Hyderabad. The tournaments will shortlist players for the state championship.

Details are available at [www.chesstelangana.com](http://www.chesstelangana.com) or contact 7337578899 and 7337399299, said General Secretary A Jayachandra.

**RR, RCB eye top-order show in Guwahati**

GUWAHATI: Riding on explosive starts from Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Rajasthan Royals will look to extend their dominance, while defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will bank on a rejuvenated Devdutt Padikkal as the two in-form sides lock horns in an IPL clash here on Friday.

RCB have a settled top-order under the watch of the talismanic Virat Kohli, who hasn't shown any signs of rust despite stepping away from T20 internationals in 2024, while Phil Salt also unleashed his explosive abilities in the previous game. Batting one down, Padikkal has carried his domestic form seamlessly into the IPL, signalling a return to his fluent best with an aggressive yet controlled approach. Padikkal had made



**MATCH STARTS AT 7:30PM**

an immediate impact in his debut IPL season, scoring 473 runs for RCB and establishing himself as a stylish batter.

However, subsequent stints with Rajasthan Royals and Lucknow Super Giants didn't

quite yield the desired returns. His return to Bengaluru last season, by his own admission, proved to be a turning point, as he played a key role in the franchise finally clinching their maiden title.

The left-hander has begun this season in similar vein, striking back-to-back fifties-- a 29-ball 50 against Chennai Super Kings and a 26-ball 61 against Sunrisers Hyderabad -- and will look to extend his rich vein of form.

The likes of skipper Rajat Patidar and big-hitting Australian Tim David provide solidarity in the middle. However, it is RCB's bowling transformation that has stood out.

The Royals, meanwhile, have emerged as one of the most explosive batting units this season, powered by the opening pair of Jaiswal and teenage sensation Sooryavanshi.

The duo has consistently provided flying starts, combining clean hitting with fearless stroke-play to put opposition attacks under early pressure.

**Siva powers Golkonda Hotel into final**

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

RIDING on T Siva's swash-buckling unbeaten 82, favourites Golkonda Hotel crushed Radisson Blu Plaza by 63 runs to storm into the final of the 10th edition of the Hotels & Restaurants Association of Telangana State T20 Cricket Tournament 2026, played at the New Madies Cricket Grounds on Wednesday.

Golkonda Hotel, appearing in the final for the first time, will now face The Leela Hotel in the title clash.



Golkonda Hotel: 175/6 in 20 overs (T. Siva 82\*, Pankaj 33; Anil Kumar 2/29) beat Radisson Blu Plaza: 112 all out in 16.4 overs (Babu 41; Pankaj 3/17, Praneeth 2/22, Shiva Kumar 2/11) by 63 runs.

**BRIEF SCORES:**

**BADMINTON ASIA C'SHIPS**

**Ayush enters quarters; Sindhu, Prannoy bow out**

NINGBO: Ayush Shetty continued his fine form at the Badminton Asia Championships as he entered the quarterfinals after beating Chin Yu Jen of Taipei in straight games here on Thursday, while two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy concluded their campaigns with their re-

spective second-round losses. Ayush, the US Open 2025 champion, registered a comfortable 21-16, 21-12 win over the Taipei shuttler in a match that lasted for 41 minutes.

Ayush started off his campaign with a stunning win over world No. 7 and fifth seed Li Shi Feng of China, 21-13, 21-16,

in the opening round. He will look to carry the momentum in the quarterfinal when he faces third seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia. Meanwhile, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and former world championship medallist H. S. Prannoy bowed out after losing their respective second-round matches.

**TFA mourns demise of former national footballer Nithyasheelan**

HYDERABAD: The Telangana Football Association (TFA) expressed deep grief over



the untimely demise of former national footballer Nithyasheelan, at the age of 57. He had represented at the Sub-Junior National Championship in 1988 held in Dhanbad.

As a mark of respect, two minutes of silence were observed on Thursday morning at the Gymkhana Football Ground during the ongoing U-20 camp. Similar tributes were paid before the C Division Football League matches. A condolence meeting was also held at 5 pm at the TFA office, attended by coaches, referees, and office bearers, who paid homage to his contributions to the sport. Nithyasheelan is survived by his wife, two sons, and a daughter. The TFA conveyed heartfelt condolences to his family, remembering his dedication and lasting contribution to football.

**Women's Reservation Bill Stalin backs 33% quota, raises suspicion on poll-timed bill**

CHENNAI: Chief Minister M K Stalin on Thursday alleged that the proposed amendment to ensure 33 per cent reservation for women in the midst of polls in states including Tamil Nadu appeared to be yet another political manoeuvre aimed at shaping electoral narratives. Stalin alleged the timing for the proposed amendment led to serious suspicion.

"Why push such a far-reaching decision in the middle of state elections. This appears to be yet another political manoeuvre aimed at shaping electoral narratives, much like earlier attempts to influence women voters ahead of the 2024 Parliament elections," he alleged in a statement titled "This is not reform, this is reengineering power." Further, he said: "Let me be unequivocal: we strongly support 33 per cent reservation for women. Our support is absolute. But it must be implemented without increasing seats and without punishing states that acted responsibly. If the intent is genuine, nothing prevents immediate implementation within the existing framework."

Demanding fair delimitation, he alleged there was complete opacity on the basis for delimitation and



asked would the exercise rely on 1971 figures from a pre-population control era or the 2021 Census. "Conflicting signals and vague assurances only deepen suspicion." This move would also impose a massive financial burden on states, forcing them to expand or rebuild Legislative Assemblies, all without proper consultation.

"This is a direct assault on cooperative federalism. This is not reform, it is a unilateral, politically driven exercise designed to concentrate power, weaken Parliament, marginalise the South, and undermine social justice," he alleged. "The nation deserves answers: why this undue haste, why shift the goalposts, and who truly stands to benefit?" The NDA government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is systematically eroding the very foundations

of Parliament, he alleged. The Dravidian party chief claimed: "What should be a vibrant forum for debate and accountability is being reduced to a hollow ritual, a stage where members may not even get fair time to speak or represent their people. This proposal to increase seats is a direct contradiction of their own slogan of minimum government, maximum governance. It will only inflate expenditure, burden taxpayers, and dilute the quality of parliamentary functioning."

This also went against the spirit of Article 1 of the Constitution, which defines India as a Union of States. Ignoring the voices of states and bypassing meaningful consultation is not democratic - it is unitary overreach that undermines the country's federal and plural character.

**Kerala polling sees minor protests over bogus votes**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Assembly polling across Kerala progressed largely peacefully, but protests were reported at several booths on Thursday over allegations of bogus voting. A minor scuffle broke out between Congress and BJP activists at Manalur in Thrissur district after UDF candidate T N Prathapan arrived in the area.

According to police, BJP activists prevented people accompanying Prathapan from entering the booth premises, leading to the scuffle.

In Wadakkanchery, also in Thrissur district, a voter, Sajeev, was unable to cast his vote after election officials informed him that his vote had already been recorded as a postal ballot. This triggered protests by BJP activists, prompting police intervention.

Although election officials offered to allow him to cast a tender vote, he declined. BJP candidate T S Ullas Babu later arrived at the booth and staged a protest.

A similar incident occurred in Kuttiady, Kozhikode district, where a woman was denied the right to vote after it was found that her vote had already been cast as a postal ballot.

At Malampuzha and Shoranur in Palakkad district, Thrikkaripur in Kasaragod, and Vattiyoorakavu in Thiruvananthapuram, complaints emerged that votes had been cast in the names of original voters, leading to protests.

The affected voters were later permitted to cast tender votes.

**From wedding hall to booth: Newlyweds turn up to vote**

PATHANAMTHITTA/WAYANAD(KERALA) A newly-wed couple in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district made a special stop at the polling station on Thursday, heading straight from their wedding to cast their votes. Their detour was a statement on the importance of democratic participation.

Joining them in the spirit of the day, another bride from northern Wayanad district also made sure to vote first before heading off to her own wedding ceremony.

Divyasree and Ashwant, who got married around 9 am, turned up to vote close to noon right from the wedding hall. Speaking to reporters, the couple said it was a joint



decision to turn up to vote. Ashwant said the wedding date was fixed in January much before the polling date was announced and therefore, it was a coincidence that both fell on the same day. He

also said that he had missed many voting opportunities as he worked outside the state, but he used to vote whenever he was in Kerala. His wife said that she always used to exercise her

right to vote. The couple said that their message to society is that everyone should vote. They said that neither was politically active, but voting was a non-political act. Just like them, Akhila Antony, a native of Meppadi in Wayanad district, arrived to vote in her wedding attire barely an hour before her marriage was scheduled at a church in Mananthavady at 10.30 am.

She decided to vote first as it would not have been possible after the wedding, Akhila told media.

On seeing her in the bridal attire, polling officials and locals made arrangements for her to vote quickly and after that she left for the wedding venue. (PTI)

**'Mamata interested in 'Khela Hobe' over sports growth'**

MALDA (WB)

BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Thursday asserted that West Bengal has fallen behind in sports and other cultural activities, in which it used to lead the country, since Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is more interested in 'Khela Hobe' (political game).

Lambasting the mess surrounding football legend Lionel Messi's appearance in Kolkata's Salt Lake stadium

in December 2025, he said it happened because of political one-upmanship. Addressing a meeting with members of sports clubs and NGOs here, the BJP chief said that West Bengal has fallen behind in sports and other cultural activities, in which it used to be the leader in the country, since "the chief minister here is more interested in 'Khela Hobe' (political game)".

Criticising the TMC government for the 'Khela Hobe'

(game will be played) slogan, he said, "For them, the sporting arena has become a political playground." The TMC chief is known to raise this slogan during elections in the state.

Stating that the time has come to punish such people, he said that states like Haryana, Gujarat, and Bihar have made tremendous advancements in sporting activities.

Nabin said that to end this culture, "this corruption and cut-money ridden TMC gov-

ernment has to be sent packing." West Bengal is due for assembly elections on April 23 and 29, with the counting of votes scheduled on May 4.

The BJP chief alleged that during the TMC rule, sports clubs are used for preparing a game plan for "booth-capturing during the elections". He asserted it will not be allowed to happen this assembly election, maintaining that misuse of sports clubs for such purposes will be ended by a BJP government.

**AJUP leader terms it AI-generated**

KOLKATA

A political controversy erupted in West Bengal on Thursday after an alleged video of Humayun Kabir surfaced on social media, purportedly showing him claiming links with senior BJP leaders and efforts to defeat Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the upcoming Assembly elec-

tions. At a press meet, the Trinamool Congress shared the purported video and demanded an Enforcement Directorate probe into Kabir's alleged claims of proximity with Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Prime Minister's Office as part of a multi-core plan to defeat Banerjee in the polls.

In the video, which could not be independently verified by PTI, Kabir is allegedly heard saying he is willing to go to "any extent" to unseat Banerjee and has been in touch with senior BJP leaders, including Adhikari.

Kabir termed the video as AI-generated and aimed at maligning him and threat-



ened to take legal action. Kabir, who founded the Aam Janata Unnayan Party days after he was suspended by the

TMC late last year, is also purportedly heard claiming that he had communication with the PMO and was advised to coordinate with leaders from other BJP-ruled states.

The video further purportedly captures Kabir stating that his strategy revolves around diverting minority votes away from the ruling Trinamool Congress, suggesting that such a shift could

benefit the BJP electorally. In the video, he allegedly mentions having received Rs 200 crore as an advance as part of a Rs 1,000 crore deal to execute the plan. Reacting sharply, senior TMC leader and minister Firhad Hakim said Kabir has been "working in tandem" with the BJP to mislead minority voters.

Asking Kabir not to take the emotions and senti-

ment of the Muslim community for granted, he said the video "exposes a deep-rooted conspiracy" aimed at influencing the electoral outcome in the state.

Hakim further alleged that Kabir was heard in the video saying that invoking the Babri Masjid issue would be more effective in mobilising Muslim votes, even if it does not ultimately materialise.

"The BJP is trying to manipulate the mandate by using proxy players. This video, if true, confirms our allegations," another senior TMC leader and minister Aroop Biswas said.

He also said the AIMIM and its president Asaduddin Owaisi should clarify their stand on the issue. Asked who shot the video, Hakim said, "That is not important."

