

Mamata Banerjee Claims Poll Body Denied Her Meeting In Collin Lane Area

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slammed the Election Commission of India (ECI), alleging that the commission denied her permission for a public meeting in the Collin Lane area.

New Delhi.(Agency) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slammed the Election Commission of India (ECI), alleging that the commission denied her permission for a public meeting in the Collin Lane area, while prioritising the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi within six hours. While addressing a public meeting in Jorasanko Assembly Constituency, Banerjee said, "I had a meeting scheduled in the Collin Lane area. If a political party had been holding a meeting there, and I hadn't been granted permission, I wouldn't have given it a second thought. But, I was explicitly told (by the Election Commission), 'We will not grant you permission.' You denied permission for my meeting, yet you prioritise the Prime Minister's meeting within six hours." Earlier on Monday, Banerjee alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had planted its "cherry-picked" officers at the airport to deliberately delay her flight. The Chief Minister said that her flight was kept waiting on the runway for 30 minutes, underlining that the same thing happened with Hemant Soren's

chopper as well. Further, she said that the AITC struggled to get permission for the meeting, further alleging that a BJP leader who is given poll duties has been



causing problems to the people of the district. "We had to struggle a lot to get permission for this meeting. They have cherry-picked officers. They deliberately stopped me so that my programs would get delayed. They are not giving us permission to hold meetings. A person has come

who thinks he is a 'big leader' of the BJP. I know the person very well. That person is given duty during the polls. They are troubling the people of this district. We will take revenge democratically," she said. The polling for the 294-member Assembly in West Bengal will be held in two phases. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 4. As per the Election Commission of India (ECI), the first phase covers 152 Assembly constituencies, while the second phase includes 142 seats. The state is set to witness a high-voltage contest between the incumbent Trinamool Congress, which is seeking a fourth consecutive term, and the BJP, which is aiming to form the government after a strong showing in the previous elections. In the 2021 Assembly polls, the Congress could not manage to open its account in the seat tally. After a horrendous performance in the last elections, Congress is aiming to turn the contest between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) into a triangular fight.

Congress Cancels Rahul Gandhi's Bengal Poll Visit, Blames Trinamool

The party alleged the local administration and police had acted on the "behest of the Mamata Banerjee-led government", and denied necessary permissions for the visit.



Kolkata.(Agency) The Congress has claimed Bengal's ruling Trinamool refused permission for Rahul Gandhi's rally in Kolkata ahead of voting Thursday for the first phase of the Bengal Assembly election.

The Lok Sabha MP was to arrive in the city to lead the party's campaign. The Congress claimed it waited till 6 pm Tuesday for clearance from local authorities. But since permission wasn't granted, it was deemed no longer possible to complete logistical preparations for the April 23 event. "A fresh request for administrative permission will be submitted for a revised schedule, likely for either April 25 or 26," party sources told news agency.

The party alleged the local administration and police had acted on the "behest of the Mamata Banerjee-led government", and denied necessary permissions for the visit. State Congress chief Subhankar Sarkar alleged the Trinamool and the BJP, the main opposition party, were intimidated by rallies Rahul Gandhi held in Malda and Murshidabad.

Bengal's Women and Child Development Minister, Shashi Panja, responded for the state, noting that applications for public meetings had to be made through a government website, the Suvidha Portal and well in advance. "Permission is granted through there. It needs to be done two to seven days before... this rule applies to all public meetings and all political parties."

On the denial of permission by authorities, she took a swipe at the Election Commission, with whom the Trinamool has had a running battle in the build-up to this election, most recently over the transfer of senior police and officials. "Caretaker government in the state cannot answer for cancellation of his visit... Election Commission can answer that," she said.

Gandhi was due to visit Sarkar's constituency to campaign. On April 14 Gandhi addressed three meetings in North Dinajpur, Malda, and Murshidabad districts. He may visit Bengal for a day to campaign in constituencies going to polls in the second phase, i.e., on April 29.

The cancellation comes amid a high-octane battle for Bengal, where the Congress is contesting in an alliance with the Left front, often finding itself at odds with the ruling Trinamool. The state is set to witness a high-voltage contest between the Trinamool, which is seeking a fourth consecutive term, and the BJP, which is aiming to form the government after a strong showing in previous elections.

In the 2021 election, the Congress could not manage to open its account. After that horrendous performance, it is aiming to turn the Trinamool vs BJP contest into a triangular fight.

Centre will act as catalyst to enhance real farm incomes & check over-exploitation of natural resources by boosting basmati production: CM Mann

The Sikh Times

CHANDIGARH, 22nd April: Punjab is set to take a major step towards crop diversification and sustainable agriculture. With strenuous efforts of CM Bhagwant Singh Mann, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Basmati has been secured during his ongoing visit to the Netherlands. The initiative is aimed at strengthening farmers' incomes and reducing overdependence on the wheat-paddy cycle. As part of his visit, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann explored best practices in agriculture and industry to benefit Punjab's farmers, who have played a key role in making the country self-reliant in food production. The Chief Minister noted, "For the sake of the nation, farmers in Punjab have overexploited the state's fertile land and water resources, making it essential to shift away from the wheat-paddy cycle." He pointed out, "For the sake of the nation, the farmers of the state have over exploited its only available natural resources in terms of fertile land and water due to which the need of hour is to bring the farmers out of the rut of wheat-paddy cycle." Emphasising the way forward, he added, "For this purpose a major push is needed to crop diversification in the state

adding that Netherlands can duly help the state a lot in this noble cause." During his visit to the LT Foods facility in Rotterdam, the company shared its global presence across more than 80 countries and strong



linkage with over one lakh farmers. The visit focused on sustainable farming practices and expanding Punjab's basmati footprint globally. Stressing the importance of aligning with international standards, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann stated, "There is a need for sustainable farming, including reducing pesticide usage to meet international standards and to pro-

mote basmati rice in the international market." Following this engagement, LT Foods gave consent to establish a Centre of Excellence for Basmati Rice in Punjab, along with a pilot for assured procurement and low-pesticide cultivation. CM Bhagwant Singh Mann also called for expediting collaboration between Dutch multinationals and Punjab Agricultural University for research and sustainable agriculture practices. Highlighting the economic challenges in farming, he said, "With the squeezing margins of profit, agriculture is no longer a profitable proposition due to which farmers are facing a lot of problems for their basic subsistence." He further noted, "The production potential of the available technology of the crops had already been nearly exploited and has now almost reached a plateau in growth." The Chief Minister also visited the Floriculture Auction Market at Aalsmeer, the world's largest flower and plant marketplace, where he observed the Dutch auction system and its highly integrated ecosystem of production, logistics and global distribution. He emphasised Punjab's intent to adopt similar models to strengthen agri-value chains and enhance farmers' incomes.

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PPCB launches Mission Clean Air Mandi Gobindgarh under the National Clean Air Programme

The Sikh Times

Chandigarh, April 22: The Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), convened a high-level meeting on Mission Clean Air Mandi Gobindgarh at Mandi Gobindgarh. The meeting was presided over by Chairperson Reena Gupta and Member Secretary Dr. Lavneet Kumar Dubey, and co-convened with the district administration, including Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sonu Thind and Additional Deputy Commissioner Pooja Soyal, along with senior officials from all key stakeholder departments, including Municipal Council, PWD, NHAI, PSIEC, Forest Department, and the Water Supply & Sewerage Department. Mandi Gobindgarh, identified as a non-attainment city for not meeting prescribed ambient air quality standards, is a priority city under NCAP. During the meeting, PPCB presented findings from its field surveys and the Source

Apportionment Study, which identified road dust, vehicular emissions, industrial emissions, and improper solid waste management as the major contributors to air pollution. Based on these findings, PPCB outlined a set of



actionable, time-bound recommendations for stakeholder departments to address key issues including road infrastructure gaps, waste management deficiencies, traffic congestion, and industrial emissions. Chairperson PPCB emphasized that the initiative is a collaborative, mission-mode effort aimed at achieving measurable improvements in air quality, and not a fault-finding exercise. While PPCB is leading the initiative, close coordination and active support from the dis-

trict administration and all concerned departments will be critical to its success. It was decided that progress will be monitored over the next 12 months through quarterly review meetings, with the Regional Office, Fatehgarh Sahib, leading on-ground implementation, regular field inspections, and inter-departmental coordination. The meeting was followed by field visits to three induction furnace industries that have installed advanced air pollution control systems for secondary emissions, developed by the Punjab State Council for Science & Technology. PPCB reiterated its commitment to facilitate the adoption of these technologies across the remaining industrial units in the cluster, which is expected to significantly reduce particulate emissions and improve air quality in Mandi Gobindgarh. Mission Clean Air Mandi Gobindgarh reflects a focused, data-driven and collaborative approach towards achieving sustained air quality improvement in Punjab.

Road blockade forces Manipur CM to fly from Imphal to Thoubal for official event

The Chief Minister was forced to alter his travel plans due to the blockade, taking a helicopter from Kangla and landing at the Assam Rifles camp before proceeding to the venue by road under tight security.



New Delhi.(Agency)

Tension escalated in Manipur's Thoubal district on Tuesday after protesters blocked stretches of National Highway-102 (NH-102) ahead of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's visit to Wangjing, where he was to inaugurate a newly constructed Block Development Officer (BDO)

office.

According to officials, demonstrators gathered at multiple points along the Thoubal stretch of the highway, disrupting vehicular movement on the key arterial route. The blockade led to temporary traffic disruptions and heightened security concerns in the area. The Chief Minister was forced to alter his travel plans due to the blockade, taking a helicopter from Kangla and landing at the Assam Rifles camp before proceeding to the venue by road under tight security. His convoy, meanwhile, travelled via Mayai Lambi under heavy deployment. Despite the unrest, the inauguration of the BDO office was carried out as scheduled. The Chief Minister appealed for calm, stating that all issues can be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding. Expressing sadness over the developments, he said that while he had received a warm welcome in the hill districts, the blockade during his visit to the valley areas was deeply disappointing.

An insidious bid to get Pakistan water from India under Indus treaty?

As summer temperatures rise, the pressure on Pakistan is mounting due to India keeping the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance after the Pahalgam terror attack. But an insidious game is on to make India relent even as the West plays along Pakistan's latest peacemaker farce.



New Delhi.(Agency)

There is a coordinated push by Pakistani media and western platforms and think tanks to project Islamabad as a victim and get India to relent on sharing waters of the Indus River System. India has kept the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance, under which it shared water with Pakistan after its role in the Pahalgam terror attack of 2025. India's leadership has made it clear, blood and water won't flow together.

The attack at Baisaran valley in Pahalgam on April 22 last year saw tourists being segregated on the basis of religion and shot dead at point-blank range. The religious nature of the attack came after dog-whistling by Pakistani Army chief Asim Munir and when a sense of normalcy returned to Jammu and Kashmir. The coordinated attempt at painting Pakistan as a victim of India's IWT suspension comes even as the former tries to project an image of a peacemaker by mediating in the Iran-US war. A pattern of literature has emerged across Pakistani media and global think-tanks and platforms in recent weeks on the IWT. These come immediately after a meeting convened by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari. The articles, published over the last few weeks, deliberately ignore or downplay Pakistan's role in terrorism and treaty violations. London-based think tank Chatham House was the most prominent, playing the role of pushing Pakistan's agenda.

India will not bow to any form of terror: PM Modi on Pahalgam attack anniversary

New Delhi.(Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday paid homage to the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack on its first anniversary and expressed solidarity with their families. In a post on X, PM Modi said the victims "will never be forgotten," describing the April 22, 2025 attack as a tragedy that continues to weigh on the nation's conscience and asserted that the country will not bow to any form of terror.

"Remembering the innocent lives lost in the gruesome Pahalgam terror attack on this day last year. They will never be forgotten. My thoughts are also with the bereaved families as they cope with this loss," he said in a post on X.

"As a nation, we stand united in grief and resolve. India will never bow to any form of terror. The heinous designs of terrorists will never succeed," the Prime Minister added. The statement came as families of victims continue to grapple with the

loss of their loved ones. On April 22 last year, terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Pahalgam in south Kashmir,



triggering nationwide outrage. In response, India launched a military operation on May 7, targeting and destroying multiple terror infrastructure sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) under Operation

Sindoor. A few minutes before PM Modi's post, the Indian Army said on X that for acts against India, the response is "assured," adding that "justice will be served. Always."

Earlier, on the eve of the first anniversary of the Pahalgam terror attack, the Indian Army had issued a stern warning to perpetrators of terrorism, asserting that the response becomes "decisive when boundaries of humanity are crossed." The Indian Army posted on X, said, "When boundaries of humanity are crossed, the response is decisive. Justice is served. India stands united," alongside a symbolic graphic referencing Operation Sindoor. The victims were reportedly segregated by terrorists on the basis of religion before being shot in front of their families, triggering widespread outrage.

In response, India launched "Operation Sindoor" on May 7, 2025, targeting terror infrastructure across the border.

PM Modi, in a post on X, paid tribute to the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack, in which terrorists killed 26 people, mostly tourists, saying they "will never be forgotten."

## News box

## Truck rams into scooter in Gurgaon, teenager and youth die

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Two youths, including a 16-year-old boy and a 21-year-old man, were killed after a speeding container truck hit their scooter near the Pataudi bypass on Sunday evening.

Police said the accident took place around 7.30pm on April 20 when Ayan (16), a resident of Ward 12 and Mustafa (21), a resident of Ward 11 in Pataudi, were heading towards village Narhera on a scooter.

Complainant Dilshad told police that he, along with one of his friends, was riding behind them on a motorcycle. The group had met shortly before and set out together.

As they reached the Pataudi bypass, a container truck coming from the Safenagar side, allegedly being driven at high speed and in a rash manner, hit the scooter.

The impact threw both riders onto the road, causing fatal injuries. The truck driver fled the spot with the vehicle. The scooter was also damaged in the collision.

The injured were taken to the govt hospital in Pataudi, where doctors declared them dead. The bodies were shifted to the mortuary for autopsy and later handed over to the families. A case has been registered against an unidentified driver under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death due to negligence) of BNS at Pataudi police station. Police said efforts are underway

## Speeding car mows down man near Surajkund, one dead, friend critical

**Noida.(Agency)**

A 42-year-old daily wage labourer died after a speeding car hit him and his friend from behind near Intezaar Garden in the Surajkund area on Sunday evening, police said. The deceased, identified as Neeraj, had gone to work as a waiter at a wedding function at Lotus Garden along with his friend Gautam, a resident of Nangloi in Delhi. After finishing their shift, the two were walking towards Delhi while looking for transport when the accident occurred around 7pm. According to police, a car approached from the Anangpur Chowk side at high speed and rammed into the duo from behind. Both men sustained serious injuries and were rushed to BK Hospital in Faridabad, where Neeraj succumbed during treatment. "Gautam suffered multiple injuries, including a forehead wound and swelling in the ankle. He was referred to AIIMS Trauma Centre and later shifted to a private hospital in Faridabad. His condition remains serious, and he is currently unfit to give a statement," an investigating officer said. The incident came to light after Neeraj's family, concerned over his absence, traced his whereabouts and approached the police the following day. Based on a complaint filed by his brother, a resident of Nangloi, Surajkund police registered an FIR against an unidentified driver under Sections 106 (death by negligence), 125(a) (endangering life) and 281 (rash driving) of BNS. Police said efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the accused. The body has been kept in the mortuary for postmortem, and further investigation is in progress.

## Scooter crashes into cab, 2 school friends without helmets die

**Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

Two boys died and two others were critically injured after the scooter they were riding — all four minors crammed onto it without helmets — crashed head-on into an Ertiga cab in Indirapuram on Sunday evening.

The collision occurred on Kanawani-Pusta road on Sunday evening when the four school friends were out for a casual ride. The boys were Satyam (13) and Shakib (10), who died during treatment, and Ansh (14) and Piyush alias Golu (11), who suffered grievous injuries. Shakib died late on Sunday night, while Satyam succumbed to his injuries on Monday afternoon. Police said the four boys, all former neighbours from Kanawani village, had gone out on a scooter ridden by Ansh. Though some of their families had later moved to Vasundhara, they continued to study in the same school. Abhishek Srivastava, ACP of Indirapuram, said the crash took place around 7pm on Sunday. "Ansh had left home on the scooter and later picked up his friends one by one. The accident occurred when he was dropping them back," he added. According to police, the scooter was at high speed when Ansh lost control and collided head-on with the cab. "A collision took place between the scooter and the car. It also emerged that the scooter was speeding and Ansh lost control before ramming into the vehicle," the ACP said. Police said the cab driver, Sahil (22), a resident of Loni who works with an online ride service, was returning to Indirapuram after dropping a passenger in Vasundhara.

## Police probe how workers' bulk data reached Noida protesters

**Noida.(Agency)**

Police are looking at the possibility of people beyond the arrested members of workers' group Mazdoor Bigul Dasta being involved in inciting violence during the April 13 industrial labour protest in the city. According to officers involved in the probe, those involved in instigating the violence aimed to disrupt industrial production in Noida for several weeks, forcing companies to halt operations and create pressure on govt to hike wages.

A senior officer said there are several key questions that emerged during the probe, one of which is how so many members were added to the main WhatsApp groups used to mobilise the protests in such quick time. "How did the organisers manage to get so many phone numbers? There were around 800 members in each group. Another point of inquiry is why, despite workers agreeing to revised salary terms on April 10 and 11, certain individuals incited them again near metro stations. We have videos of the speeches," the officer said.

# Long-billed dowitcher makes rare stop at Gurgaon wetland, first sighting after 13 years

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A rare migratory shorebird, the long-billed dowitcher, was sighted at Chandu Budhera wetland on Sunday during a routine bird walk. This is possibly the 13th documented occurrence of the species in India. The bird was spotted by a group of around 10 birdwatchers, including Kavi Nanda, Nikhil Devasar, Uday Kiran and Rohit Sharma, who were scanning a shallow water patch for waders. "We initially thought it could be a godwit because of structural similarity, but the completely straight, dark bill (beak) stood out," Nanda said.

He explained that, unlike the commonly seen black-tailed godwit, which has a slightly upturned, dual-coloured bill, this bird showed a straight, entirely dark bill, a key field marker for dowitchers. The identification was further confirmed by its greenish legs, distinguishing it from the Asian dowitcher. The bird was seen feeding alongside other waders, including ruffs, and only a single bird was spotted.



Birders said this is the first confirmed sighting in the city in over a decade. "The species was last recorded in Haryana in Sonapat in July 2020, and earlier at

Sultanpur National Park in March 2013," said Pankaj Gupta, adding that recent inputs also point to a sighting at Maguri Beel in Assam earlier this year.

Experts believe the bird is likely on reverse migration. "At this time, many birds are heading back to their breeding grounds in Siberia and Central Asia. This individual was probably stopping over to refuel," Nanda said. The long-billed dowitcher typically breeds in Siberia and winters in North America, making its presence in India unusual. Birders say such vagrancy (migratory birds straying from their usual routes and appearing in unexpected places) may occur when individuals mix with flocks of other migratory species.

The species was also reported earlier this year from Maguri Beel in Assam, where an individual was observed for nearly a month, indicating sporadic, rare appearances along migratory pathways.

Birdwatchers said the sighting underscores the ecological importance of wetlands like Chandu Budhera as critical stopover habitats, even as urban pressure continues to fragment such

## Gurgaon at 41°C, Faridabad hottest at 42.9°C, heatwave to intensify

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

The city recorded a maximum temperature of 41°C on Tuesday, a notch higher than Monday's 40°C, while Faridabad logged the state's highest reading at 42.9°C despite a 0.4°C dip in the state's average maximum temperature. The city's minimum temperature was 23.5°C on Tuesday, a slight rise from Monday's 22°C. IMD has forecast a 3-5°C rise in maximum temperatures over the next five to six days. At present, heatwave conditions are expected at isolated places in Haryana till April 24, along with warm night conditions in some areas. Bhiwani recorded a maximum temperature of 42.5°C and Narnaul 42°C, while Sirsa also touched 41°C. Hisar (39.6°C) and Karnal (39.5°C) remained just below 40°C, pointing to widespread heat stress. Overall, temperatures are around 1.8°C

above normal, IMD data shows. The Met department said dry weather is likely to persist over the next five days, with only isolated light rain expected later in the week. A fresh western disturbance may affect the western Himalayan region from April 23, but its impact over Haryana is expected to be limited. With both day and night temperatures rising, officials warned of increasing heat stress, particularly in urban centres like Gurgaon and Faridabad, where built-up areas tend to retain heat. A heatwave is declared when the maximum temperature crosses 40°C and is at least 4.5°C above normal. If the departure exceeds 6.4°C, it is classified as a severe heatwave. Doctors in Delhi-NCR are already seeing a surge in heat-related illnesses. According to Dr Shivanshu Raj Goyal, associate director and unit head, pulmonology, respiratory and sleep

medicine at Max Hospital, "Cases have risen by over 20% in the past week, driven by high temperatures, dry winds and lack of overnight relief. Patients are reporting dehydration, exhaustion, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, abdominal pain and, in severe cases, heatstroke. While many are treated on an outpatient basis, hospitalisations are rising among outdoor workers, the elderly and children."

Doctors advise residents to stay hydrated, avoid stepping out between 11 am and 4 pm, wear light cotton clothing and use protective gear like hats and sunglasses. Keeping indoor spaces cool and avoiding heavy or greasy food can also help. In case of symptoms such as dizziness, nausea or high body temperature, immediate cooling and hydration are critical, and medical help should be sought if the condition does not improve.

## Rusted height barrier comes crashing down near Botanical Garden metro station

**NOIDA.(Agency)**

An old and rusted height restriction barrier outside the Botanical Garden metro station collapsed on Monday. Noida Authority has since placed it on the road parallel to the central verge.

This stretch is a vital link on Dabri-Surajpur-Chhalera Road, connecting Sector 37 and Bhangel to GIP Mall and sectors 16 and 18. It handles a dense flow of vehicles throughout the day, including cars, auto-rickshaws, bike taxis and delivery fleets. The collapse has once again stirred concerns over commuter safety on one of the city's busiest arterial stretches. Originally installed by Noida Authority in coordination with the traffic police a few years ago to restrict the entry of heavy vehicles on this stretch. Buses and trucks are required to divert left, pass through the Botanical Garden metro station's parking area, and rejoin the main road near the multilevel parking. Commuters allege that the structure has been in a state of disrepair

for months. Instead of replacing the barrier, the Authority has simply repaired it.

"The barrier had been deteriorating for a



long time. It was rusted and broken at multiple joints. It has collapsed at least two to three times. Each time, workers carry out shoddy repairs and reinstall it," a regular commuter on the route, Gaurav Kumar, said. "These fixes have failed to address the underlying structural weakness." Echoing similar concerns, a bike taxi driver operating near the metro

station stressed the urgency of permanent intervention. "If the Authority reinstalls that rusted barrier again and it recollapses onto a moving vehicle or a pedestrian, it would be a serious accident. It needs to be replaced now," he said.

The Authority CEO Krishna Karunesh has asked officials to inspect the site and take necessary measures at the earliest.

A TOI report published in June last year pointed out the dilapidated state of both the height barriers installed on DSC Road — one near the Botanical Garden metro station and another close to the GIP Mall. In March last year, a height barrier near DLF Mall of India's west gate was damaged after reportedly being hit by a heavy vehicle. Most of the height barriers across the city have corroded frames and jagged metal edges that pose a threat to two-wheelers and auto-rickshaws. The absence of reflectors or adequate lighting makes them nearly invisible at night, compounding the danger.

## Gurgaon right-of-way cleanup: 'Illegal extensions squeezed roads so much even 2 cars couldn't pass'

**Ghaziabad.(Agency)**

In several colonies, roads meant for free movement had been squeezed by years of illegal lawns, ramps, grills, guard rooms and boundary extensions to the point that even two cars could not pass together on some stretches. The shrinking of public space and right of way — repeated across internal roads, green belts and footpaths — actually triggered a demolition drive that entered its fourth day on Tuesday, with the town and country planning department clearing fresh encroachments across eight licensed colonies. The crackdown, one of the city's biggest in recent years, follows a Punjab and Haryana high court stay on Haryana's stilt-plus-four-floor policy and a state order asking agencies to clear right-of-way violations by April 22. Officials said the exercise is aimed at reclaiming public land that had steadily disappeared under unchecked extensions. "A 11 encroachments within the right of way — from 9 metres to 24 metres — have to be cleared in a time-bound manner before April 22. In several places, residents had pushed grills and structures so far into the road that the carriageway was severely compromised. After the removals, roads have visibly opened up," district town planner (enforcement) Amit Madholia said. Three days of demolitions have also

begun to produce a second effect — voluntary compliance. In parts of Sushant Lok-1 and DLF Phase 2, residents started dismantling illegal extensions after appeals by RWAs and warnings from officials. In Sushant Lok-1's D Block, residents of nearly 250 houses began clearing projections, while in Maple Block, most households removed illegal structures by evening. In DLF Phase 2, around 350 houses shifted planters, removed grills and cleared extended portions before teams arrived. Officials said the "cooperation" reduced the need for coercive action, but warned that the campaign would continue across all licensed colonies. "This is not a one-off exercise. Residents were given time to remove violations voluntarily. But in places where there was no compliance, enforcement became necessary. There will be no relaxation for repeat violations," Madholia said. Residents expressed mixed reactions to the drive. While most agreed that encroachments had steadily narrowed internal roads and made movement difficult, some questioned the manner in which the demolition was carried out. "This has been completely arbitrary. We were given no proper time to respond, and suddenly bulldozers showed up and demolished structures that have existed for years. If

these were illegal, why did authorities allow them to come up in the first place? It feels selective and unfair. Residents are the ones bearing the loss," said Rohit Malhotra, a resident of DLF Phase 2. Others said the action was necessary but poorly executed. "Encroachments had become a real problem. Roads were getting too narrow and movement was difficult. But the way this has been carried out is harsh. Some notice and a phased approach would have helped. While the intent seems right, the execution has caused inconvenience and confusion for many families," said Neha Arora, a resident of South City 1. On Tuesday, the drive in DLF Phas 2 covered M Block, Akashneem Marg, parts of L and L Extension, Cassia Marg and Q Block, where around 800-900 houses were inspected. Officials said more than 250 illegal lawns and railings were removed, over 80 guard rooms demolished and hundreds of smaller violations cleared. In South City 1 and Greenwood City, teams cleared encroachments along a 13km stretch, removing around 70 shopfront ramps and extensions, 29 guard rooms, eight tin sheds and 12 temporary structures, besides demolishing ramps, grills and staircases outside 40 houses. At Palam Vihar, boundary walls and fencing were removed from nearly 150 houses in

Block A, along with 16 guard rooms. In Sushant Lok-2, teams cleared a 12km road network, removing ramps, guard rooms, DG sets placed on public land, boundary walls and encroachments on green areas.

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Centre will act as catalyst to enhance real farm incomes & check over-exploitation of natural resources by boosting basmati production: CM Mann

Contd.....Front page In a detailed meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, Government of the Netherlands, led by senior officials including the Director-General for Agriculture, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann highlighted the strong India-Netherlands partnership in agriculture. He sought cooperation in water-efficient farming and crop diversification, enhancing productivity through technology and precision agriculture, and promoting sustainable and regenerative farming practices. "Punjab is keen to adopt advanced agricultural systems of the Netherlands, including the use of automation, AI, drones, and data-driven crop management, as well as innovations in greenhouse farming," he said. Underlining the role of technology-driven cultivation, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann noted that greenhouse farming offers efficiency

in water and energy use but is best suited for high-value crops. He also proposed potential partnerships between Punjab Agricultural University and leading Dutch institutions such as Wageningen University & Research, particularly in applied research, innovation and knowledge exchange. During his meeting with the leadership of VNO-NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers), CM Bhagwant Singh Mann stressed the need to build a structured partnership to facilitate sustained engagement between Dutch companies and Punjab. He highlighted that the evolving India-EU Free Trade Agreement is expected to create new opportunities for trade and investment, noting that both Punjab and the Netherlands can mutually benefit in sec-

tors such as IT/ITES, dairy, food processing and agri-value chains, including potato production. Extending an invitation to global investors, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "Punjab offers a conducive ecosystem for investment." He invited Dutch companies to participate in upcoming agri-tech and industrial platforms, including engagements with CII. He also highlighted the state's progressive policy frame-

work, including the Industrial & Business Development Policy 2026 and the FastTrack Punjab Portal, which ensures time-bound and transparent approvals. Reaffirming the broader vision, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann reiterated

the Punjab Government's commitment to building a technology-driven, sustainable and globally integrated agri and industrial

economy.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, Kumari Phyanika W/o Manoj Kumar R/O House No.13, Jagabai, Jamsia Nagar, Okhla, New Delhi-110025 have changed my name Phyanika Sharma for all future purposes

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I hitherto known as LAKSHMI KANT S/O KRISHNA MURARI R/O HOUSE NO-696, NEAR RAILWAY STATION NOLI, VIKAS NAGAR, LONI DEHAT, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201102 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as LAXMIKANT MISHRA.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I, hitherto known as Vijayashanthi D/O: Rajaraman, residing at Jhuggi no 248, Madras camp, Jal vihar Lajpat nagar, South Delhi Delhi 110024. Permanent Address-18, VTC, Kongrayanur, PO: Kongrayanur, Sub District: Tirupkoyilur, District: Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, 607203, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Thamizharasi.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I sonu S/o dheeraj choudhary R/o 274 saida mohalla near Sai mandir chilla chilla village chilla saroda delhi -110091 have changed my name to sonu choudhary

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Rajesh w/o dheeraj choudhary R/o 55a saida mohalla near Sai mandir chilla chilla village chilla saroda delhi -110091 have changed my name to Rajesh choudhary

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Pinky w/o sonu choudhary R/o 274 saida mohalla near Sai mandir chilla chilla village chilla saroda delhi -110091 have changed my name to Pinki choudhary

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Sekhar Chand Meena Son Mr. Kanha Ram in respect of First Floor, without Roof rights, Front side Portion, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds., built on Property Bearing No. 1657 and Old No. 42 out of Kharsa No. 454/169, situated in the area of Village Sadhora Kalan, in Shastri Nagar, Delhi, by virtue of Regd. Will dated 31.05.1983, duly registered in the office of SRO- Delhi, vide Doc No. 1811, in Book No. 3, Volume No. 280, on Pages No. 14/4, dated 31.05.1983, executed by Mrs. Saraswati Devi W/o Mr. Kanha Ram and said property to be sold to Mrs. Rekha Gupta, and same to be finance by SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd., General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/interest in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, SAHI RAM S/O Sur Ram R/o 60877, Sector-D, Vasant Kunj, Delhi-110077, have changed my name to SAHIRAM BISHNOI permanently.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, UPENDRA S/O Siya Ram Sharma R/o House No.46, New T Block, Second Floor Left Side, Street No.8, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059, Have Changed my name from UPENDRA to UPENDRA KUMAR SHARMA permanently.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEERAJ S/O RAMNIVAS R/O H-NO-101 ISHWAR COLONY BAWANA NORTH WEST DELHI-110039 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NEERAJ KUMAR

**NAME CHANGE**  
I KUSUM RANI GUPTA W/O RAJKUMAR GUPTA R/O B-301 gali no 13 Bhajan pura delhi 110053 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO KUSUM RANI

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, BEENA D/O SHANKAR SINGH BISHT, H-NO-N-10, GALI NO-1, SADATPUR EXT., NORTH EAST, DELHI-110094 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BEENA BISHT

**NAME CHANGE**  
I ANJANA D/O RAM DAS PODDAR R/O A-158/12, MANDI PAHARI SHANTI COLONY DELHI 110047, CHANGED MY NAME TO ANJANA KUMARI

**NAME CHANGE**  
I GURU DAVAL SINGH S/O RANJEET SINGH R/O B-353 STREET NO - 2 , B BLOCK ASHOK NAGAR SHAHDARA DELHI-110093 have changed my name to GURDAYAL SINGH Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I SAZID S/O SHAHRUDDIN KHAN R/O HNO C 462 NEAR DHAR-MVEER OFFICE PRATAP NAGAR SABOLI DELHI- 110093 have changed my name to SAZID KHAN Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I KAMAKASHI D/O SUKUL KUMAR R/O A-19 MAHADEV APARTMENT INDIRA ENCLAVE NEB SARAI NEW DELHI - 110068 have changed my name to KAMAKASHI Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I SHAMHOOSHARAN S/O SHYAM BIHARI R/O KARANJINI PRE-MIVLYA ANDHRA KUSHINAGAR UTTAR PRADESH 274402, have changed my name to SHAMBHU SHARAN MISHRA Permanently for all future purpose

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Public notice is hereby given that Mr. Manoj Kumar Sharma S/o Mr. Jantri Prasad, R/O House No. 858, Radha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh 203001, is owner of Agriculture Land, area measuring 0.663 Hectare, out of Kharsa No. 1004, situated in the village Salempur, Pargana & Tehsil Shikarpur, District Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh, Vide Sale Deed Dated 03.02.2010, Doc No. 1042, Book No. 1, Jld No. 1613, Page No. 223 to 240, registered on 03.02.2010, SR- Shikarpur. That the said Original Sale Deed Doc No. 1042, Book No. 1, Jld No. 1613, Page No. 223 to 240, registered on 03.02.2010, SR- Shikarpur, has been lost and a lost report has been lodged at Police Station Anand Vihar-Police Station, District Shahdara/Crime Branch Delhi, vide L. A. R. No. 249364/2026 on 21.04.2026. Manoj Kumar Sharma is absolute owner of the said Property which is free from encumbrance. The said property neither falls under acquisition nor falls under any litigation in any court of law. On date, being the absolute owner of the said property, Mr. Manoj Kumar Sharma S/o Mr. Jantri Prasad Sharma, who is Chairman of M/s Shivi R. N. Educational Welfare Society, going to take loan against the said property by my client i.e. Abhiyan Capital India Pvt. Ltd., branch Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. If any person(s) found the same or has/have any objection regarding the above said property, then kindly may submit his/her objection within 7 days from the date of the Notice in writing to undersigned or the said Bank/FI. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned/bank by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail. Failing which, the claim as per aforesaid shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MOHD ATIF S/O MOHD ALAM residing at H-10-N011, BASTI HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN, DELHI-110013. Have changed my name to MOHAMMAD ATIF for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, MOHD ATIF S/O MOHD ALAM residing at H-10-N011, BASTI HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN, DELHI-110013. Have changed my name to MOHAMMAD ATIF for all future purposes.

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**NAME CHANGE**  
I, hitherto known as REENA ASJIA W/O DEEPAK ASJIA/R/O 788, New Rajendra Nagar, Raundel Nagar, Central Delhi, Delhi-110060 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NAINA ASJIA.

**Public Notice**  
I hitherto known as ANUBHAV S/O ABHAY KUMAR R/O B-346, D A Flats, Bindapur, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110059 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ANUBHAV SHARMA. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
My client Vinod S/O Prem Singh R/O H. No. J-53, Dakshin Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-62 has severed all his relation and disowned his son Vishal from all his movable & immovable properties due to their disobedience. My client shall not be responsible for their any acts.

**JITIN ADVOCATE**  
CH. NO. 738, LAWYERS BLOCK, SAKET COURT, NEW DELHI

**NAME CHANGE**  
It is for general information that I RAJINDER SINGH S/O AMAR SINGH R/O D-39-C, Savarn Park Mundka, Nangloi, West Delhi, Delhi-110041, declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as KULVINDER in my minor daughter's name SUKHNIEET KAUR aged 14 years in her school records. The actual name of my wife is KULVINDER KAUR which may be amended accordingly.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, RAJESH W/O dheeraj choudhary R/o 55a saida mohalla near Sai mandir chilla chilla village chilla saroda delhi -110091 have changed my name to Rajesh choudhary

**NAME CHANGE**  
I Pinky w/o sonu choudhary R/o 274 saida mohalla near Sai mandir chilla chilla village chilla saroda delhi -110091 have changed my name to Pinki choudhary

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, NEERAJ S/O RAMNIVAS R/O H-NO-101 ISHWAR COLONY BAWANA NORTH WEST DELHI-110039 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NEERAJ KUMAR

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, UPENDRA S/O Siya Ram Sharma R/o House No.46, New T Block, Second Floor Left Side, Street No.8, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059, Have Changed my name from UPENDRA to UPENDRA KUMAR SHARMA permanently.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, BEENA D/O SHANKAR SINGH BISHT, H-NO-N-10, GALI NO-1, SADATPUR EXT., NORTH EAST, DELHI-110094 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BEENA BISHT

**NAME CHANGE**  
I ANJANA D/O RAM DAS PODDAR R/O A-158/12, MANDI PAHARI SHANTI COLONY DELHI 110047, CHANGED MY NAME TO ANJANA KUMARI

**NAME CHANGE**  
I GURU DAVAL SINGH S/O RANJEET SINGH R/O B-353 STREET NO - 2 , B BLOCK ASHOK NAGAR SHAHDARA DELHI-110093 have changed my name to GURDAYAL SINGH Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I SAZID S/O SHAHRUDDIN KHAN R/O HNO C 462 NEAR DHAR-MVEER OFFICE PRATAP NAGAR SABOLI DELHI- 110093 have changed my name to SAZID KHAN Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
I KAMAKASHI D/O SUKUL KUMAR R/O A-19 MAHADEV APARTMENT INDIRA ENCLAVE NEB SARAI NEW DELHI - 110068 have changed my name to KAMAKASHI Permanently for all future purpose

**NAME CHANGE**  
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**NAME CHANGE**  
I, JOGENDER KUMAR S/O BALRAM SINGH residing at H-NO-A-484, GALI NO-5, AMAR COLONY, EAST GOKAL PUR, DELHI-110094 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO JOGINDER KUMAR for all future purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I NEERAJ S/O RAMNIVAS R/O H-NO-101 ISHWAR COLONY BAWANA NORTH WEST DELHI-110039 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NEERAJ KUMAR

**NAME CHANGE**  
I KUSUM RANI GUPTA W/O RAJKUMAR GUPTA R/O B-301 gali no 13 Bhajan pura delhi 110053 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO KUSUM RANI

**NAME CHANGE**  
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## NEWS BOX

**"China's Client": Former US NSA Questions Pak's Role In Iran Talks**

VIENNA. (Agency)

Former US National Security Advisor (NSA) H.R. McMaster has cast doubt on Pakistan's role in Iran-related diplomacy, describing it as a "client" of China and warning of "ulterior motives" in its mediation efforts. "I think what you have to do is consider Pakistan as certainly a client of the Chinese Communist Party," McMaster told IANS in an exclusive interview when asked about the role of Pakistan in mediating between the US and Iran. The second round of talks between Iran and the US in Islamabad was called off by President Donald Trump on Tuesday afternoon (local time). McMaster, in response to a question, argued that Beijing has a vested interest in preserving the current Iranian regime. "The Chinese Communist Party... is desperate to keep the Islamic Republic... in power in Iran," said McMaster, who served as the national security advisor to President Trump in his first term. Given that context, McMaster suggested Pakistan's offer to broker talks may not be neutral. "There is probably an ulterior motive here in offering their good offices to broker these talks," he said.

Blunt on his experience, McMaster delivered a blunt assessment of Pakistan's security establishment. "My experience with the Pakistani army has been one of great disappointment," he said. He accused Pakistan of pursuing a dual-track approach in security cooperation. "Pakistan often offers to be your friend and to assist... in counter-terrorism efforts... while at the same time... they're supporting your enemies," he said. Referring to long-standing concerns raised by India, he added that such behaviour is not new. "They've been using terrorist organisations as an arm of their foreign policy since the late 1940s," he said.

**US Sanctions Target Iranian Weapons, UAV Procurement Networks**

TEHRAN. (Agency)

The United States has imposed sanctions on 14 individuals, entities, and aircraft linked to Iran, targeting networks involved in procuring and transporting weapons and components for the Iranian regime, as per the release by the US Department of the Treasury. The action was announced by the US Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control, which said those designated are based in Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The sanctions aim to disrupt supply chains supporting Iran's military capabilities. According to the Treasury, the move comes as the United States continues efforts to deplete Iran's ballistic missile stockpiles, while Tehran is attempting to rebuild its production capacity. Officials said Iran has increasingly relied on Shahed-series one-way attack drones to target US interests and allies, including critical energy infrastructure in the region.

"The Iranian regime must be held accountable for its extortion of global energy markets and indiscriminate targeting of civilians with missiles and drones," said Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent. "Under President Trump's leadership, as part of Economic Fury, Treasury will continue to follow the money and target the Iranian regime's recklessness and those who enable it," he said. The action builds on the implementation of National Security Presidential Memorandum 2, under which Washington has directed agencies to restrict Iran's ballistic missile programme, counter its development of both asymmetric and conventional weapons, and prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

**2 CIA Officers Killed In Mexico Vehicle Crash After Anti-Drug Op: Report**

Washington. (Agency)

Two US officials killed in a vehicle crash as they returned from destroying a clandestine drug lab in a rugged region of Mexico over the weekend were working for the CIA, according to a US official and two other people familiar with matter. Two Mexican investigators also were killed in the crash, which Mexican authorities said occurred while the officials were returning from an operation to destroy drug labs of criminal groups.

The CIA's involvement was confirmed on Tuesday by a US official and two people with knowledge of the crash who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters. The identity of the two Americans as CIA officers was earlier reported by The Washington Post. Confirmation of the CIA's involvement comes after days of contradictions from Mexican and US authorities about the role US officials played in an operation to bust a narco-laboratory in northern Chihuahua. The lack of clarity by authorities reignited a debate over the extent of US involvement in Mexican security operations at a moment when Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has come under extreme pressure by President Donald Trump's administration to crack down on cartels. The US Embassy has declined to identify who the officials were or which entity of the US government they worked for but said the officials were "supporting Chihuahua state authorities' efforts to combat cartel operations." On Tuesday, it did not comment on reports that the officials were with the CIA. The CIA also declined to comment on the identities of the Americans killed in the crash.

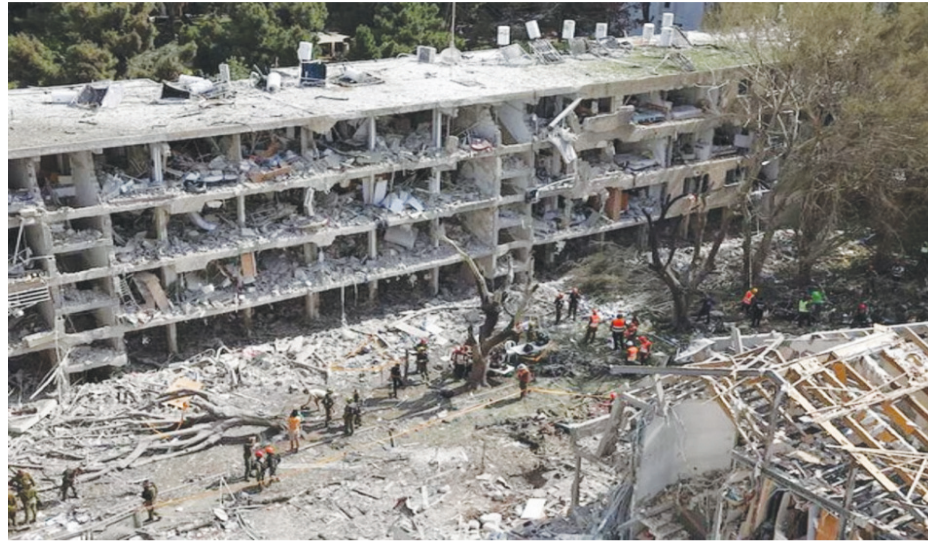
Local Mexican officials originally claimed that they were working together with US officials, then walked those comments back. Sheinbaum said she knew nothing of a joint operation between Chihuahua's government and the US, despite reports that the Mexican army was also involved in the raid on the lab. On Tuesday, the president maintained in her morning press briefing that she didn't know if the officials were part of the CIA, but she admitted that state officials and the US "were working together."

**Hezbollah says attacked north Israel in response to Israeli truce violations**

**Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters launched rockets and attack drones at a site in northern Israel that it said was the source of artillery shelling towards a south Lebanon town.**

BEIRUT. (Agency)

Hezbollah said it launched an attack on northern Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for what it said were Israeli violations of a 10-day ceasefire, the first such claim since the truce began. Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters launched rockets and attack drones at a site in northern Israel that it said was the source of artillery shelling towards a south Lebanon town. It said the move came "in defence of Lebanon and its people, and in response to the blatant" Israeli



ceasefire violations including "attacks on civilians and the destruction of their homes and villages". The Israeli military said Tuesday that Hezbollah "launched several rockets" towards soldiers stationed in south

Lebanon and that the military struck the launcher in response. It also said sirens had sounded in two northern Israeli communities after a drone fired from Lebanon was intercepted before crossing

into Israeli territory. Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli artillery shelling in several locations in the country's south on Tuesday.

It also said the Israeli army was continuing to blow up homes and infrastructure in several villages near the border, after reporting similar destruction in previous days. On Monday, the NNA said an Israeli drone strike hit a town in the country's south, with the health ministry saying six people were wounded.

Israel conducted huge strikes across Lebanon and invaded the south after Hezbollah entered the Middle East war in support of its backer Iran on March 2.

Despite the truce which began on Friday, Israeli soldiers are still active in south Lebanon, with Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz saying on Sunday that troops would use "full force" if threatened.

Under the truce terms, Israel reserves the right to act against "planned, imminent or ongoing attacks".

**'Every mum hopes to take her kids home': Giving birth in Lebanon's cramped shelters amid war**

**According to the UNFPA, an estimated 620,000 women and girls are displaced, including some 13,500 pregnant women, of whom 1,500 are expected to give birth within the next 30 days.**

BEIRUT. (Agency)

Mariam Zein cradled her 11-week-old son on a mattress on the floor where she and her family have sheltered near Beirut since the Israel-Hezbollah war upended her young family's life. "I was really excited when I was in my ninth month of pregnancy... I never thought he'd be born and there'd be war," said Zein, 26, clutching baby Hussein. "I haven't been able to enjoy my son -- my first child... to see him getting bigger in his own bed, in his own home." "I was very sad, and I'm still sad," she told AFP, nappies and baby

formula wedged near a photocopier, clothes hanging on an improvised line in a training institute. Zein fled with



her husband, their baby and other relatives when war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah on March 2, drawing Lebanon into the Middle East conflict. She does not know if her home in south Lebanon is still standing. Lebanese authorities say more than 2,450 people have been killed in the war and more than one million displaced. A 10-day ceasefire came into effect Friday. Some 140,000 people had been squeezed into

overcrowded shelters like the centre in Beirut's suburbs housing Zein's family and around 500 other people, among them five pregnant women and others with young babies. Zein said she stopped breastfeeding because there was no privacy, and now struggles to buy baby formula, while Hussein is outgrowing his clothes. "Whatever happens I just want my son near me," she said. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), an estimated 620,000 women and girls are displaced, including some 13,500 pregnant women, of whom "1,500 are expected to give birth within the next 30 days". The agency and other organisations have sought to support women as the authorities struggled to cope. In a small tent containing a portable ultrasound, obstetrician and gynaecologist Theresia Nassar has checked on women including Zein as part of a mobile health clinic run by charity Caritas Lebanon with support from UNFPA.

**Pak PM thanks Trump as he cites Islamabad's request for Iran ceasefire extension; Vance visit called off**

JERUSALEM. (Agency)

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday thanked US President Donald Trump for extending the ceasefire with Iran, after Washington said the move was made at Pakistan's request amid stalled diplomatic efforts.

Sharif, in a post on X, said: "On my personal behalf and on behalf of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, I sincerely thank President Trump for graciously accepting our request to extend the ceasefire to allow ongoing diplomatic efforts to take their course." He added that Pakistan would continue its efforts for a negotiated settlement of the conflict and expressed hope that both sides would respect the truce and move towards a "comprehensive 'Peace Deal'" during a proposed second round of talks in Islamabad. US President Donald Trump had earlier

confirmed that the extension of the ceasefire was made following a request from Pakistan's leadership. He



said he had agreed to prolong the truce while awaiting a "unified proposal" from Tehran, and until discussions were concluded one way or the other. Trump also said the US military would maintain a blockade of Iranian ports and remain on standby during the extended ceasefire period.

The White House, earlier had said in a statement following Trump's announcement to extend the truce that

Vice President JD Vance and the US negotiating delegation would not be travelling to Pakistan on Tuesday for the next round of talks. The White House did not provide details on whether in-person negotiations would be rescheduled. The ceasefire extension comes as diplomatic efforts to restart US-Iran talks remain uncertain. The two-week truce was set to expire on Wednesday, with both sides previously indicating they were prepared to resume hostilities if no agreement was reached. Iran has not yet confirmed participation in the proposed negotiations in Pakistan. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Tehran would only join talks if it believed they would produce results.

**US puts negotiations with Iran on hold as ceasefire deadline nears**

ISLAMABAD. (Agency)

Last-minute ceasefire talks between the United States and Iran looked uncertain Tuesday as a two-week truce was set to expire and both countries warned that, without a deal, they were prepared to resume fighting. U.S. Vice President JD Vance, expected to lead U.S. negotiators if talks continue, called off a trip to Pakistan, a U.S. official said. And Iran said it hadn't decided whether to participate. Pakistani leaders, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, worked intensively late Tuesday to get both sides to agree to a second round of ceasefire talks, according to two officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The ceasefire was set to expire Wednesday.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told Iran's state TV there has been "no final decision" on whether to attend because of "unacceptable actions" by the U.S., apparently referencing its recent blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. As Vance put on hold traveling for more ceasefire

talks, President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were expected in Washington on Tuesday afternoon for consultations about how to proceed, said an official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations.

The official cautioned that Trump could change his mind on negotiating with Iran at any minute, and declined to predict what would happen if the current ceasefire expires without another meeting in Islamabad but noted that Trump retains options short of restarting airstrikes.

Trump says he doesn't favor extending ceasefire. Both sides remain dug in rhetorically. Trump has warned that "lots of bombs" will "start going off" if there's no agreement before the ceasefire deadline, and Iran's chief negotiator said that Tehran has "new cards on the battlefield" that haven't yet been revealed.

An aerospace commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps threatened to destroy the region's oil industry if war with the United States resumes. Gen. Majid

Mousavi told an Iranian news site that "if southern neighbors allow the enemy to use their facilities to attack Iran, they should say goodbye to oil production in the



Middle East region. "The ceasefire, which began April 8, could be extended if talks resume, though Trump said in an interview Tuesday with CNBC: "Well, I don't want to do that." "We don't have that much tie," Trump said, adding that Iran "had a choice" and "they have to negotiate."

White House officials have said that Vance

would lead the American delegation, but Iran hasn't said who it might send. Iranian state television on Tuesday broadcast a message saying that "no delegation from Iran has visited Islamabad... so far." US says its forces board sanctioned oil tanker

On Tuesday, the U.S. said its forces boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia. The Pentagon said in a social media post that U.S. forces boarded the M/T Tifani "without incident."

The U.S. military did not say where the vessel had been boarded, though ship-tracking data showed the Tifani in the Indian Ocean between Sri Lanka and Indonesia on Tuesday. The Pentagon statement added that "international waters are not a refuge for sanctioned vessels." The U.S. military on Sunday seized an Iranian container ship, the first interception under a blockade of Iranian ports. Iran's joint military command called the armed boarding an act of piracy and a violation of the ceasefire.

**US court rules Texas public schools can display Ten Commandments in classrooms**

DALLAS. (Agency)

Texas can require the Ten Commandments to be displayed in public schools, a US appeals court ruled Tuesday in a victory for conservatives who have long sought to incorporate more religion into classrooms. The 9-8 decision by the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals delivered a boost to backers of similar laws in Arkansas and Louisiana. Opponents have argued that hanging the Ten Commandments in classrooms proselytizes to students and amounts to religious indoctrination by the government. In a lengthy majority opinion, the conservative-leaning appeals court in New Orleans rejected those arguments in Texas, saying the requirement does not step on the rights of parents or students. "No child is made to recite the Commandments, believe them, or affirm their divine origin," the ruling says.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other groups that challenged the Texas law on behalf of parents said in a statement that they anticipate appealing the ruling to the US Supreme Court. "The First Amendment safeguards the separation of church and state, and the freedom of families to choose how, when and if to provide their children with religious instruction. This decision tramples those rights," they said in the statement. The mandate is one of several fronts in Texas that opponents have fought over religion in classrooms. In 2024, the state approved optional Bible-infused curriculum for elementary schools, and a proposal set for a vote in June would add Bible stories to required reading lists in Texas classrooms.

The decision over the Ten Commandments law reverses a lower federal court ruling that had blocked about a dozen Texas school districts — including some of the state's largest — from putting up the posters. The Texas law signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott took effect in September, marking the largest attempt in the nation to hang the Ten Commandments in public schools. From the start, the law was met almost immediately by a mix of embrace and hesitation in Texas classrooms that educate the state's 5.5 million public school students. The mandate animated school board meetings, spun up guidance about what to say when students ask questions, and led to boxes of donated posters being dropped on the doorsteps of campuses statewide. Although the law only requires schools to hang the posters if donated, one suburban Dallas school district spent nearly \$1,800 to print roughly 5,000 posters. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, called the ruling "a major victory for Texas and our moral values." The Ten Commandments have had a profound impact on our nation, and it's important that students learn from them every single day," he said.

## Short news

## Kerala to cap tourist inflow based on waste management capacity

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

In a significant move aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and curbing environmental pollution in ecologically sensitive hilly areas, the local self-government department (LSGD) has initiated a statewide mapping of tourist destinations to regulate visitor inflow based on local waste processing capacity.

The step comes as part of the implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules 2026, which came into force on April 1, 2026. The LSGD has launched a study to find the infrastructure gap and carrying capacity at destinations falling under such ecologically sensitive hilly terrains.

A senior official with the LSGD told TNIE that efforts are in full swing to implement the Solid Waste Management Rules in the state. Recently, the government constituted a state-level committee chaired by the chief secretary for the purpose. In February, the Supreme Court directed states to implement the rules effectively.

The new rules mandate levying user fees on tourists to manage waste generation at the destination, regulating tourist influx based on the available waste management infrastructure capacity, decentralised processing of wet waste generated at hotels and restaurants at the destinations, and setting up of designated collection points for handling non-biodegradable waste.

"The SWM rules give special emphasis to hilly regions. We have directed our district officials to undertake a mapping of hilly destinations across the state. Visitor footfall, peak tourism seasons and waste generation patterns will be studied. We need to find out the requirements at each destination for the implementation of the rules," said a top LSGD official.

## 'Mazha' man of Kalpetta continues his prayer for rain

KALPETTA. (Agency)

Kalpetta is sweltering under a relentless summer sun. The roads shimmer and the air hangs heavy. Yet across walls, corners and quiet stretches of the town, a single word appears in bursts of colour: "Mazha" (rain). No one pauses to question it anymore. The town knows who is calling for rain. For decades, Salamath Kalpetta has been a familiar and gentle presence in this hill town. He arrived nearly 40 years ago and has since become part of its living memory. He is known not for many words, but for a constant smile and a quiet routine. Living along the roadside, he earns a living collecting and selling plastic bottles and scrap. In return, the town has given him a name that ties him closely to its identity.

When summer intensifies, Salamath takes on a different role. Carrying pieces of coloured chalk, he walks through Kalpetta writing "Mazha" on walls, pavements and empty spaces, a silent appeal to the skies. The word appears everywhere, like a prayer scattered across the town. Many say the rain often follows. Whether coincidence or belief, the connection remains unquestioned.

A recent video featuring Salamath, shared by Wayanad-based digital creator Ashish John on his social media page GodsOwnFrames, has crossed 5 million views on Instagram. In the video, Ashish says, "He has been in Kalpetta for more than four decades. Nobody really knows who he is. Even when we asked him about his family, we did not get any clear answer."

## POSCO set for Odisha comeback with JSW Steel JV for steel plant

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

In a major boost to the state's steel vision, JSW Steel and South Korean steel major POSCO have signed a joint venture (JV) agreement to establish a 6 million tonne per annum (MTPA) integrated greenfield steel plant in Dhenkanal district. The agreement was formalised in New Delhi on Monday.

The project signals a significant comeback for POSCO, nearly eight years after it exited the ambitious Paradip steel project in 2017. The South Korean major had earlier signed a \$12 billion MoU with the state government in 2005 to build a 12 MTPA plant near Paradip. Tipped to be one of the largest-ever foreign direct investment proposals for the country at the time, the project could not see the light of the day due to prolonged delays in land acquisition and environmental concerns forcing the company to withdraw.

The new JV builds on a series of prior engagements between the two companies, including an MoU in October 2024 and a heads of agreement (HoA) in July 2025. The integrated steel project will include steelmaking, hot rolling and cold rolling/coating facilities, with land already secured.

Designed to produce high-grade flat steel products, the plant will cater to sectors such as automobiles and electrical equipment. Leveraging POSCO's advanced technological capabilities, the venture aims to complement JSW Steel's existing portfolio while opening up new product opportunities in India's rapidly expanding market. The project is expected to be operational by 2031, sources familiar with the development said.

## No contents disclosure, liquor prices to rise: Karnataka to overhaul excise policy

The Siddaramaiah government has proposed amendments to excise, brewery, and bottling rules to introduce sweeping policy changes, aiming to modernise regulations, streamline processes, and reshape the state's liquor framework.

Bengaluru.(Agency)

The Karnataka government has proposed a major overhaul of its excise policy, including a move to drop mandatory ingredient disclosures on beer labels, triggering concerns over transparency and consumer awareness. The draft amendments, issued by the Siddaramaiah-led administration, also signal a broader restructuring of liquor taxation that could lead to higher retail prices across the state.

## NO INGREDIENTS INFORMATION ON BOTTLES

At the centre of the controversy is a proposal to amend the Karnataka Excise (Brewery) Rules, 1967, which would remove the requirement for manufacturers to disclose ingredients—particularly sugar content—on beer bottles and cans.

Currently, the rules mandate that brewers

specify details of composition, including limits on sugar addition in malt or grain-based beverages such as ales, porters, and stouts.

By omitting this provision, the government aims to simplify compliance procedures and improve the ease of doing business for manufacturers. However, critics argue that the move reduces transparency and limits

consumers' ability to make informed choices, especially amid growing health concerns around sugar intake.

## HIGHER TAXES, HIGHER PRICES

Alongside regulatory relaxations, the government has proposed significant revisions to the Karnataka Excise (Excise Duties and Fees) Rules, 1968, which are expected to impact liquor pricing.

A major feature of the draft is the introduction of a new taxation concept based on Alcohol-in-Beverage (AIB), which calculates excise duty according to the amount of pure alcohol per litre across different categories, including whisky, rum, beer, and wine. Under the proposed structure, a uniform levy of Rs 1,000 per litre of pure alcohol will be applied at the distributor level, covering both domestic supply and imports.



## Days before May 1 deadline, teams race to deliver Mumbai-Pune Expressway's Missing Link

While the MSRDC aims to wrap up work on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway's Missing Link by May 1, the inauguration date has yet to be decided.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The long-promised deadline of May 1 for the Missing Link on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway—a Rs 6,695 crore project designed to bypass the 19.8 km accident-prone and congested Ghat stretch between Khalapur and Kusgaon—is now just a week away. Engineers, labourers, and contractors are working overnight to see it across the finishing line, even as the West Asia conflict has made bitumen and waterproofing material hard to come by.

Once complete, vehicles will be able to bypass the treacherous ghat section and zip through a straight, long corridor of tunnels and bridges, cutting travel time by at least 30 minutes.

"Our aim is to finish all work by May 1," said Rajesh Patil, Joint Managing Director, Maharashtra State Road Development



Corporation (MSRDC). "Everything is on track. There were some issues in procuring bitumen and waterproofing material, which set us back by a few days, but we are trying our best to meet the deadline," he added.

While the MSRDC aims to wrap up work by May 1, an inauguration date has yet to be decided and might be subject to the availability of

politicians.

An MSRDC official said that currently, the last leg of laying bitumen is underway along the cable-stayed bridge portion of the project. Due to the West Asia conflict, bitumen, which is made up of crude oil, has been in short supply and expensive. An ANAROCK report in March had noted the cost had risen to Rs 48,000-51,000/tonne. The costs have now shot up over 50 per cent.

"Both bitumen and waterproofing material are limited in supply, so it has been taking longer to reach us and in smaller quantities. It has added a delay of two to four days to the work, but we are still trying to make it in time. Earlier, we had planned to finish work by April 25, but that date will likely be surpassed. We are trying our best to finish by May 1," the official added.

## 'No material to show intent of causing death in accident': Orissa HC quashes Vigilance case against senior IAS officer, flags delays in anti-corruption trials

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Arguing that there is "no material to suggest that the accused had either the intention to cause death or the knowledge that his actions were likely to result in death", Paramveer Singh, accused in the 2023 Sarangpur Volkswagen Beetle crash that killed three persons, has moved a discharge application before a Chandigarh court.

The plea, filed before the court of Additional Sessions Judge Sonika, contends that the essential ingredients to invoke culpable homicide under Section 304 of the IPC are absent in the case, and seeks discharge under Section 227 of the CrPC (now Section 250 of the BNSS). The court has issued notice to the prosecution and posted the matter for May 25.

The case pertains to an FIR registered on May 17, 2023 at the Sarangpur police station under Sections 279, 337 and 304 of the IPC, with Section 338 added later. The FIR relates to an incident in which a speeding Volkswagen Beetle



allegedly rammed into a group of people near a bus stop close to the Botanical Garden, leaving three dead and five injured.

In the application, filed through advocates Terminus Singh, Madhu Vani, Manjinder Singh and others, the accused has claimed false implication and denied any negligence on his part. It has been argued that the accident occurred due to the fault of a motorcycle rider who was allegedly coming from the wrong side and did not possess a valid driving licence.

The defence has maintained that even if the prosecution's version is accepted at

face value, the case would, at best, attract Section 304-A IPC (causing death by negligence), and not Section 304 IPC. It emphasises that there is no evidence to indicate intention or prior knowledge that could elevate the offence to culpable homicide.

Referring to the material on record, the application cites the mechanical inspection report of the car, stating that the damage pattern and deployment of airbags suggest a sudden impact, allegedly caused by the motorcycle entering from the wrong direction.

It also claims that the CCTV footage from the accident site was not preserved, which, according to the defence, could have supported its version. The plea further relies on the statement of a co-passenger in the vehicle, who has reportedly corroborated the claim that the motorcycle was at fault. It also points out that there are no allegations of intoxication against the accused and that he has no prior criminal record.

CUTTACK.(Agency)

The Orissa High Court has expressed serious concern over systemic delays and procedural lapses that undermine anti-corruption prosecutions, while quashing a Vigilance case against senior IAS officer Bijay Ketan Upadhyaya, presently serving as the secretary of Odia, Language and Culture department.

The Vigilance case was registered in 2019 under sections 7 and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and section 120B of the Indian Penal Code with allegations that Upadhyaya, while serving as director of Horticulture, demanded and accepted illegal gratification in connection with the release of bills of an empanelled supplier.

The single judge bench of Justice Sanjeeb Kumar Panigrahi set aside the cognisance order dated January 16, 2023, passed by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar and all consequential proceedings against Upadhyaya. In a detailed judgment on April 17, Justice Panigrahi observed that the case exemplified a broader pattern of delay plaguing Vigilance proceedings.

Justice Panigrahi pointed to prolonged timelines across all stages, from investigation to charge framing, stating, "It is a matter of serious concern that courts are repeatedly being confronted with vigilance prosecutions that remain pending in a state of abnormal inertia." He added that investigations often take years, followed by further delays in filing charge sheets and initiating trial.

## The MBA student, the peddler, the bribed guard: How drugs reached Mumbai's NESCO concert floor and killed two people

As police make arrests one by one, The Indian Express puts together the full picture of who allegedly did what in the controversial NESCO concert drug case.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Two people died and ten have been arrested after a techno music concert at the NESCO Exhibition Centre in Goregaon on the night of April 11, allegedly exposing a sophisticated narcotics supply chain—one that bridged prestigious management students from South Mumbai, local drug suppliers from the Kalyan-Ulhasnagar belt, and a compromised security apparatus at one of Mumbai's biggest event venues.

The fallout has been swift. Senior officers of Mumbai police have told The Indian Express that Electronic Dance Music or EDM concerts will now face stricter scrutiny before receiving permissions, a decision that seems to have already claimed its first casualty, with Circoloco's much-anticipated India debut cancelled

hours before it was to begin on April 19.

Here is a look at those allegedly involved in the NESCO concert case, all of whom have been arrested, and the events that led up to the tragedy:

## Student Victims

According to the police remand application, Shreya Rai, 24, and Sheetal Salvi, 25, second-year MBA classmates at a prominent management institute in South Mumbai, had gone to attend a concert at the NESCO Exhibition Centre on April 11 with a group of 19 friends.

While dancing in the crowd, both suddenly began experiencing dizziness. They were admitted to a trauma hospital around 12:30 am on April 12 and later shifted to Bombay Hospital as their condition turned critical.



Rai was declared dead that afternoon. Salvi survived and is recovering.

A third victim, Bismat Singh Amarjit Singh Bhasin, 28, a resident of J S Hall, Churchgate who wasn't part of the above student group, had consumed alcohol and was dancing when he began to feel unwell, as per the remand application. He was

admitted to Lifeline Medicare Hospital, where he later died during treatment. Police believe he too had consumed pills along with alcohol. Viscera has been collected and sent for forensic analysis. The formal cause of death has not yet been established pending the forensic report.

Following the two deaths, the Vanrai police registered a case under charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, along with relevant sections of the Maharashtra Prohibition Act and the NDPS Act.

## Student 'Distributors'

According to the remand application, the drug supply ring involved several students from the same prominent management college in South Mumbai, who allegedly leveraged their social

## 51 Urban Local Bodies in Himachal go to polls on May 17: SEC, MCC imposed

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Himachal Pradesh State Election Commissioner Anil Kumar Khachi on Tuesday announced that the elections to 51 Urban Local Bodies in Himachal Pradesh will be held on May 17, marking the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in urban areas.

The 51 Urban Local Bodies comprise the four Municipal Corporations of Solan, Mandi, Dharamshala and Palampur, along with 25 Municipal Councils and 22 Nagar Panchayats.

Addressing a press conference here, Khachi said, "A total of 1,80,963 male and 1,79,882 female eligible voters would exercise their franchise. Additionally, 1,808 voters aged 18 will cast their votes for the first time. Voters can also verify their names and those of family members through the Sarathi mobile application."

Khachi said, "As per the schedule, nomination papers will be filed on April 29, 30 and May 2 (till 3 pm). Scrutiny of nominations will take place on May 4 from 10 am onwards, while the last date for withdrawal of nominations is May 6 (from 10 am to 3 pm). Election symbols will be allotted immediately after the withdrawal process."

"Polling will be held on May 17 from 7 am to 3 pm. The counting of votes for Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats will be conducted the same day, while counting for the four Municipal Corporations will take place on May 31," the SEC said. The list of polling stations would be published on April 29, he added.

Khachi further said Rs 1 lakh expenditure limits have been fixed for candidates for the Municipal Corporation elections, Rs 75,000 for the Municipal Council elections and Rs 50,000 for the Nagar Panchayat elections.

## Glow hard or go home

Beauty and eternal youth is everything. Even in a world ravaged by war, famine, poverty, global warming, pollution, substance abuse, human trafficking, and dead babies. Good looks command attention and reverence. Talent, merit, a great personality, and the rest of it is important, of course, but these things are recognised and marketable mostly if they come in a glossy package that looks good enough to eat. This is hardly an evil exclusive to the present age. We have always been a superficial lot, fixated on frills, but have become less apologetic and discreet about our shallow ways. You know it is the ugly truth because the tech billionaires are spending their ill-begotten squillions on longevity and looking good ad infinitum. Of course, according to their PR people, the intention is noble and uplifting with an altruistic vision to eliminate disease and improve quality of life for the ancient as well as those who merely look like they don't spend their nights in hyperbaric chambers while availing the benefits of vampire facials and blood transfusions from baby rodents. After all, nobody deserves to suffer through the horrors of aging such as wattle necks, warts, wrinkles, balding, liver spots, menopause, greying, aching joints, recalcitrant bowels, cognitive decline, and the tendency of society to ignore their senior citizens as well as the unfortunate looking or the obese and condemn them to enforced loneliness, irrelevance



and not-so-surreptitious scorn. The second most powerful lobby in the world—the influencers—reinforce this notion by urging people to be the best looking version of themselves and keep squawking about bio-hacking, supplements, fitness routines, cell rejuvenation, and 'legit' beauty products that guarantee a more photographic version of you on the morrow provided you are willing to make the investment today and buy truckloads of fat-free collagen and hyaluronic acid with glutathione pudding available in chocolate, passion fruit, and orange blossom flavours. Their feeds feature ads urging women, men, and children to try botox, dermal fillers, laser skin resurfacing, blepharoplasties, Ozempic, packets of powdered puppies, assorted aids and implements from a serial killer's basement, which the willingly gullible gobble up in the vain hope of looking as ethereal as Aditi Rao Hydari, exquisitely emaciated as Ariana Grande and age-defying as Malaika Arora. A lot of people are buying into the fallacious argument that if you look effortlessly good, skinny and exude an enviable 'glow' you will definitely be treated better and might even make a fortune, meet and keep the love of your life and truly enjoy all that glitters. Most are willing to go to extreme lengths, expend time, money and resources they can scarce afford to look luminous and just wow all the damn time! While a vast majority of cosmetic procedures are performed on women, men are catching up too, both risking invasive and painful surgery that may have damaging, and long-term physical and psychological implications. What emerges is not a pretty picture revealing how we have allowed our insecurities and inanities to get the better of us and degenerated into beastly beings who care only about how strangers view us through filters and refuse to work on how we feel about ourselves or forge real connections that translate into joyful, meaningful ways to experience life with loved ones.

## Balanced tourism or we only go downhill

Letters Edwin Lutyens wrote to his wife while designing New Delhi reveal a deeply racist mind. That prejudice shaped how the new imperial capital for British India was built

When Edwin Lutyens—the British architect who designed imperial New Delhi and what is now Rashtrapati Bhavan—wrote about India, he was not always speaking in generalities. In one striking passage from his private letters (1912–14) describing Madras (now Chennai), he calls the people “degenerate—very dark, very naked” with “awful faces”, dismissing them even while noting that Freeman Freeman-Thomas, marquess of Willingdon, “says they are most unusually intelligent”. The evidence does not alter the judgement. It's simply ignored. The extracts cited here are drawn from Lutyens' private correspondence with his wife Emily, held in the archives of the Royal Institute of British Architects in London. While the letters have long been available to scholars, passages such as his remarks on Madras have remained largely overlooked in contemporary debates about his legacy. These letters, written while Lutyens was designing the new imperial capital for British India, now carry renewed relevance. The recent decision to remove his bust from Rashtrapati Bhavan and replace it with that of C Rajagopalachari has reopened questions about how India remembers those who shaped its colonial past. Seen in that context, Lutyens' private views matter. They are not isolated remarks. Across his correspondence, he returns to the same themes with striking consistency. India, for him, is “barbaric”. Its aesthetics are “childishly vulgar”. Its cities repel him with “dirt, filth... stench and hideousness”. Its religion—dismissed as “bull, cow and monkey worship”—is treated as absurdity rather than belief. Its people appear as “every sort of black body doing every sort of thing”. At times, the language is cruder still. He refers to Indians as “niggers” and “blackamoors”, complains that “some fat blacks” have occupied a ladies' carriage, and mocks what he sees as their inability to use basic facilities. Even the sons of Indian princes are reduced to caricature, observed with a mixture of condescension and disdain.

Even in architecture, his judgements follow the same line. The Taj Mahal is “wonderful”, but “not architecture”. Indian buildings are dismissed as “tents in stone”. Indian craftsmen produce “hideous vulgarities”, lacking any real understanding of construction. More revealing still is the theory behind the contempt. Lutyens writes that he does not believe there is “any real Indian architecture or any great tradition”, describing it as “the building style of children”. What is admirable, he suggests, comes from elsewhere—“an Italian or a Chinaman”. India, in this view, must be taught: Western tradition must intervene so that Indians can learn to

“think in three dimensions”.

At one point, reflecting on Indian artisans, he goes further. The difficulty, he writes, is finding the right men: “Government ought to breed them... A job for the Eugenic Societies.” This is not casual prejudice. It's a worldview. And it extends into politics. Lutyens describes the nationalist movement as children rebelling

country but in “the people and their minds”—a distance he resolves not by understanding, but by reduction. He was not an observer passing through India. He was designing its imperial capital. The buildings that followed—most notably Rashtrapati Bhavan—were intended to express authority, permanence and control. They were, in effect, architecture as ideology.

Seen in that light, the familiar features of Lutyens' Delhi take on a sharper meaning. The distance from the old city, the elevation of the imperial complex, the strict geometry of its layout—these are not simply aesthetic choices. They reflect a hierarchy the letters articulate openly. For decades, independent India has lived with—and adapted—that inheritance. Lutyens' buildings have been absorbed into the life of a democratic state, their meanings reshaped by use.

But the question of honour is separate from the question of use. The removal of Lutyens' bust from Rashtrapati Bhavan sits within a broader, longer process—visible in the renaming of roads, institutions and public spaces—through which India is reassessing the symbols of colonial authority. This is not erasure, but reordering: deciding who is honoured, and on what terms.

The afterlife of Lutyens' reputation is captured not only in stone but in objects. A caricature bust he kept in his Delhi office—wearing an Indian chhatra like a hat—was later taken back to London and now sits in a museum collection. The symbolism is difficult to ignore. Indian architectural forms are appropriated, stylised and made part of his self-image, even as the culture that produced them is dismissed in his letters. There will be those who argue that Lutyens should be judged in context—a man of his time, reflecting the assumptions of empire. That is true, as far as it goes. But the letters go further. They are explicit, repeated and argued. They reveal not just prejudice, but a coherent racial and civilisational hierarchy—one that spans culture, religion, aesthetics and political authority. And that hierarchy shaped how India was seen, and therefore how it was built. Lutyens' achievement is not in doubt. But neither is the distance he placed between himself and the people he was building for. His letters show a mind that could order space with brilliance, but could not—or would not—grasp the society around it except by diminishing it.



against their nurse. He writes that the “average Indian seems a hopeless creature” and suggests it will be years before Indians are “fit to govern themselves with any sense of justice or fairness”. Representative government, in his view, risks disorder rather than progress. He admits, too, to a deeper distance. “The horror of India has not gripped me at all,” he writes, adding that the real difficulty lies not in the physical

## Manipur's woes: Violence poses new threat to stability

India, which will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games and has set its sights on the 2036 Olympics, must go all out to improve its image

THE recurrence of violence in Manipur, just two months after an elected government was reinstated, is an alarming sign that peace in the northeastern state must not be taken for granted. Two persons, including an ex-serviceman, were shot dead by suspected militants in an ambush in Ukhrul district on Saturday, while two kids were killed in a bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district on April 7. Clashes between protesters, who are seeking the arrest of the perpetrators, and security forces have rocked districts of the Imphal valley. The ambush comes amid appeals for dialogue and reconciliation. The fact that renewed calls for peace are being ignored reflects the depth of mistrust and the volatility of the situation. The state government's prompt decision to hand over the Ukhrul and Bishnupur cases to the National Investigation Agency indicates a sense of urgency, but it is not a solution in itself. There is a dire need to



address the underlying causes that continue to trigger cycles of violence. Competing narratives, mutual suspicion among communities and the quick spread of misinformation have created an environment where

even isolated incidents risk triggering wider unrest. Public anger is palpable, but it is also apparently being fuelled by rumours and inflammatory rhetoric.

The government's assertion that the law-and-order situation is “sensitive but under control” seems divorced from the lived reality of people on the ground. Manipur's path forward must rest on sustained dialogue, accountability and community engagement. Security operations are necessary to curb immediate threats, but they must be complemented by efforts to rebuild trust and address grievances. Peace cannot be imposed—it should be negotiated, nurtured and protected by all stakeholders. Until then, each new incident of violence will continue to erode hope, pushing the state further away from lasting stability.

Manipuris have suffered untold misery over the past three years; the onus is on the “double-engine” government to give the healing touch right now.

## Teflon Trump keeps winning the war for attention

Where traditional politicians trade in credibility (fragile or fluctuating), Trump deals in defiance. He pre-bunks every critique, pre-labels every attack, and also pre-loads every scandal into a persecution playlist

It starts, as it so often does, with Teflon Trump as the spectacle. He is the showman supreme, chaos conductor or headline hijacker. The image of POTUS cosplaying Christ isn't just non-biological ego-core AI cocaine; it's message-maxxing. Translation for the timeline: “validation is mid, I'm the main character.” Whether it's a “woke pope” or elite echo chambers clutching pearls, the vibe he's pushing is simple: disapproval equals dopamine. The more his attackers seethe, the more his squad solidifies behind him. What looks cringe to critics reads as courage to his crowd, not absurd but assertive, and not bizarre but based.

Which is why the evergreen take from liberal media that he's “losing his base” feels like pure copcore. Trump's bond with his base isn't policy-pilled or decorum-driven; it's identity-coded, emotion-loaded, and borderline tribal-coded. Every drag is reframed as an attack on them. Every scandal becomes saga, every critique becomes confirmation. Pressure doesn't break the bond—it buffs it, polishes it, turns it into something harder, louder, stickier. History, when it's not busy being aesthetic propaganda, is messy. Take Iran, for instance. Critics dissed ceasefire talks as failure. But from Trump's POV, it's more chessboard than checklist. Control the currents, command the game, especially around chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz. If energy is power, then disruption isn't defeat. It's leverage. Maritime muscle over multilateral meetings is less “peace process,” and more of “power play.” And here's the core disconnect: where critics see chaos; supporters see strategy. Same soundbite, different subtitles; talk of oil, territory, and force projection seems reckless to some, but refreshingly real to others. That split-screen

perception is the whole story. Then there's the culture war carousel. Trump-bashing isn't just critique—it's community content. Eye-rolls, hot takes, doom threads are all ritual—identity affirmation dressed as analysis. But Trump? He doesn't dodge the discourse, he dominates it. Criticism doesn't sideline him; it spotlights him. Keeps him trending, talking, and top-of-feed. The outrage isn't starving him; instead it's feeding him. History doesn't do copy-paste, but it does rhyme. Julius Caesar knew being branded a threat to the establishment made him the popular alternative. Charles de Gaulle turned exile into epic comeback. Trump taps that same energy, only sped up, scaled up, and meme'd up. Faster backlash, faster bounce-back, faster myth-making is his shtick. The storm doesn't pass; it refreshes. And Trump rides it. So the opposition spirals into satire mode: a content farm of caricature. Unflattering frames, memeified meltdowns, headline hysteria—“unhinged,” “panicked,” “midnight meltdown.” The media montage tries to become myth. They storyboard his downfall, script his exit, poll his extinction. Remember the confident calls about Kamala Harris sweeping him aside? But here's the glitch: the mockery doesn't land lethal. The laughter loops, but he lingers. He respawns. Resets. Rebrands. What should cancel him instead catapults him. In the attention economy, outrage isn't oxygen depletion, it's oxygen delivery. And Trump's got the lungs. Trumpian rhetoric runs like a rollercoaster reel: one day “almost done,” next day “stone age strategy,” destiny-drenched declarations dropping like dramatic trailers. This is not inconsistency; it is suspense as statecraft. It is governance as a form of narrative nudging. Thus Donald Trump fits the glitch-in-the-

matrix lineage, not in a neat category but as a recurring disruption. He is part thunder, part theatre kid, part funhouse mirror nobody ordered from Amazon but everyone's forced to stare into. For a lot of liberal culture, he isn't just wrong, he's shaped all wrong. Don't call him misguided, but as grammatically illegal in the



language of polite public life. Liberalism prides itself on soft-tone signalling, empathy aesthetics, and carefully choreographed caution. But Trump? He's the bull in the brunch café, not just breaking the porcelain but asking why the porcelain mattered. He doesn't just dissent; instead he disdains. And that hits different. Across the Atlantic, the energy shifts but the side-eye stays. European leaders are watching with curated concern.

Where they conduct with batons, Trump bangs the drum. Percussion over precision, leverage over legacy is his philosophy. The real issue about him isn't about disagreement but his unpredictability. In diplomacy, unpredictability is the ultimate plot twist. Still, in a world where power flexes louder than it whispers, his wavelength summed up by visibility, velocity, and victory feels weirdly legible, even when it's not likeable. Therefore the myth, the meme, the mantra: Teflon Trump. Not because nothing hits but because nothing sticks. Where traditional politicians trade in credibility (fragile or fluctuating), Trump deals in defiance. He pre-bunks every critique, pre-labels every attack, and also pre-loads every scandal into a persecution playlist. The Trump trope feels algorithmic: outrage in, allegiance out. There's historical echo energy here: figures who knew that being besieged keeps you boosted, that opposition equals oxygen, that storms aren't survived but surfed. So what you get isn't a clean conclusion but a chaotic collage. A man who's both product and producer of his moment. A walking feedback loop and the reminder that in politics, the most confusing characters are often the most persistent ones.

So we circle back to the enigma: Teflon Trump. Where war becomes theatre, he turns deadlines into drama, and danger into narrative fuel. The spectacle is as real as the stakes. Trump doesn't just play the expected role; he rewrites the script mid-scene. Big strokes, bold edits, constant cliffhangers. And the world watches, wondering: is this the final act, or just another episode drop. But then Donald Trump is no Apprentice at being Donald Trump. Don't you think it trumps everything else?

# 5 Indore cops break into businessman's home, steal jewellery worth over Rs 35 lakh

According to Additional DCP Amrendra Singh, Sub-Inspector Sanjay Bishnoi and four others — Praveen Bhadoria, Dinesh Jat, Ravindra Kushwaha and a head constable — have been suspended. The move follows a complaint linked to the execution of a warrant and alleged misconduct during the operation.

**Indore. (Agency)**  
Five police personnel, including a sub-inspector, have been suspended in Indore after a businessman accused them of forcibly entering his house, switching off CCTV cameras and taking valuables during a warrant-related operation, officials said. The action was taken on the orders of senior officers, though authorities have so far cited only a departmental inquiry without confirming specific allegations. According to Additional DCP Amrendra Singh, Sub-Inspector Sanjay Bishnoi and four others — Praveen Bhadoria, Dinesh Jat, Ravindra Kushwaha and a head constable — have been suspended. The move follows a complaint linked to the execution of a warrant and alleged misconduct during the operation. The case

centres on businessman Gaurav Jain, whose house was searched by police. Jain has alleged that officers entered the house like thieves, disabled CCTV cameras and opened locks using a master key.

He claimed the police entered without a warrant and caused damage to his personal property. Jain also alleged that gold and silver jewellery worth around Rs 36 lakh were taken during the operation.

According to him, the action was linked to a property dispute involving a retired ACP, and was carried out to exert pressure.

**QUESTIONS OVER POLICE CONDUCT**

The incident has triggered questions about police functioning, particularly regarding officers who remain posted at the same police station despite transfer orders.

Officials said this is not the first time personnel have failed to leave their posts

even after being transferred, sometimes continuing for months or even securing re-posting at the same station. In this case, Sub-Inspector Sanjay Bishnoi had reportedly been transferred to Tilak Nagar, while another officer was posted to Pardesipura. However, their formal departure from the station had not taken place. Authorities have not officially confirmed whether the suspensions are directly linked to the transfer violations or the allegations made by the businessman, maintaining that a departmental probe is underway.

**PROBE UNDERWAY**

Police said senior officers, including ACP-level officials, visited the scene following

the complaint. Additional DCP Amrendra Singh said the suspensions were ordered by DCP Kumar Prateek and that a detailed investigation is ongoing to establish the facts. While officials have refrained from commenting on specific allegations, the simultaneous suspension of five personnel has raised serious concerns about internal accountability and conduct during police operations. The case has drawn attention not only because of the allegations of illegal entry and misconduct, but also due to claims of influence by a retired police officer in a property dispute.

With the enquiry now underway, investigators are expected to examine CCTV evidence, the legality of the warrant execution, and the circumstances under which the police team entered the house.

## Short news

### Second maternity leave cannot be denied on the ground of a two-year gap: High Court

**Lucknow. (Agency)**

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday held that a second maternity leave cannot be denied merely because it is sought within two years of the first, observing that statutory rights under the law override provisions of the financial handbook.

The order was passed by Justice Karunesh Singh Pawar of the high court's Lucknow bench while hearing a petition by Manisha Yadav, who had challenged an April 4, 2026 order rejecting her request for a second maternity leave.

The petitioner argued that the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 is a beneficial legislation and its provisions must take precedence. The state government, however, relied on Rule 153(1) of the financial handbook to contend that a minimum gap of two years between two maternity leaves is mandatory.

Referring to earlier rulings, the high court said that the Maternity Benefit Act, being a law enacted by Parliament, would prevail over any executive instructions or provisions in the financial handbook. In case of inconsistency, the provisions of the Act would have an overriding effect.

The court noted that the petitioner had her first child in 2021 and had applied for a second maternity leave in 2022, which was rejected on untenable grounds.

Setting aside the impugned order, the court directed the competent authority to grant her maternity leave from April 6, 2026, to October 2, 2026.

### US tourist raped, confined to room at Karnataka homestay; owner, staff arrested

**Kodagu. (Agency)**

A tourist from Washington was allegedly raped at a homestay in Kodagu district of Karnataka, police said on Wednesday. Two persons have been arrested in connection with the incident, including the prime accused, a worker at the homestay who is reportedly from Jharkhand, and the owner of the facility. According to police, the accused assaulted the woman inside her room at the homestay at the popular tourist spot.



The owner, who became aware of the incident, did not extend any assistance to the woman. Instead, he allegedly confined the American tourist for three days, seizing her mobile phone, and threatening her to prevent her from filing a complaint.

The incident is said to have taken place about a week ago. The woman later travelled to Mysuru, where she contacted US authorities and reported the crime. Acting on inputs from the US Embassy, Karnataka Police registered a case and launched an investigation.

Kodagu Superintendent of Police confirmed the development, saying that both accused have been arrested and remanded to judicial custody till May 3.

## Drowning plot, 100 calls: How husband survived wife's murder bid in Gujarat

**In Gujarat, a man survived a murder attempt allegedly plotted by his wife and her lover. After over 100 calls, they hired a contract killer who abducted him and threw him into a canal. So, how did he survive? Read more to know...**

**Vadodara. (Agency)**

A chilling murder conspiracy in Gujarat's Vadodara has come to light after a man miraculously survived an attempt on his life, allegedly orchestrated by his own wife and her lover. Police have arrested six accused, including the wife, in connection with the case.

The incident took place in the Chhani area, where Girish Patel, a paan parlour owner, was abducted on April 15 while returning home. According to police, he was forcibly taken into a car on the Chhani-Sokhda Road by a group of men, threatened with a knife, and driven around multiple locations before being thrown into a canal near Sojitra.

Believing him to be dead, the attackers fled the scene. However, in a remarkable turn of events, Girish managed to cling to a structure inside the canal and struggled for nearly three hours before emerging alive the next



morning.

Initial investigations led to the arrest of five suspects within days. As the probe deepened, police uncovered a larger conspiracy involving Girish's wife, Falguni Patel. Investigators revealed that she had been in a relationship with Kaushik Sharma, a salon owner from Kheda, and the two allegedly plotted to eliminate Girish, whom they saw

as an obstacle. Police said Kaushik Sharma hired a contract killer, Narendra alias Nikul Goswami, for Rs35,000 to carry out the murder. Call records showed frequent communication between Falguni and Kaushik, with over 100 calls exchanged in just two days prior to the incident. Another accused, Rudra Rawal, was allegedly tasked with surveillance.

During the abduction, the assailants also robbed Girish of his ATM card and cash, though they refrained from using the card to avoid CCTV identification. Based on technical surveillance and interrogation, police arrested Kaushik Sharma, Jitendra Baria, Umang Prajapati, Umang Bhoi, and Prithvi Bhoi, all linked to Kheda. Falguni Patel was later identified as the mastermind and taken into custody.

## UP bureaucrat enters Uttarakhand temple sanctum with armed guard, priests object

**Almora. (Agency)**

A district magistrate from Uttar Pradesh drew sharp criticism after entering the sanctum sanctorum of a temple in Uttarakhand's Almora with an armed security guard during a ritual on Monday, prompting protests from priests.

The official, identified as Bareilly DM Avinash Singh, had reportedly entered the inner shrine of the Jageshwar Dham complex to perform a Navagraha puja. During the ritual, his security personnel was present inside the sanctum carrying a carbine-like weapon, triggering immediate objections from temple priests, who termed it a violation of the temple's religious sanctity.

**PRIESTS FLAG 'BREACH OF**



**RELIGIOUS NORMS'**

Priests at the temple said the sanctum is the most sacred part of the shrine and strict norms govern entry, especially regarding items like weapons. They pointed out that even during visits by top dignitaries, including the Prime Minister and Chief

Ministers, no weapons have been allowed inside the sanctum.

"This goes against established religious traditions. The sanctity of the garbhagriha must be preserved at all costs," said one of the priests, Pandit Navveen Chandra Bhatt, who was among those who raised objections. Several priests, including Manoj Bhatt, Puran Bhatt, Gopal Bhatt, Basant Bhatt and Khimanand Bhatt, jointly protested the incident and demanded strict adherence to temple customs.

**SECURITY CITES PROTOCOL, PROBE ORDERED**

Security personnel, however, maintained that the armed presence was part of standard protocol for a visiting senior official.

## Road blockade forces Manipur CM to fly from Imphal to Thoubal for official event

**The Chief Minister was forced to alter his travel plans due to the blockade, taking a helicopter from Kangla and landing at the Assam Rifles camp before proceeding to the venue by road under tight security.**

**Imphal. (Agency)**

Tension escalated in Manipur's Thoubal district on Tuesday after protesters blocked stretches of National Highway-102 (NH-102) ahead of Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh's visit to Wangjing, where he was to inaugurate a newly constructed Block Development Officer (BDO) office.

According to officials, demonstrators gathered at multiple points along the Thoubal stretch of the highway, disrupting vehicular movement on the key arterial route. The blockade led to temporary traffic disruptions and heightened security concerns in the area. The Chief Minister was forced to alter his travel plans due to the blockade, taking a



helicopter from Kangla and landing at the Assam Rifles camp before proceeding to the venue by road under tight security. His convoy, meanwhile, travelled via

Mayai Lambi under heavy deployment. Despite the unrest, the inauguration of the BDO office was carried out as scheduled.

The Chief Minister appealed for calm, stating that all issues can be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding. Expressing sadness over the developments, he said that while he had received a warm welcome in the hill districts, the blockade during his visit to the valley areas was deeply disappointing.

In a statement, Manipur Police said a large group of protesters, allegedly armed with stones and catapults, advanced towards the event site with the apparent intention of vandalising the newly built government facility. Police said repeated warnings were issued, but the crowd continued to advance, posing what authorities described as a serious threat to

public property and those present. "As the situation escalated, minimum necessary force was used. As a last resort, controlled firing was carried out in accordance with established protocols to disperse the mob," the statement said.

During the incident, one individual, identified as Elangbam Nandbir Singh (40), a resident of Heirok Part II and reportedly a Village Defence Force (VDF) SPO A-Coy personnel, sustained injuries. Authorities said the situation was later brought under control, preventing further damage. Security has since been intensified in and around the BDO office campus, with additional forces deployed to maintain law and order.

# 18 inspectors posted to strengthen infrastructure oversight in MCD schools

**School inspectors, appointed zone-wise, are tasked with monitoring schools in terms of performance, activities, quality of education, and infrastructure.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has posted 18 School Inspectors (LACs) across several zones, signalling a recalibration of monitoring within its education department. School inspectors, appointed zone-wise, are tasked with monitoring schools in terms of performance, activities, quality of education, and infrastructure. Each inspector typically oversees 30-35 schools in a zone and plays a critical role in ensuring attendance and compliance with academic and administrative standards. Of the 81 sanctioned the inspectors posts, 18 have now been filled through this order, with more postings expected in the coming days to strengthen ground-level monitoring and checks. According to an office order issued by the MCD's Central Establishment Department on April 20, officials have been posted in zones including West,



Keshavpuram, Shahdara (North and South), Rohini, Civil Lines, Karol Bagh, Narela, and Central. The order directs all officers to report to their respective Zonal Deputy Directors of Education with immediate effect. "Efforts were made to fill vacancies by issuing orders for 63 positions, but many declined,

resulting in a low uptake, with only 18 officials agreeing to take up the role," an official said. "In order to address this, the department also maintains a reserve list and is continuing to persuade more candidates," the official added, noting that despite reluctance, more inspectors to be posted soon. "The inspectors act as a key link between school principals and higher authorities and are responsible for inspecting schools, identifying operational and academic issues, and monitoring teaching and implementation on the ground," the official further said. **Shortage hits inspection** "Ideally, each inspector is expected to oversee around 30-35 schools, but due to the shortage, this ratio has been difficult to maintain. The postings are part of an effort to strengthen zonal infrastructure," official said.

## Fake antacid powder and coffee products syndicate busted, four men arrested

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Police have arrested four men busting a racket involved in illegal manufacturing, stocking, and distribution of spurious antacid powder and counterfeit coffee products in the Madhu Vihar area. These fake products were being supplied through wholesale and retail channels across the country. The accused have been identified as Uttam Das (23), Papai Das Baragya alias Pankaj (19), Nitin Bhardwaj (38), and Sanjay Bansal (50), all residents of Delhi. Police have recovered three single-track filling machines with compressors, around one lakh antacid sachets, approximately 50,000 coffee sachets (both ready for distribution), raw materials, including around 500 kg of coffee powder and two drums of acids, two hot guns and other tools, and packing materials such as foil paper rolls, stickers, boxes, cartons, and gunny bags.



Acting on a tip-off, police conducted raids in Madhu Vihar, where two illegal manufacturing units were found operational. The units were active under the supervision of Uttam, with assistance from labourer Papai, Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Rahul Alwal said. Uttam and Papai revealed that the units had been operational for the past two months in two rented 2-BHK flats under the direction of Bhardwaj. Bhardwaj was nabbed from Dehradun in Uttarakhand. He disclosed his association with Bansal, who was also apprehended near Kashmere Gate, while attempting to leave the city, the DCP said.

## India signs Rs 975 crore deal to boost minifield breaching capability

New Delhi.(Agency)

India has taken a significant step to strengthen its battlefield mobility, with the Ministry of Defence signing contracts worth Rs 975 crore for the procurement of TRAWL assemblies for T-72 and T-90 tanks. The agreements were inked on April 21, 2026, in New Delhi in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, with Bharat Earth Movers Limited and Electro Pneumatics and Hydraulics (India) Private Limited tasked with supplying the equipment. The TRAWL system, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, is designed to enhance



the Indian Army's ability to breach minifields. It enables the creation of safe lanes for armoured vehicles, particularly in areas with anti-tank mines equipped with proximity magnetic fuses, thereby improving operational effectiveness in combat scenarios. Officials said the procurement falls under the "Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)" category, underscoring the government's push for self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Beyond military capability, the project is also expected to provide a boost to domestic industry, with potential for significant direct and indirect employment generation, particularly through the MSME sector involved in component manufacturing.

## CBSE three-language policy sparks anxiety, confusion among parents

New Delhi.(Agency)

As the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) pushes forward with its revised three-language policy, parents across India are grappling with uncertainty, frustration, and, in some cases, difficult personal decisions regarding their children's education.

In conversations across parent groups—both online and within school communities—the dominant concern is not the idea of multilingual learning, but the manner of its implementation. Many parents believe the policy feels rushed and poorly planned.

"We are not against languages," said a parent from Delhi and a member of the Educators Federation. He questioned, "But

**In conversations across parent groups—both online and within school communities—the dominant concern is not the idea of multilingual learning, but the manner of its implementation.**



how do you introduce a new subject when there are no textbooks, no trained teachers, and no clarity on assessment?"

A recurring worry is what parents call the "English dilemma." While the policy encourages two Indian languages, parents argue that English remains essential for higher education and careers. "In reality, English becomes compulsory anyway," another parent noted. "So where is the choice?"

Families with transferable jobs, particularly those in central government services, are among the most distressed. Frequent relocations across states mean children may have to restart learning a new regional language every few years. "My child has already studied three different languages in five years," said a government employee. "Now we're being told to add another. It's not learning, it's disruption," she added.

## Delhi HC pulls up authorities over 'security' of judicial officers

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday pulled up Delhi Police and government authorities over the lack of proper security for judicial officers, saying their approach was "affecting judicial independence". The judge noted that the district court judges deal with heavy case-loads and are "exposed to risks".

Justice Manoj Jain, while hearing a plea seeking Personal Security Officers (PSOs) and proper safety arrangements for district court judges, said that authorities cannot wait for an untoward incident before acting. "You are affecting judicial independence," the judge said and asked the authorities why protection was not provided "despite clear risks", adding that the demand for round-the-clock security appeared justified and deserved proper consideration. The court also expressed unhappiness with the response of the authorities concerned for their lack of seriousness, terming it

"insensitive" after noting that the earlier meeting on the issue failed to address key concerns and did not include some important officials.

During the hearing on Tuesday, the court also declined to take the minutes of the earlier meeting on record and directed that a fresh meeting be convened within seven days.

"Return with concrete and workable suggestions," the judge asked the authorities concerned. The matter is now listed for hearing on May 12.

The judge made the observation after senior advocate Kirti Uppal, appearing for the Judicial Service Association, informed the court that several states have already provided security to judicial officers, but similar steps have not been effectively taken in Delhi. The bench also noted that restricting security to a limited number of officers or specific categories was not justified. It had earlier directed senior the Union Home Ministry, Delhi government, and Delhi Police to examine the issue of security for district court judges.



# Operation Sindoor one year on reshapes India's military doctrine

New Delhi.(Agency)

**One year after Operation Sindoor, India has strengthened its defence doctrine, accelerated indigenous procurement, expanded drone capabilities and enhanced tri-service coordination, marking a decisive shift towards technological self-reliance and a faster, more integrated military response to emerging security threats.**

One year after Operation Sindoor, India's armed forces have undergone a significant transformation marked by a new military doctrine, rapid technological upgrades and expanded defence capabilities. The operation, launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025, has emerged as a defining moment in shaping India's security strategy.

The government's updated doctrine makes it clear that dialogue and terrorism cannot coexist, signalling a firm commitment to decisive retaliation against any act of terror. Over the past year, this approach has translated into aggressive procurement, enhanced operational readiness and a strong push toward self-reliance in defence technology.

The Ministry of Defence has accelerated acquisitions across critical areas such as drone



warfare, layered air defence systems and electronic warfare. Hundreds of drones, including kamikaze and FPV variants, have been inducted into the Indian Army, significantly boosting battlefield capabilities. Structural reforms within the Army have also been introduced under the leadership of Chief of Army Staff General Uppendra Dwivedi. New tactical formations such as Rudra Brigades, Divyastra Batteries, Bhairav

Battalions and specialised drone units known as Ashni Platoons have been established to act as force multipliers, particularly along the northern borders. Infrastructure and connectivity in these regions have also seen notable improvements.

Operation Sindoor also underscored the importance of joint military operations. Enhanced coordination between the Army, Navy and Air Force has since been reinforced through multiple tri-service exercises, including Exercise Trishul, validating India's integrated warfare approach.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi further announced Mission Sudarshan Chakra, an ambitious initiative aimed at strengthening offensive capabilities and countering enemy threats with speed and precision. The mission envisions a comprehensive national security shield covering public spaces by 2035.

## Pink Saheli Smart Card catering to more than 5 lakh users: Government data

**Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the achievement reflects not only the success of the scheme but also the growing confidence and participation of women in the capital's public transport system.**



New Delhi.(Agency)

More than 5 lakh women have availed the Delhi government's 'Pink Saheli Smart Card' scheme so far, according to the latest data.

All 5.3 lakh cards are currently in active use. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the achievement reflects not only the success of the scheme but also the growing confidence and participation of women in the capital's public transport system.

She said that when public transport is safe and accessible, it naturally opens up greater opportunities in education, employment and overall progress. "This initiative is helping women become more independent, which is central to the vision of a developed Delhi," she added.

The card operates on a 'tap-and-go' system using the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) framework, eliminating the need for paper tickets. Women can simply tap the card on electronic ticketing machines (ETMs) and board buses with ease.

It enables free travel for women and transgender persons on buses, while also allowing paid use across the Metro and other modes of public transport, making it a truly integrated mobility solution. The scheme is available to all women and transgender residents of Delhi aged five and above.

The card can be recharged online, and users can track their travel history, ensuring transparency and efficiency. The digital system has also improved transport data management, enabling authorities to further enhance service delivery.

## NEWS BOX

Next demi-god of cricket?  
Srikkanth urges BCCI to act fast  
on Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

Mumbai. (Agency)

Former India captain and legendary opener Kris Srikkanth has thrown his weight behind 15-year-old sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, calling him the potential "next demi-god of cricket." Drawing bold parallels to Sachin Tendulkar's 1989 debut, Srikkanth has issued a passionate plea to Chief Selector Ajit Agarkar to fast-track the teenager into the senior national setup immediately.

The endorsement comes as Sooryavanshi continues to dismantle professional bowling attacks in the ongoing IPL 2026 season, sparking a nationwide debate on whether age should be a barrier to international honors.

## Fast-Track Him Into National Side

Speaking on The Week's podcast, Srikkanth did not mince words regarding the youngster's readiness. He insisted that Sooryavanshi should not only be in the next series squad but should have been part of the T20 World Cup plans. "I'm telling you today, fast-track him. Next series, he should be playing," Srikkanth urged. "He should be in the T20 World Cup team, in the 15. Let him understand and get the feel of what international cricket is." Srikkanth, who captained Tendulkar during his debut tour of Pakistan, sees a similar spark in the way Sooryavanshi handles world-class pace. "Imagine. First ball, Jasprit Bumrah, six. Josh Hazlewood, he hammers him. He's not bothered at all. Similarly, this boy could be the next demi-god of cricket." Record-breaking Statistical Run Continues

The hype surrounding the 15-year-old is backed by staggering numbers. Sooryavanshi is currently a frontrunner for the Orange Cap, having amassed 246 runs in just six games this season. His performance is characterized by an extraordinary average of 41.00 and a strike rate of 236.53, a figure that has left even seasoned veterans in awe. This isn't a flash-in-the-pan performance. Sooryavanshi already has a maiden IPL century to his name from his debut season and was the architect of India's U19 World Cup glory, where he smashed a mammoth 175 in the final against England. With reports suggesting the BCCI is considering him for the upcoming tour of Ireland, Sooryavanshi stands on the cusp of becoming the youngest player ever to represent the Indian senior team.

LSG vs RR: Vaibhav  
Sooryavanshi in town as  
Lucknow hope to escape  
their backyard trap

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The local autowallahs already think they've seen the script. "Chaar over se zyada Vaibhav khel gaya toh match wahi jectake dega," says one driver, an avid enthusiast, eyes lighting up at the mention of the 15-year-old wunderkind. The buzz around Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is inescapable, but on Wednesday, his presence at the Ekana Stadium carries a more haunting weight for the hosts. Rajasthan Royals arrive in Lucknow seeking to snap a two-match skid after their initial four-game burst. They face a Lucknow Super Giants side currently rooted to ninth place, having lost three on the bounce and looking thoroughly demoralised. The IPL 2026 match will get underway on Wednesday at Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium at



7:30 pm IST. Star Sports will telecast the match in India. Livestreaming will be on JioHostar.

In the heart of the city lies the Bara Imambara, famous for its Bhool Bhulaiya—a labyrinth where guides warn that "four paths are ghosts (bhooth) and only one is the truth." In 2026, the Ekana has become LSG's own private maze. Six successive defeats at home—including two to start this season—have turned the stadium into a venue that is 'home' only on paper. They return to the Ekana on Wednesday, desperate to stop the rot and find their way out of the dark. They've experimented with combinations and toyed with surface prep, yet they remain lost in their own backyard. None of their big guns have found a way out. The bowling attack, formidable on paper, has begun to wilt—a decline laid bare on Sunday when the Punjab Kings plundered 254 runs in Mullanpur. Senior campaigner Aiden Markram, speaking to the press in Lucknow on Tuesday, acknowledged the rarity of their predicament.

Premier League winners in 2016, Leicester  
City relegated to England's third-division

**Leicester City have been relegated to League One after a draw against Hull City. The 2016 Premier League champions complete a stunning fall, dropping to England's third tier after back-to-back relegations and a troubled campaign.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Leicester City's fall is now complete. Just ten years after scripting one of football's greatest underdog stories, the former Premier League champions have been relegated to England's third tier following a 2-2 draw against Hull City. The result confirmed what had been looming for weeks. Leicester needed a win to stay alive, but the draw left them seven points adrift of safety with only two games remaining, sealing their drop to League One. It marked a brutal reality check for a club that once redefined belief. Leicester

showed flashes of fight in a tense contest, even managing to respond after falling behind, but a late equaliser from Hull ensured there would be no escape. This is not a sudden collapse, but the end of a prolonged decline. A six-point deduction for breaching financial rules played a decisive role, leaving them constantly chasing the pack in the Championship standings. More worrying is the pattern. This is Leicester's second successive relegation, having dropped from the Premier League last season. From champions of England to the third tier in under a decade, the fall has been both rapid and stark. The contrast with their past is impossible to ignore. Under Claudio Ranieri, Leicester stunned the world by winning the 2015/16 Premier League title at 5000-1 odds, powered by stars like Jamie Vardy, Riyad Mahrez and N'Golo Kante. That fairytale, along with their FA Cup triumph in 2021, turned Leicester into a global symbol of belief. Today, however, the club faces a completely different challenge—rebuilding from one of the

lowest points in its modern history. Club chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha accepted responsibility in a statement to fans. "There are no excuses. We have experienced the highest highs and now the

respond strongly and compete to move this club forward again," he added.

WHAT LED TO LEICESTER CITY'S FALL  
Leicester's relegation is the result of multiple issues that built up over time rather than a single failure. The most immediate blow came with a six-point deduction for breaching financial rules, which left them battling from behind throughout the season. But the deeper problems lie in decisions made over the past few years. A lack of sustained investment and planning saw the squad gradually weaken after their FA Cup success, even as other teams continued to evolve. Managerial instability has also played a key role. Since the departure of Brendan Rodgers in 2023, the club has cycled through several managers, including Dean Smith and Ruud van Nistelrooy, without establishing a clear identity. Former defender Robert Huth, who was part of the title-winning side, highlighted the importance of leadership at the club. "He was so influential. He had a 'get stuff done' attitude," Huth said, referring to late owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha.



lowest lows, and the pain is shared by all of us. I am truly sorry for the disappointment we have caused," he said.

"Our focus now is on what comes next. We will take the necessary decisions to move the club forward, working together to rebuild, improve, and restore the standards expected of Leicester City. Our objective is clear—to

World body revokes India Volleyball  
Federation recognition after players' protest

**FIVB has revoked recognition of Volleyball Federation of India after governance breaches. The move comes days after player protests exposed deeper issues around facilities, selection politics and athlete welfare in Indian volleyball.**

Manchester. (Agency)

World volleyball body FIVB on Tuesday revoked Volleyball Federation of India's recognition with immediate effect for breach of "legal and administrative requirements", days after two senior players quit the national camp over "poor and unscientific facilities" and "politics" in selection. The FIVB constituted a steering committee made up of representatives from the world body and the Indian Olympic Association to safeguard the sport in the country and look after athlete welfare. In accordance with Articles 1.5.3 and 1.9.1 of the FIVB General Regulations, the FIVB Board of Administration has determined that the legal and administrative requirements established by the FIVB have not been respected by the interim leadership of the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI), the world body said in a statement. "As such, the VFI's provisional recognition has been

revoked with immediate effect, granting temporary administrative competence to a Steering Committee – comprising representatives from the FIVB and the Indian Olympic Association – to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of volleyball



activities in India." The FIVB said the welfare and support of athletes remains its top priority, and to this end, the Steering Committee has been mandated to ensure continuity, stability and proper governance

during the transitional period.

"Their responsibility spans the following court-mandated areas: establishment of the Athletes' Commission; conduct of State Association elections, and the alignment of the VFI Constitution with applicable legal and governance frameworks." Further, the Steering Committee will work to implement a transparent, merit-based national team selection, coordinate upcoming international and national competitions, and provide technical and high-performance support through the FIVB Volleyball Empowerment programme, including the deployment of international coaching expertise. "Under this Programme, the FIVB will contribute USD 258,000 in 2026 toward athlete support and national team development across both genders and disciplines in India, reaffirming its commitment to a stronger, more transparent future for Indian volleyball.

What makes Sakib Hussain stand out? Aaron  
hails SRH pacer after crucial DC spell

BEIJING. (Agency)

Sunrisers Hyderabad's resurgence with the ball took centre stage in their clash against Delhi Capitals, but beyond the result, it was Varun Aaron's assessment of Sakib Hussain that stood out. The SRH bowling coach pointed to a key trait that has made the young pacer such a valuable asset in their recent turnaround. Defending a massive 243, SRH once again relied on discipline and variation rather than just pace. While Eshan Malinga grabbed the spotlight with a four-wicket haul, Hussain quietly delivered another impactful spell, returning figures of 1/29 in his four overs and ensuring Delhi never truly got control of the chase. It was a collective bowling effort on a batting-friendly surface, with SRH using slower balls and clever changes of pace to disrupt rhythm. Hussain's role in that plan has



become increasingly important, especially in the middle overs where control often dictates the game. Aaron, speaking after the match, highlighted exactly what makes the youngster stand out

in modern T20 cricket.

"With Sakib, that slower ball is just brilliant. He's almost getting as much turn as an off-spinner on it. Same arm speed, executes his yorkers, and can bowl 140-plus as well. In today's game, you need that variation—to go from 140-145 down to almost 107," Aaron said. SRH's bowling story, however, wasn't always this controlled. Earlier in the season, they struggled badly, most notably against Punjab Kings, where they failed to defend 220. That game forced a rethink, leading to the axing of experienced names like Jaydev Unadkat and Harshal Patel, and opening the door for younger options like Hussain.

Since that shift, SRH have found rhythm, and their bowling has started to complement their already explosive batting, helping them stitch together a strong run of results.

SRH vs DC: Delhi Capitals reflect on Nitish  
Rana ploy that ultimately backfired

**Delhi Capitals' Venugopal Rao addresses the controversial decision to bowl Nitish Rana for his full quota and the tactical middle-order collapse that handed SRH a 47-run victory in Hyderabad.**

Hyderabad., (Agency)

The tactical landscape of IPL 2026 was pushed to its limits on Tuesday night as the Delhi Capitals' (DC) coaching staff faced a wave of criticism following their 47-run defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad. At the centre of the debate was the decision to bowl part-timer Nitish Rana for his full four-over quota while elite spinners Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav remained underutilized. Following Abhishek Sharma's explosive 135 off 68 balls\*, DC's Director of Cricket, Venugopal Rao, was left

to explain the rationale behind a move that many baffled.

The "Match-up" That Backfired

DC entered the contest with a clear plan to use Rana's off-spin to counter SRH's left-handed heavy top order. However, the theory dissolved in the face of Abhishek Sharma's carnage. Rana was dispatched for half a dozen sixes, finishing with figures of 0/55. Surprisingly, frontline weapons Axar and Kuldeep bowled just two overs apiece, seemingly held back as the scoreboard spiraled out of control. Whatever happens, happens on the field," Rao noted during the post-match press conference. At the end of the day, we can point out things like Nitish Rana bowling four overs. See, these are instant decisions. Sometimes they click, sometimes they don't. That's how it is in this format. "While Rao defended the "instant" nature of the decision, the statistics painted a grim picture. DC

leaked 116 runs during the middle overs (7-15), a phase where the failure to trust their premier spinners allowed SRH to mount a



mammoth 242/2.

Cluster Collapses and Strike-Rate Woes  
The tactical errors weren't confined to the bowling. In the chase, DC found themselves in a strong position at 107/1 before a trademark "cluster collapse" saw them lose three wickets for zero runs. Sri Lankan pacer

commercially expansive edition of the tournament. However, the latest developments have raised concerns over whether it is becoming increasingly inaccessible to fans. WHY FANS SLAMMED WORLD CUP 2026 TICKET PRICES

Fan frustration has largely centred around the sudden introduction of higher-priced categories and the lack of communication around these changes. Many supporters took to social media to question why premium seats appeared to be reclassified and sold later at inflated rates.

Eshan Malinga was the chief architect, his 4/32 ripping the heart out of the DC middle order. Rao pinpointed this lack of stability as a recurring nightmare for the franchise. "One major learning is that we are losing wickets in clusters. Every time we get into a position, we are losing three wickets together," he admitted. "In this format, people talk about not losing back-to-back wickets. But we are losing three in a row, and that is becoming the turning point." Further complicating the chase was a lack of strike for captain KL Rahul during the Powerplay. Rao observed that Rahul "hardly faced any balls" for a two-over stretch, a rhythm-breaker that shifted momentum irrevocably toward SRH. While Nitish Rana found redemption with the bat, scoring a valiant 57 off 30, it was a "pale comparison" to the relentless assault led by Sharma, leaving the Capitals to reflect on a night of tactical gambles that simply didn't pay off.



## Housing prices in Bengaluru may further rise up to 40%; THIS is the reason

New Delhi..(Agency)

A report by Colliers has highlighted that the tech hub city's rapid economic and real estate growth, fuelled by the expansion of the technology sector since the 1990s, is set to accelerate further with ongoing infrastructure development. It also highlighted that Bengaluru leads globally in tech talent availability, with nearly twice as many professionals as the next largest city. Along with the presence of multinational firms, startups, and a strong industrial ecosystem, this has positioned the city among India's fastest-growing real estate markets. Infrastructure development, including roads, expressways, Metro connectivity and airport expansion emerged as a major growth driver, particularly in easing congestion and unlocking new real estate corridors. The Metro network, comprising multiple lines at different stages is expected to play a crucial role in shaping future demand. While the Purple and Green Lines have already boosted office, residential and warehousing activity across key corridors, the recently operational Yellow Line and upcoming Pink Line are likely to further transform the city's real estate landscape, according to the report.

The Yellow Line network has improved connectivity to major employment hubs such as Electronic City, while the Pink Line is expected to decongest central and southern parts of the city, enhancing access to key commercial and residential zones.

The report has projected that office space demand in key micro-markets such as CBD, SBD 2 and Electronic City could reach up to 7 million square feet over the next two years, with rentals likely to rise by 5-10 per cent. Residential markets are already witnessing strong traction, with housing prices in key locations projected to rise by up to 40 per cent, driven by improved connectivity and increased developer activity.

## Opting for New Tax Regime? Even your Rs 14.65 lakh salary can be tax-free -- Calculation explained

New Delhi..(Agency)

Under the New Tax Regime, individuals with a net taxable income of up to Rs 12 lakh per annum pay zero income tax for the financial year 2025-26. If you are earning a Rs 14.65 lakh salary, it could be tax-free just like someone who is earning Rs 12 lakh. Under the New Income Tax Regime, you can pay zero income tax even with a salary of Rs 14.65 lakh by strategically utilising deductions. A standard deduction of Rs 75,000 is available for salaried individuals under the New Tax Regime. While most taxpayers believe that the new regime only offers a standard deduction of Rs 75,000, they must note that employer contributions and retirement benefits are highly tax-efficient. When a deduction strategy is applied, employees can make their salary of Rs 14.65 lakh tax-free. If you contribute to the National Pension Scheme (NPS) you can deduct up to 14 percent of your basic salary invested in NPS. Employer NPS contributions up to 14 percent of basic salary plus DA are tax-free under Section 80CCD(2) in the new tax regime.

EPF contribution

The employer's contribution to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) is also tax-free. 12 percent of the basic salary plus DA contributed by the employer to EPF is tax-exempt.

## Crude oil prices near \$100 again as Strait of Hormuz remains constrained

New Delhi..(Agency)

Global crude oil prices edged higher to nearly \$100 a barrel on Wednesday as traders and investors analysed the outlook for US-Iran peace talks following US President Donald Trump's announcement to extend a fragile ceasefire, even as the Strait of Hormuz remained constrained.

International benchmark Brent crude futures traded at \$99.29 per barrel, up 0.82 per cent, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose 1.15 per cent to \$90.71. Both benchmark contracts had gained around 3 per cent in the previous session. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), crude oil declined from previous close levels, hitting an intraday low of Rs 8,382, down 0.65 per cent or Rs 55 as of around 10:30 am.

Market sentiment remained cautious after Trump said he would indefinitely extend the ceasefire with Iran to allow more time for negotiations, after initially setting a two-week period. Moreover, the naval blockade continued, with the Strait of Hormuz remaining constrained. In a social media post, Trump claimed that Iran was 'collapsing financially' and 'losing \$500 million a day', adding that Tehran was keen to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Shipping activity through the Strait of Hormuz -- a critical route for nearly 20 per cent of global energy supplies -- remained largely stalled, with minimal vessel movement reported in the past 24 hours, according to reports. Adding to tensions, Iran has indicated it may attempt to break the blockade.

In equities, markets showed mixed performance globally. Domestic equities traded lower, with both benchmark indices, Sensex and Nifty, declining about 1 per cent each amid selling pressure in IT, banking and auto stocks such as Infosys, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Eicher Motors and M&M. On the global front, markets traded mixed. In Asia, the Nikkei rose 0.61 per cent, while the Hang Seng declined 1 per cent and the KOSPI traded marginally lower. In the US, Wall Street closed in negative territory, with the S&P 500 falling 0.63 per cent to 7,064 and the Nasdaq ending 0.6 per cent lower at 24,259.96.

# RBI changes auto-debit rules: Your Netflix, SIPs and bill payments may get easier

New Delhi..(Agency)

Paying monthly subscriptions, SIPs, insurance premiums, credit card bills and utility charges may soon become less frustrating for many users. That is because the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has changed its recurring payment rules, allowing many auto-debit transactions of up to Rs 15,000 to go through without asking for a fresh OTP every single time.

In simple terms, if you have already approved an automatic payment once, future monthly payments within the allowed limit can happen more smoothly.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

Recurring payments up to Rs 15,000 can now be processed without fresh authentication each cycle once the mandate is registered. This means many common monthly payments such as subscriptions, SIP instalments, maintenance bills, broadband charges or utility bills may no longer fail just because you missed an OTP message.

For many users, that removes one of the biggest irritations in digital payments.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR USERS

A lot of recurring payments fail for avoidable reasons. Sometimes the OTP arrives late. Sometimes the phone has no signal. Sometimes users miss the message entirely. In other cases, people are asleep or travelling when the payment request comes through. That can lead to interrupted subscriptions, missed SIP dates, insurance payment delays or credit card penalties. THE FIRST PAYMENT STILL NEEDS APPROVAL

This is important. No company can simply start taking money from your account automatically. When you first set up auto-pay, you still need to approve it using OTP or another authentication method. Only after that first approval can future recurring payments happen automatically within the permitted limits. So customers still remain in control.

BIG RELIEF FOR CREDIT CARD BILLS

AND INSURANCE

RBI has also allowed a higher limit of Rs 1 lakh for certain categories such as insurance premiums, mutual fund



subscriptions and credit card bill payments. This could help users who make large recurring payments and often face payment delays due to repeated authentication requests. For example, someone paying a high insurance

premium or clearing a large monthly card bill may now face fewer hurdles.

YOU WILL STILL GET ALERTS

The rule does not remove warnings.

Banks must continue sending pre-debit alerts before money is deducted. That means users should still receive advance notice showing the amount, merchant name and payment timing. You should also receive confirmation after the payment is completed.

So while payments may become smoother, they should not become invisible.

GOOD TIME TO CHECK AUTO-PAY MANDATES

This is a good time to check all active auto-pay mandates linked to your bank account, card or UPI apps. Many people continue paying for subscriptions they forgot about, duplicate services, unused memberships or old cards still linked to recurring charges. The easier auto-pay becomes, the more important it is to track where your money is going.

## Infosys declined 2.8%, Tata Consultancy Services slipped 1.9%, while Tech Mahindra dropped 4.2%.

New Delhi..(Agency)

Summer is starting to take full effect, and as temperatures rise, many are reaching for that familiar, chilled silver can of Diet Coke to beat the heat.

But this year, the go-to sugar-free drink may not be as easy to find. Across cities, shelves are running dry just when demand is at its peak, leaving consumers wondering why their usual refreshment is suddenly missing. What looks like a simple stock-out, however, is tied to a much larger global disruption, one that begins with aluminium and stretches all the way to a conflict in the Middle East. SHORTAGE THAT STARTS WITH THE CAN

The problem is not the drink itself, but what it comes in. A shortage of aluminium beverage cans is hitting supplies of Diet Coke and other canned drinks across cities. Unlike other colas that are widely available in plastic bottles or glass, Diet Coke is largely dependent on cans. That makes it more exposed when aluminium supply

tightens. At the same time, demand for sugar-free and low-sugar drinks has surged sharply. Sales in this segment have doubled over the past year,



creating a mismatch where demand is rising just as supply is getting constrained.

THE GLOBAL ALUMINIUM SHOCK

Behind this shortage is a sharp and sustained spike in aluminium prices. Globally, aluminium has surged to four-year highs on the London Metal Exchange, touching \$3,672 per tonne earlier this month. In India, prices have

climbed to around Rs 375 per kg.

What makes this surge significant is not just the price, but the scale of disruption behind it. The global aluminium market is currently witnessing a "black swan" event, a rare and unpredictable shock, reported news agency Reuters.

Nick Snowdon, head of metals and mining research at commodity trader Mercuria, told Reuters, "The scale of the supply shock we're seeing in the aluminium market is probably the largest single supply shock a base metals market has suffered in the post-2000 era." "We are already in a 'black swan' event. No one could have foreseen something on this scale," he told Reuters.

WHY THE MIDDLE EAST WAR IS TO BLAME

The trigger for this disruption lies in the ongoing conflict involving Iran.

The Middle East accounts for about 7 million metric tonnes of aluminium smelting capacity — roughly 9% of global supply.

## RBI updates e-mandate rules for transactions over Rs 15,000. Check details

New Delhi..(Agency)

The Reserve Bank of India has tightened and clarified rules around recurring payments, introducing a clearer framework for auto-debits under its e-mandate system. The move aims to make digital payments smoother while ensuring stronger customer protection across platforms such as UPI, cards and prepaid instruments. Under the new guidelines, recurring payments of up to Rs 15,000 will not require a one-time password (OTP). However, transactions above this threshold will need additional authentication, marking a key shift in how automatic payments are processed. WHAT HAS CHANGED The biggest takeaway from the new framework is the Rs 15,000 limit.

Payments up to Rs 15,000 can be processed automatically without OTP. Payments above Rs 15,000 will

require additional factor authentication

There is, however, a key exception. Payments such as insurance premiums, mutual fund subscriptions and credit card bills between Rs 15,000 and Rs 1



lakh can still go through without OTP under specific conditions. The new rules apply across:

UPI auto-pay Debit and credit cards  
Prepaid payment instruments  
MANDATORY ALERTS BEFORE AND AFTER PAYMENT

To strengthen customer control, RBI has made alerts compulsory.

Customers must receive a pre-debit notification at least 24 hours before the transaction, clearly mentioning:

Merchant name, amount, and date of debit  
Users will also have the option to cancel or opt out before the money is deducted. In addition, post-debit alerts are also mandatory, ensuring customers are informed after every transaction along with details on grievance redressal. NO CHARGES FOR E-MANDATE

The central bank has also clarified that no charges can be levied on customers for setting up or using e-mandates. For card users, existing mandates can be mapped to reissued cards, ensuring continuity. Banks and payment service providers have been tasked with ensuring merchants comply with these rules.

## The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) expert panel has approved NSE's proposal to settle long-pending cases by paying around Rs 1,800 crore.

New Delhi..(Agency)

After nearly a decade of delays, India's largest stock exchange may finally be inching towards its long-awaited public listing. The National Stock Exchange's (NSE) IPO, first proposed in 2016, is back in focus after a key regulatory hurdle appears to have been cleared.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) expert panel has approved NSE's proposal to settle long-pending cases by paying around Rs 1,800 crore, reported The Economic Times. The move is seen as a significant step towards resolving issues that have held up the IPO for years. The approval comes from a four-member



expert committee on settlement orders, chaired by former Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Jai Narayan Patel. The panel has cleared NSE's applications related to the colocation and dark fibre cases, which have been among the biggest regulatory concerns.

The recommendations will now be placed before Sebi's whole-time members for final approval. If cleared, it could pave the way for NSE to revive its IPO plans.

WHY NSE'S IPO WAS STUCK

The NSE IPO has been one of India's most closely watched yet repeatedly delayed public offerings. Since filing its draft papers in 2016, the exchange has faced multiple roadblocks, including:

Allegations in the colocation case  
Governance lapses  
Concerns around technology infrastructure  
These issues led Sebi to withhold approval, keeping the IPO in limbo for years.

## Sensex tumbles 800 points: 4 things investors must know

New Delhi..(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices tumbled on Wednesday, with the Sensex falling more than 600 points in early trade as investors booked profits after a sharp recent rally and weak IT stocks dragged sentiment lower.

At around 9:50 am, the BSE Sensex was down 628.98 points, or 0.79%, at 78,644.35, while the NSE Nifty50 slipped 162.80 points, or 0.66%, to 24,413.80. Here are four key things investors should know about today's market fall. IT STOCKS ARE DRAGGING THE MARKET

One of the biggest reasons behind today's decline was weakness in IT shares after HCLTech's cautious commentary disappointed investors.

HCLTech fell sharply after flagging slower discretionary spending and delayed client decisions. The weak outlook also pulled down Infosys, TCS and Tech Mahindra.

Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said, "IT, following the weak commentary from HCLTech yesterday is again likely to go into correction mode."

PROFIT-BOOKING AFTER STRONG RALLY

Markets have rallied sharply this month, and analysts say some cooling off after the surge is natural. Vijayakumar noted, "This month, so far, Nifty is up by 10%. The broader market has outperformed with near 15% returns in BSE 500." He added that markets have continued to surprise investors, saying, "The uncanny ability of the market to surprise is evident from this." GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY HAS NOT GONE AWAY

Investors are also cautious due to geopolitical risks and unpredictable global developments. Vijayakumar said, "The declaration of indefinite ceasefire by President Trump and Iran's indifferent and suspect response to it means the uncertainty will continue. Anything can happen any time."

OTHER SECTORS ARE STILL HOLDING UP

Despite the fall in headline indices, several pockets of the market remain resilient. Vijayakumar said, "Good results from financials are lending support to the segment. Capital market-related stocks are doing well in response to good results. Power related stocks are doing well." He also flagged autos as a space to watch, saying, "Watch out for the results of autos and auto ancillaries, which are likely to be good." The next triggers for markets will be earnings from autos, banks and more IT companies, along with global cues. For now, today's decline appears to be driven by sector-specific weakness and profit-booking rather than a broad panic sell-off.

# NSE nears IPO after Sebi panel clears Rs 1,800 crore settlement

The proposed settlement is being seen as a turning point. As per the report, NSE has offered to pay about Rs 1,800 crore to settle the cases — one of the largest such payments in India's regulatory history. The settlement mechanism allows entities to resolve disputes by paying a penalty without admitting or denying wrongdoing. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE IPO

The development is being viewed as a major positive for NSE's listing ambitions.

With regulatory uncertainty easing, the path for the IPO could become smoother. The exchange has made multiple attempts over the years to get approval, including filing fresh settlement applications in 2024 and 2025. Earlier, NSE had also paid Rs 643 crore to settle a related case, signalling its intent to resolve legacy issues and move forward. The final decision now rests with Sebi's whole-time members. If they approve the settlement, it could clear one of the last major hurdles for the IPO. For investors and the broader market, this could mark the revival of one of India's most anticipated listings.

'Bas Karo Yaar': Akshay Kumar Reacts To

# Wamiqa Gabbi's

## Poor Jokes In Latest Viral Video

Akshay Kumar and Wamiqa Gabbi are currently enjoying the success of *Bhooth Bangla*. The film is entertaining everyone. Amid this, the actress shared a lighthearted moment with Akshay Kumar. The actress shared a video in which she is seen entertaining Akshay by cracking a series of poor jokes. But the actor's reaction is going viral. Taking to her Instagram handle, Wamiqa shared a video in which she is seen saying jokes to Akshay Kumar. He is looking pissed off because of her bad jokes. "Premiqa ke PJ pe hasi hui faraar, Akshay sir bole, 'Bas karo yaar! BHOOTH BANGLA in cinemas now! Book your tickets now!! (Please aise aur joke ho toh bhejo, I am reading all comments'," read the caption. Fans also reacted laughing emojis. One of the fans wrote, "Seeing AK Paaji cooked for the first time well done Wamiqa."

### About *Bhooth Bangla*

*Bhooth Bangla* has opened to a roaring response. It dominated the box office on its very first day, collecting ₹21.60 crore in India. *Bhooth Bangla* has certainly exceeded expectations with its whopping box office collection. Backed by strong buzz and excellent word of mouth, the film has amassed ₹21.60 crore at the Indian box office. Meanwhile, *Bhooth Bangla* also stars Tabu, Wamiqa Gabbi, Rajpal Yadav, Paresh Rawal, and the late actor Asrani. A part of News18's review read, "In flashes, *Bhooth Bangla* taps into a certain nostalgic absurdity, particularly in its more playful, slapstick stretches. It also has a *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* hangover. There's an Aami Je Tomar-esque song capturing classical love. The interval block of *Bhooth Bangla* will remind you of a brand of comedy Bollywood once thrived on, but if you overstay, you'll realise that much like yourself, the film is also struggling to not zone off."

The film marks Akshay Kumar's reunion with director Priyadarshan after 15 years. The duo has previously worked on several hit comedies, including *Hera Pheri*, *Garam Masala*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* and *Bhagam Bhag*. Their last collaboration was *Khatta Meetha* in 2010. Akshay is also set to work with Priyadarshan again in the upcoming film *Haiwaan*, which will also star Saif Ali Khan.

### About Wamiqa Gabbi's work front:

The actress will be next seen in *Pati Patni Aur Who*. Recently, the makers of the film have dropped the teaser of the comedy-drama, promising a rollercoaster of laughter, confusion, and full-blown chaos. The video comes as a wave of nostalgia, revisiting the classic drama of the 'pati-patni-aur-woh' dynamic. The teaser of *Pati Patni Aur Woh* Do serves as a nostalgic dive into the universe of "patis", a.k.a. the "pativerse", leading to the introduction of the latest film with a new twist. Ayushmann Khurrana leads the madness as the hilariously flustered Prajapati Pandey, whose life quickly unravels when he finds himself caught between not one, not two, but three women, played by Sara Ali Khan, Wamiqa Gabbi, and Rakul Preet Singh. As the confusion snowballs into an all-out comedy of errors, Vijay Raaz enters as a cop, dialling up the chaos even further.



## Has AI Been Used In Varun Dhawan's Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai? David Dhawan Reveals



When the teaser of Varun Dhawan's upcoming movie *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* was released recently, the use of AI toddlers in the clip left many disappointed and initiated a quiz online. However, amid the controversy, the film's director, David Dhawan, has also opened up about the use of AI in the teaser. Recently, the filmmaker was speaking to the news agency ANI when he clarified that AI has not been used in his film but only in the teaser. "AI has not been used in the film at all... It has only been used in the teaser," David Dhawan said. "We decided to do something different and made it. It is just a teaser. Once songs are out, you'll know that the film has nothing to do with AI," he added.

### *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* Postponed

Meanwhile, Varun Dhawan, Mrunal Thakur, and Pooja Hegde's *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* has been postponed.

The film, which was earlier scheduled to release on June 5, will now hit theatres on June 12. The move came after Yash's *Toxic* changed its release date. The action drama has also shifted from March 19 to June 4.

In an official statement, Ramesh Taurani, Managing Director of Tips Films, shared, "We would like to clarify that our film - *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* was originally scheduled for release on June 5, a date we had announced several months ago. However, after recent developments and considering the prevailing situation, we felt it would be more appropriate to shift our release."

He further added, "We strongly believe that it is always healthier for the industry when filmmakers support one another rather than compete unnecessarily on the same date. In that spirit of solidarity, we have decided to move the release of *Hai Jawaani Toh Ishq Hona Hai* to June 12 and bring our film to audiences a week later."

However, the film will now clash at the box office with Imtiaz Ali's *Main Vaapas Aaunga*, starring Diljit Dosanjh, Sharvari and Vedang Raina.

## It's Official! Sooraj Barjatya And Ayushmann Khurrana's Yeh Prem Mol Liya To Release On THIS Date



*Yeh Prem Mol Liya*, starring Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari, has been making headlines, but what fans awaited was an official announcement—and it looks like the time has come. Rajshri Productions, in association with Mahaveer Jain Films, has finally made the announcement. Sooraj Barjatya is all set to light up the big screen post *Diwali* with *Yeh Prem Mol Liya*. After winning the National Award for Best Director for his critically acclaimed 2022 film *Uunchai*, Sooraj Barjatya is back with a quintessential family entertainer.

With *Yeh Prem Mol Liya*, Rajshri's beloved character Prem makes a return to the big screen after 12 years. Ayushmann Khurrana steps in to play the iconic character for the first time. Paired opposite Ayushmann in the film is Sharvari. The pair comes together on screen for the first time, and the movie is all set to hit theatres on November 27, 2026.

Also reuniting after 12 years are Sooraj Barjatya and Himesh Reshammiya. Their last outing together was *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*. The album gave memorable, viral hits that broke records. Music is an essential building block of a Sooraj Barjatya film. With Himesh Reshammiya composing the music for *Yeh Prem Mol Liya*, expectations for a blockbuster album are at an all-time high.

Earlier, while speaking exclusively to News18 Showsha, Ayushmann Khurrana expressed his excitement about collaborating with the Maine Pyar Kiya and Hum Aapke Hain Koun...! director for the first time. "It was a part of my bucket list to work with sir," he told us. "He's a very noble man. I touch his feet whenever I meet him. He gives that kind of a vibe, and I want to give that energy back to him as a student of cinema. The best part is that he's a master of cinema, but he still believes that he's a student, which is really beautiful. He's away from this circus around us," he added.

# Aishwarya Rai

## Celebrates 19th Anniversary With Abhishek Bachchan, Shares Photos From Celebration

Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan celebrated their 19th wedding anniversary on Monday, April 20. The two had tied the knot in a dreamy and intimate ceremony at the Bachchan residence, Prateeksha, in Juhu, Mumbai. Aishwarya Rai has now taken to Instagram to share glimpses of her celebration, which also included their daughter, Aaradhya. Aishwarya Rai shared selfies that she took with Abhishek and Aaradhya. The family was seen holding a beautiful bouquet as they posed together. Aishwarya looked stunning in a white ensemble and her signature red lip. She wore her hair down, framing her face perfectly. Abhishek Bachchan looked dapper in blue ethnic wear, and Aaradhya smiled radiantly.

Fans couldn't stop gushing over the couple. One person wrote, "Happy Anniversar ❤️." Another added, "Happy 19th Anniversary wedding Our Queen ❤️." A comment read, "God bless." Another mentioned, "Beautiful family." A fan wrote, "Love is divine and ultimate ❤️." Another added, "So good to see you all together and happy." Recently, Abhishek Bachchan had opened up about how he and Aishwarya are a balanced couple without gender roles. Abhishek Bachchan told Lily Singh, "In my home, as parents, both of us try to be the best example for Aaradhya instead of telling her what is right and what is wrong. We believe in showing what to do by being that ourselves. It's never been like, 'Okay, I'll teach her self-defence.' If you've seen my wife, she can take care of herself. It's never been divided like, 'I'll teach her self-defence, you teach her to be empathetic.' No, it's not that."

"It's simply about leading a good, responsible life with your values and morals. Your child sees that, emulates it, and in that way, you've equipped them. So there's no competition at home about who has to be the man or who has to be the woman. When it comes to children, we both believe you have to lead by example, not try to teach them what is right and wrong. Because what's right for us might not be right for them. Generations change. Our world is very different, and our children's world is going to be even more different," he had said.





# Ayurvedic

tips to keep skin problems away!

How to keep skin problems away!

**Avoid spicy and oily food:**

To keep your skin healthy in the monsoon season, avoid spicy, oily and sour foods. The high humidity levels cause the digestive system to weaken and heavy food can lead to an upset stomach. These types of food also aggravate pitta which is responsible for a variety of skin breakouts and eruptions in this season. Eat light and easily digestible foods, cooked or steamed vegetables, zucchini, squash, pumpkin, steamed salad, fruits, moong dal, khichree, corn, chickpea flour, and oatmeal etc.

**Say no to pitta aggravating beverages:**

We understand that you can't begin your day without a cuppa but try to reduce your daily intake. Coffee and alcohol is a strict no because it is notoriously known for aggravating pitta and acidity. Replace them with pitta pacifying herbal teas.

**Keep your skin dry:**

Getting a little wet or sometimes getting drenched is not uncommon when you are outdoors during the rainy season. However,

don't let your skin remain wet for a long time while enjoying the monsoon showers. It is important to keep your skin folds and feet dry and clean at all times. Damp skin is a breeding ground for fungal infections.

**Wheat grass, a tonic for your skin:**

Wheatgrass is a tonic for your skin. It is helpful in boosting the immune system and helping you in warding off or controlling skin disorders in monsoon. A healthy immune system is reflected in a healthy and glowing skin. Wheatgrass is rich in antioxidants and is instrumental in detoxifying the blood.

**Drink a lot of fluids:**

No, we are not talking about the one that gets you tipsy! Drink at least 8-10 glasses of clean water daily. Though you need to keep dry outside in this season to prevent skin problems it is important to consume adequate quantities of water to keep your skin hydrated.

Eat fresh: Eat fresh and unprocessed food to keep your body and your skin functioning at an optimum level. Don't rely on packed, refrigerated and processed food. Instead of ordering pizzas, burgers or feasting on chips, relish some fresh homemade food. Eat a lot of fruits and green vegetables.

**Avoid alcohol-based skin cleansers:**

You should avoid alcohol-based skin cleansers because it irritates and dries your skin. Instead use a herbal soap or cleanser regularly to get rid of excess oil, grime and dust, and of course to keep you skin free of bacterial infections.

**Use cooling herbs:**

It is beneficial to use the herbs that have cooling effects on the body (pitta pacifying) such as fennel, coriander seeds and Indian gooseberry (amla) for a glowing skin in monsoon. Amla helps to detoxify the liver and aids digestion - and is also a good source of Vitamin C and other minerals. One of the benefits of taking it regularly is a flawless complexion.



## Three office Makeup looks for the season



**Boardroom presentation**

Highlight one of your features, either the lips or eyes. For instance, colour your lips in a bright shade and let your eyes have the bare minimum of colour. If red is too bright for you, pick lip colours like plum or burgundy.

**Dinner party**

An office party or post-work hangout allow you to bring a little drama to your look. Do a winged cat-eye and keep the liner thick on the lower inner rims as well. Use a pink lip gloss to finish off.

**Corporate lunch**

A hint of peachy blush will add some freshness to a dull afternoon. Outline your lips with a lip pencil in a corresponding shade and fill it in with a creamy matte lipstick in the same shade. You can choose

from colours like light pink, peach, nude or even a lighter shade of brown. Make a thin outline around your eyes, and don't make it too high.

**Dos and don'ts**

Stick to neutral colours for a corporate office environment

Don't overdo the colours and compact



Opt for blushers in colours like rose and apricot. Indigo blue, browns and grey are great options for eye shadows and liners.

Don't wear yellow-tinted colours like coral and fuchsia, since they could make your teeth appear yellow

Keep the foundation to a

minimum

For an alert look, don't forget the mascara and curl your lashes with an eyelash curler before stepping out



## Why coconut oil is good for

# Your Skin

However, coconut oil according to Ayurvedic experts is also considered to be one of the best ways to treat any skin-related disorders. Here are a few problems that can be healed using coconut oil.

**Acne and acne scars**

The application of coconut oil can help reduce the occurrence of acne. Mostly acne happens

Coconut oil is considered one of the best oils that is mostly used for treating any kind of hair problems — be it dandruff, itchy scalp etc.

when the pores of your skin gets blocked. Coconut oil not only helps clear the pores but also reduce the swelling around the area. Further, acne scars can also be treated using coconut oil. Regular application of this oil will lessen the scar and also clear your complexion.

**Itchy skin**

Another advantage of using coconut oil on your skin is that it helps treat itchy skin. It soothes the skin and also hydrates it so there is no way you can develop dry skin.

**Cures skin rashes**

Skin rashes are common during this season. Thus, the application of coconut oil will make your skin super soft and will reduce the occurrence of rashes.