

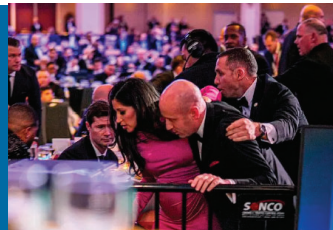


Entire Union cabinet, 19 CMs won't help BJP win Bengal polls: Mamata

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Trump and his officials 'likely' targets of suspected gunman, acting attorney general says

WORLD | NEWS



RASHMIKA MANDANNA'S PAN INDIA ACTION DRAMA 'MAISA' BEGINS 15-DAY BRUTAL ACTION PACKED SHOOTING SCHEDULE IN KERALA

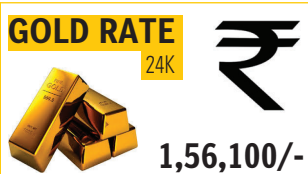
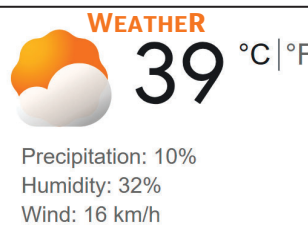
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## MALI DEFENCE MINISTER KILLED IN TERRORIST ATTACK

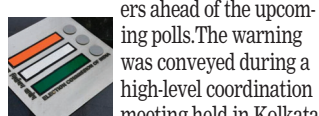


Bamako, April 26: Mali Defence Minister Sadio Camara was killed in an attack on his residence in the town of Kati, near the capital Bamako, carried out by armed terrorist groups, local sources reported.

According to the sources, who requested anonymity, armed terrorist groups launched coordinated attacks on several cities across the country on Saturday, leaving 16 people wounded. Camara's residence in Kati was also targeted, and both the minister and his second wife were killed. In a statement on Saturday evening, the government of the West African nation said the attacks targeted multiple locations, including the garrison towns of Kati, Sèvre, Gao and Kidal, as well as the capital, Bamako, reported Xinhua news agency. The wounded, including civilians and military personnel, were taken to medical facilities, and the material damage was limited, the statement added. As of Sunday, the government had not issued an official statement confirming the minister's death.

## ECI WARNS POLICE OVER LAPSES IN HANDLING VOTER INTIMIDATION AHEAD OF POLLS IN WEST

Kolkata, Apr 26: The Election Commission of India has issued a stern warning to Kolkata Police and South 24 Parganas district police officials, cautioning them of strict disciplinary action if any negligence is found in handling cases of voter intimidation or the use of explosives to influence voters ahead of the upcoming polls. The warning was conveyed during a high-level coordination meeting held in Kolkata on Sunday, attended by senior police officials from both Kolkata and South 24 Parganas. The meeting was led by special election observer Subrata Gupta, appointed by the Commission. Officials stressed that Officers-in-Charge (OCs) and Inspectors-in-Charge (ICs) will now be directly accountable for any incidents involving voter intimidation or the use of explosives in their jurisdictions before or during polling. They were instructed to act swiftly and decisively in such situations, with clear warnings that failure to do so could result in severe disciplinary consequences.



Imphal, Apr 25 (UND) Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday appealed to all stakeholders to engage in dialogue and work collectively towards restoring peace in the state, stressing that negotiations remain the only viable path forward. The Chief Minister made the appeal while briefing the media after holding a series of meetings with representatives from various localities at the Chief Minister's Secretariat. He said the prevailing unrest has adversely affected daily wage earners and disrupted the ac-

## Auto drivers continue to grapple with LPG shortage in Chennai

CHENNAI (TSIT): A prolonged shortage of auto LPG has severely disrupted fuel supply across the city for over 10 days, with several filling stations either running out of stock or operating intermittently.

LPG crisis in the city The situation has forced autorickshaw drivers to endure long queues at the few outlets that continue to supply the fuel.

On Friday, long queues of autorickshaws were seen along CIT Nagar in Saidapet, with drivers waiting for hours amid uncertainty over fuel availability. At one of the fuel stations, an operator said demand had remained consistently high. "We have fuelled at least 100 autos in just 3-4 hours," he said. "Drivers were arriving from various parts of the city as only a limited number of stations offer comparatively lower-priced LPG."

Meanwhile, a prominent fuel station in Egmore remained shut owing to lack of supply, further aggravating the crisis.

LPG bunk displaying boards in the barrier stating no stock of gas Auto drivers said that the shortage had significantly affected their working hours and increased financial strain due to rising fuel prices. Ramesh Murugesan, an auto driver, said LPG prices had risen sharply in recent months. "A few months ago, LPG was around Rs 58/kg. Now it rang-



THE SITUATION HAS FORCED AUTORICKSHAW DRIVERS TO ENDURE LONG QUEUES AT THE FEW OUTLETS THAT CONTINUE TO SUPPLY THE FUEL.

es between Rs 85 and Rs 100," he lamented. "But aggregator platforms like Rapido, Ola and Uber have not revised fares in line with rising costs."

Drivers also pointed to increasing friction with commuters. "Passengers assume we're overcharging, but prices have gone up everywhere. Tea shops and hotels have

increased rates too, but auto drivers alone are questioned," another driver opined.

Concerns over fuel quality have further compounded the issue. Auto driver Jayakumar said the mileage from LPG had dropped considerably. "We spend Rs 400-500 expecting to cover around 150 km, but the vehi-

cle barely manages half that distance," he said. "Low pressure or air mixing during refuelling could be affecting efficiency."

With time lost in queues, inconsistent supply and rising input costs, drivers said their daily earnings had declined sharply. Some have begun skipping work on days when fuel is unavailable. They warned that unless supply stabilises soon, the shortage could lead to fewer autorickshaws on the roads and longer waiting times for commuters.

## BRS asks cadres to hoist party flags in every village on formation day



Hyderabad (TSIT): Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President K.T. Rama Rao on Sunday called on the party cadres to hoist party flags in every village, town, constituency, and district headquarters to mark the BRS formation day on Monday.

During a teleconference with party cadres, Rama Rao urged cadres to hoist party flags to mark the Formation Day.

KTR, as the former Minister is popularly known, announced that a state-level

delegates' meeting would be held on Monday at the Telangana Bhavan. He noted that, in light of the massive public meeting recently held in Jagtial - and keeping the current intense summer heat in mind - the plenary session has been limited to a State Executive Committee meeting this time, in accordance with the directives of BRS President and former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR). The party clarified that invitations to this meeting have been extended exclusively to State Executive Committee members, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, district presidents, as well as former public representatives and former chairpersons of various corporations.

KTR requested that, given the limited entry capacity at Telangana Bhavan, only those who have received invitations should attend.

## Bengal's TMC govt not run from state secretariat, but by party-sheltered criminals: PM Modi

ARAMBAG (WEST BENGAL):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday alleged the TMC government in West Bengal is not run from the state secretariat but by criminals sheltered by the party.

Addressing his second rally of the day in the Haripal area of Arambag in the Hooghly district, a day before the poll campaign ends, he said the TMC's "dependence on anti-social elements in ruling the state" often forces the Calcutta High Court or the Supreme Court to intervene and bring it back on track.

"The TMC's 'nirmam (cruel) sarkar' doesn't run from the Nabanna (state secretariat). It is run by goons and criminals, requiring the intervention of the high court and the country's apex court to bring the government back on track," Modi said.

He promised that at its very first Cabinet meeting, a BJP government in the state will give its nod to the implementation of the Centre's flagship health insurance programme, Ayushman Bharat-



Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. West Bengal is the only state that has not yet implemented the Centre's universal healthcare coverage scheme, with the TMC government running its own Swasthya Sathi scheme that provides for secondary and tertiary care up to Rs 5 lakh per family annually. At the rally, the prime minister referred to the record 93.19 per cent polling in the first phase of Assembly polls in Bengal to claim that the ruling TMC was "rattled" by the voter turnout figure.

Alleging that the credibility of the Mamata Banerjee administration "has fallen to zero", Modi claimed that only the BJP can form a government, which will

## Let the show go on, says Trump after shots fired at White House event

New York, April 26: US President Donald Trump said he was safe after he was rushed away from a journalists' event after shots were fired at the Washington hotel where it was taking place.

"The First Lady, plus the Vice President [JD Vance], and all Cabinet members, are in perfect condition", he said on Truth Social in a series of posts.

"The shooter has been apprehended", he said. "Quite an evening in DC [District of Columbia - Washington]", he exclaimed.

Several members of the cabinet and other officials, including FBI Director Kash Patel who were at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner were all reported safe after the incident.

Reports said the shots were fired outside the banquet room where hundreds of journalists were assembled, rather than inside the ballroom at the Hilton hotel.

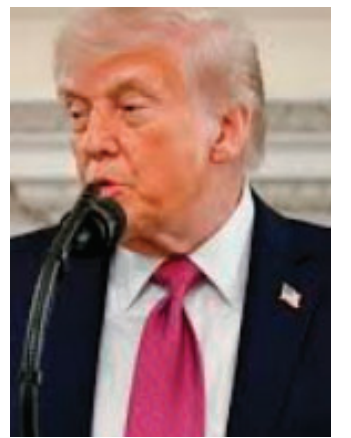
In a dramatic scene, Secret Service agents jumped onto the stage with guns drawn, pushed him and others off the stage and moved them out.

Trump nonchalantly said, "I have recommended that we 'LET THE SHOW GO ON' but, will entirely be guided by Law Enforcement".

Later said that he won't go ahead with it on the advice of law enforcement, but would reschedule the dinner within 30 days.

Trump has survived two assassination attempts, which took place during his election campaign in 2024, one of them injuring him slightly.

Trump, who has testy relations with most of the media, had boy-



cotted the annual dinner that presidents usually attend, and this was the first time that he attended it as president.

The event usually features jokes and skits by both journalists and the invited VIPs, lampooning each other.

Trump said on Truth Social, "Secret Service and Law Enforcement did a fantastic job. They acted quickly and bravely". According to the reporters' press pool that accompanies the president, a Secret Service agent shouted "Shots fired", as the officers stormed the stage to protect Trump.

The report said that an armed person who was stopped from entering the ballroom opened fire, but was subdued.

According to reports, the person was stopped at the magnetometer, a metal detector, and fired at a Secret Service Agent.

Inside the ballroom, journalists and other invitees, many of them high-ranking officials and media leaders, dived under the table and stayed till the situation stabilised.

## BENGAL POLLS: KEJRIWAL ASKS 90 LAKH DELETED VOTERS TO SUPPORT TMC AND DEFEAT BJP

KOLKATA (TSIT): AAP leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that a BJP-EC conspiracy led to the deletion of 90 lakh voters from the electoral rolls in West Bengal under the SIR exercise, claiming it was part of a larger plan to target citizenship documents.

Addressing an election rally in Rasbehari constituency here, Kejriwal also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "insulting" the people of the state by deploying 3.5 lakh security personnel for the Assembly polls. He urged those whose names were allegedly deleted from the voters' list to support the Trinamool Congress.



## CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh calls for dialogue to restore peace in Manipur

Imphal, Apr 25 (UND) Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Saturday appealed to all stakeholders to engage in dialogue and work collectively towards restoring peace in the state, stressing that negotiations remain the only viable path forward.

The Chief Minister made the appeal while briefing the media after holding a series of meetings with representatives from various localities at the Chief Minister's Secretariat.

He said the prevailing unrest has adversely affected daily wage earners and disrupted the ac-

democratic environment of children across the state. "There is no alternative to peace except through talks and coming together at the negotiating table," he stated, adding that the government alone cannot ensure peace without the cooperation of the public and civil society organisations. Reiterating his call, the Chief Minister urged all stakeholders to participate in dialogue to arrive at a lasting solution to the ongoing issues.

He also informed that the state Cabinet has decided to provide government employment to parents of children killed in the



Tronglaobi incident on humanitarian grounds.

The decision, he clarified, was not made in response to any demand from the Joint Action Committee (JAC) or affected fam-

ilies. Assuring that justice will be pursued, the Chief Minister said the government is making all efforts to ensure that those responsible for the incident are brought to book at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said the government has so far allowed democratic and non-violent protests, noting that the Chief Minister met several groups who visited the Secretariat following a public rally earlier in the day. The Home Minister informed that individuals representing the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI)

submitted a memorandum comprising seven questions. He added that the government had earlier invited COCOMI for discussions, but the invitation was declined. Responding to the memorandum, Konthoujam reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding all indigenous communities. He also asserted that the government will not tolerate any form of terrorism, including narco-terrorism and illegal possession of arms and ammunition.

Referring to the Tronglaobi incident, the Home Minister said the case has been handed over to the National

Investigation Agency, and a team led by an Inspector General has already visited the site. On the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), he stated that arrangements have been made for their return, but the process has been delayed due to the prevailing situation and trust deficit among communities. He added that the Chief Minister has been visiting relief camps of affected communities as time permits. Konthoujam further clarified that any decision regarding the abrogation of the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreements with Kuki militants cannot be taken unilaterally by the state government, as it involves the union Ministry of Home Affairs in a tripartite framework.

# Kapil Sibal: Merger of AAP MPs with BJP before party's merger 'unconstitutional'

**NEW DELHI:** Independent MP and former Union law minister Kapil Sibal on Saturday accused the BJP of perpetrating "unconstitutional activities" such as the merger of seven AAP MPs into it even without the merger of two-thirds of the party.



He also asked if the prime minister of the country lacks the courage to counter the president of the United States for calling India a "hellhole," how can the Rajya Sabha chairman muster the courage to decide on a petition on the disqualification of these MPs.

In a surprise move on Friday, seven Rajya Sabha MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), including six from Punjab, defected to the BJP. These included Raghav Chadha, Sandeep Pathak, Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Rajinder Gupta, Swati Malwani and Vikramjit Sahney.

Addressing a press conference here, Sibal claimed that the merger of AAP MPs

into the BJP is unconstitutional, as the law permits it only if the party is merged first.

Anyone cannot simply merge on their own, Sibal said, the Constitution says that first the political party must take a decision at the organisational level, pass a resolution deciding that as a political party they want to merge with the BJP, and only then can it be done.

The party merges first and then the MPs, the opposite cannot happen, he said, adding that it is against

Schedule 10 of the Constitution.

On disqualification of the AAP MPs, the former Union minister said, "What courage will the Rajya Sabha chairman have in deciding a disqualification petition if the prime minister does not have the courage to even respond to President Trump? You keep quiet."

"The way you (the prime minister) surrender (before Trump) is the way AAP members surrendered to you. It is the same. We have surrendered to all the

machinations of the government that are unconstitutional. Because we do not dare to stand up and say this is wrong. At no level do we have that courage," he told reporters.

Sibal claimed that petitions lie for years in courts without being decided, terming it a sad state of affairs.

Taking on the prime minister for his silence on Trump using derogatory words for India, he said, "If somebody outside can dare to say to this country that this is a hellhole and the prime minister of India doesn't respond, can you imagine? We are a country of 140 crore people, and the 'Vishwaguru' cannot respond".

He said the prime minister does not have that kind of courage.

Sibal said, "When the history of this country will be written, these will be the darkest days. I hope that at the end of the tunnel, we will see some light."

# AAP holds protests outside residences of MPs Rajinder Gupta, Harbhajan Singh, Ashok Mittal

**CHANDIGARH:** AAP workers on Saturday held protests outside the residences of Rajya Sabha MPs Harbhajan Singh, Ashok Mittal and Rajinder Gupta, who quit the party and joined the BJP. The workers wrote 'Gaddar' (traitor) on the boundary walls of their houses with spray paint in Ludhiana and Jalandhar.



On Friday, AAP Rajya Sabha members Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak announced that they were quitting the party and joining the BJP along with five other MPs. Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Rajinder Gupta, Swati Malwani, and Vikramjit Sahney were the other AAP MPs they named. The protesters raised slogans of "Punjab de Gaddar", accusing them of betraying the people of Punjab.

In Jalandhar, AAP leader Pawan Kumar Tinu said, "The AAP government will return to power in Punjab in 2027, and the BJP will have no political ground left to stand on. Out of frustration, the BJP has resorted

to poaching AAP's Rajya Sabha MPs by hook or crook. The Congress, BJP and Akali Dal have formed an unholy alliance against AAP, which is why their leaders are making similar statements about AAP MPs defecting to the BJP."

AAP Punjab Youth Wing acting president Parminder

Goldy led a protest outside the residence of MP Rajinder Gupta in Ludhiana, raising slogans against him.

He said, "The people of Punjab will never forgive this betrayal of trust. The BJP is deeply unsettled by Arvind Kejriwal's politics of development and governance, and is attempting to destabilise AAP through conspiracies. However, these efforts will fail because every AAP worker stands firmly with the party's leadership and its vision." The AAP leaders reiterated that the party remains united and committed to serving the people of Punjab, asserting that those who betray the trust of Punjab will ultimately be held accountable by the people.

# Boy sexually assaulted by two classmates, class 10 student in Faridabad

**FARIDABAD:** A student of class 8 here was allegedly sexually assaulted for several days by two of his classmates and a student of class 10, police said on Saturday.

Based on a complaint of the victim's father, police have registered a case against the three juveniles under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act at Saran Police Station.

According to police, the 12-year-old boy, studying in a government school, was leaving the premises to go home when he was lured by two of his classmates and another student of class 10 to the school bathroom, where they sexually assaulted him.

Following this, the accused students allegedly assaulted him for several days.

# No space left to work in AAP, says Chadha; attacks Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI:** Leaders quitting the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have not done so out of fear but due to a growing sense of "disappointment, disengagement and disgust" with the organisation, Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha said on Saturday, a day after he joined the BJP along with six other party MPs.

Referring to the 'Sheesh Mahal' row related to the official residence of Kejriwal when he was the Delhi chief minister, Chadha claimed it was one of the main reasons for AAP's defeat in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections.

He said that every true patriot who had nurtured the AAP with their blood and sweat with great hope has either already left the party or is in the process of leaving it.

Chadha claimed every honest and hardworking

person now feels that there is "no space left to work in AAP" and that the party is moving on a wrong path with which no one wants to remain associated.

"Because of this, leaders have been leaving the party one after another," Chadha told PTT Videos.

AAP has accused the BJP of engineering the split and using fear of central agencies to poach its leaders. Calling the seven MPs "gaddar" (traitors), the ruling party in Punjab said it will seek their disqualification from the Upper House.

However, Chadha said the MPs are leaving the AAP together because they believe it has gone into "corrupt and compromised hands". He said those in AAP claiming that leaders left out of fear were wrong, adding that they did not leave due to any fear but be-

cause they felt disappointed, disengaged and disgusted with the party.

Chadha alleged that "Sheesh Mahal Part Two" has now come up in Delhi and some pictures of it have surfaced, referring to an earlier press conference where Delhi cabinet minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma alleged that money was being squandered on a newly allotted bungalow in Lodhi Estate to AAP's national convener Arvind Kejriwal.

Chadha said that when the first "Sheesh Mahal" was built, it had badly damaged the image of AAP. "It was one of the main reasons behind the party's defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections," he claimed.

Meanwhile, AAP leader Atishi claimed the photographs released by Verma were fake.

# Couple's bodies found in well in Banswara

**JAIPUR:** A couple's bodies were found in a well near their village in Rajasthan's Banswara district on Saturday, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Dhapu and Mukesh, residents of Nava Gaon mohalla under the Arthuna police station area. The police said the bodies were recovered from a well located about 500 metres from the village, adding that the couple had been missing since April 21.

SHO Vinod Kumar said that the case appeared suspicious and the exact cause of death is yet to be ascertained. He said the police are examining all angles, including the possibility of suicide and other causes.

# 'Delhi ka Rahman Dakait': BJP targets Kejriwal, also makes huge claim on Punjab CM Mann

**NEW DELHI:** A day after seven AAP MPs defected to the BJP, the two parties clashed over AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's new residence in Delhi, with the BJP dubbing it "Sheesh Mahal Part 2"—a reference to his official residence during his tenure as Chief Minister which the saffron party had called "Sheesh Mahal".

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Parvesh Verma called Kejriwal "Delhi ka Rahman Dakait," drawing a comparison to a character portrayed by Akshay Khanna in the film Dhurandhar. He alleged that, like a sequel, Kejriwal now has a second "Sheesh Mahal."

Verma also presented what he claimed were

layout plans and interior design documents of the bungalow at 95 Lodhi Estate, where Kejriwal has recently moved. According to Verma, the documents describe a "contemporary transitional" design featuring spaces such as a foyer, living room, bedrooms, lounge, and meeting room, along with customised furniture and décor.

Interestingly, Verma also claimed that Punjab's AAP Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was feeling tense and "wondering when Arvind Kejriwal will leave him, or he will leave Arvind Kejriwal." "He is feeling suffocated, but he knows under the pressure of which video he is saying all these things and is not leaving the party."

Former Delhi minister Atishi Marlena rejected the allegations, calling the images "fake" and not belonging to Kejriwal's residence. She countered that if questions were being raised about luxury, then BJP leader Rekha Gupta and the Lieutenant Governor should also open their homes to public scrutiny. "Kejriwal ji will open his house as well, and the public will decide," she said.

Verma also criticised Kejriwal's lifestyle, saying the leader who once promised simplicity now lives lavishly. "The Aam Aadmi Party has become the 'Alisshaan Aadmi Party'," he said, questioning the cost of the Lodhi Estate bungalow and the source of funds used for its interiors.

# YouTuber arrested in 31-year-old kidnapping -murder case

**NEW DELHI:** In a major breakthrough, the Crime Branch of Delhi Police has arrested 54-year-old social activist and YouTuber Salim Khan, also known as Salim Ahmed alias Salim Wastik, in connection with a 31-year-old kidnapping for ransom and murder case of a 13-year-old boy in North East Delhi. The accused had been absconding for over two decades after jumping interim bail and had even declared himself dead to evade arrest. DCP Crime Branch Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said, "This successful operation reflects the relentless efforts

of Delhi Police. Despite the accused's attempts to mislead agencies by changing identity and faking his death, our teams tracked him down. It reaffirms that the law will eventually catch up with offenders, no matter how long they evade justice."

According to police, the case dates back to January 1995, when Sandeep Bansal, son of a cement businessman, was kidnapped while on his way to school. The kidnapers demanded a ransom of ₹30,000 and instructed the family to deliver the money near Loni.

However, the child was later found murdered, and his body was recovered from a drain in Mustafabad following the disclosure made by Salim Khan.

Investigations revealed that Salim Khan, then a martial arts instructor at Ramjas School, Daryaganj, and his associate Anil had planned the crime. Both were convicted in 1997 and sentenced to life imprisonment by a Delhi court. While Anil surrendered, Salim Khan was granted interim bail by the Delhi High Court in 2000 but failed to return, becoming a proclaimed offender.

# IUML not concerned over Cong CM candidate debate, says Kunhalikutty

**KOZHIKODE:** IUML leader P K Kunhalikutty on Saturday said discussions among Congress leaders over the chief ministerial candidate were not a matter of concern for his party.

Speaking to reporters after the IUML's election evaluation meeting here, Kunhalikutty said the party leadership had already clarified its stand that the chief ministerial candidate would be decided only after the Assembly election results are announced on May 4.

"We have not taken the discussions seriously. Such discussions happen in Kerala. During the election, there were discussions in the LDF after some leaders quit the front. After the election, naturally they cannot discuss it," he said.

He said such discussions were normal, but the IUML was clear about its position. "The UDF has a method



of choosing the Chief Minister after the election result is announced. As per that method, since the Congress is the principal ally, the Chief Minister will be from the Congress. But Congress leadership will discuss the matter with alliance partners. It is not the first time we are going to form a government in Kerala," he said.

Kunhalikutty said public sentiment would also be tak-

en into consideration while selecting the chief ministerial candidate.

"The ally parties will present their opinion when the discussion is held with the Congress after the election result is announced," he said.

Claiming that there was a pro-UDF trend in the state during the election, he said the front could win up to 100 of the 140 Assembly seats.

# 27 years after encounter death of gangster, nephew kills 'informant'

**MUMBAI:** Nearly three decades after the death of a gangster in the city in a police encounter, his nephew and another person have been arrested for the alleged revenge killing of 78-year-old man whom they suspected to be a police informant. Sadiq Jawar (29), nephew of deceased gangster Sadiq Kalia, and his associate Naushad Mithani allegedly killed Iqbal Ibrahim Selia in Nagpada area of South Mumbai earlier this week, said an official.

Jawar -- who would have been a toddler when his uncle died -- suspected that it was Selia who had tipped off the police which led to the encounter 27 years ago, the official said. Jawar and Mithani allegedly entered Selia's house on the evening of April 20 when his wife and son were away, and hacked him to death with a chopper, according to police.

# Entire Union cabinet, 19 CMs won't help BJP win Bengal polls: Mamata

**KOLKATA:** TMC chief Mamata Banerjee on Saturday claimed that the BJP has deployed its entire machinery to defeat the regional party in the West Bengal assembly elections as almost the entire Union cabinet and CMs of NDA-ruled states are camping in the poll-bound state.

Addressing an election rally at Uttarpara in Hooghly district, Banerjee accused the BJP of giving false promises to migrant workers from West Bengal employed outside the state.

"The BJP is desperate, with 50 helicopters flying into West Bengal as almost the entire Union cabinet, from the PM to home, railway and defence ministers, as well as CMs of 19 NDA-ruled states camping in a single state -- West Bengal," the chief minister said.

Compare this with only three helicopters being used by the TMC to campaign across the state. But all this hype and sound and fury will end in a whimper on May



4, she said. "On top of this, we are seeing central forces wherever we are going. They are bringing in armoured vehicles which are not put to use where such vehicles are needed," Banerjee said.

On Union Home Minister Amit Shah's reported statement that "TMC-aided goons would be hung upside down after the results", she said, "As a Union minister and a responsible leader, you cannot utter such words. You

are speaking in the language of terror. I know no action will be taken against you. But, I have asked our men to videograph his speech and submit the same to the court." Alleging that 400 people were brought from outside to her constituency Bhabanipur, she said, "They were driven out. I will ask everyone to keep a tab on every hotel and guest house to identify such people who are helping the BJP."

# 'Elaborate security for Gujarat local body polls'

**AHMEDABAD:** A three-tier security is in place for the local body elections in Gujarat scheduled for April 26, aided by CCTV surveillance and deployment of special squads in sensitive areas, a top police officer said on Saturday.

Polling will be held from 7 AM to 6 PM across 15 municipal corporations, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra and Rajkot, 84 municipalities, 34 district panchayats, and 260 taluka panchayats. Votes will be counted on April 28.

Director General of Police KLN Rao said elaborate security arrangements have been put in place to ensure free and fair polling.

The security set up covers around 29,000 polling buildings and over 49,000 polling stations, he said, adding that booths are classified as sensitive, hyper-sensitive and normal based on standard operating procedures.

Local police will be accompanied by armed cops, State Reserve Police, Central forces, Home Guards, Gram Rakshak Dal (GRD), and



Sagar Rakshak Dal (SRD).

"A three-tier arrangement has been implemented, comprising booth-level deployment, sub-perimeter security and route patrolling. Additionally, special police squads will be deployed in areas specifically identified as sensitive," Rao told reporters in Gandhinagar.

He said 113 inter-state and in-

tra-district check posts have been set up as part of the pre-poll measures.

Referring to the police crackdown, he said around 3,000 non-bailable warrants have been executed in one month, and more than 450 cases under the PASA (Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act) and externment have been filed

across the state. Enforcement drives have led to seizure of liquor valued at more than Rs 30 crore, and nearly 95 per cent of licensed weapons have been confiscated across the state, he said.

He said surveillance is being strengthened through CCTV networks linked to district-level "Netram" systems and the state-level "Trinetra" Command and Control Centre, which will function round-the-clock. "Feeds from all areas connected to the CCTV network arrive at the command centre. We will receive alerts if any attempts are made to cause a disruption, and we will take strict action against them," he said. Social media is also being closely monitored through cyber units to prevent the spread of objectionable content, he said.

"We are actively monitoring for any objectionable posts that attempt to spoil the peaceful atmosphere or intend to disrupt the elections. If we identify any such objectionable content, it will be promptly deleted," the DGP said.

## Tamil Nadu sizzles as mercury crosses 100°F at multiple places

In Chennai, the maximum temperature is expected to touch 38 degrees Celsius on April 27, while the minimum temperature may hover around 28 degrees Celsius.

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has been witnessing a steady rise in temperatures since the first week of April, with mercury levels crossing 100 degrees Fahrenheit at several weather stations across the state. On Sunday alone, more than 15 stations recorded temperatures above this mark, indicating intensifying summer conditions.

Tamil Nadu: Gudalur villagers protest fatal wild elephant attack

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, moderate to heavy rainfall is likely at isolated places in parts of the state by early May. Districts including Coimbatore, the Nilgiris, Erode, Salem, Dharmapuri, Vellore, Tirupattur and Krishnagiri are expected to receive rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning. The weather department said a trough or wind discontinuity extending from north interior Karnataka to the Comorin area across south interior



Karnataka and Tamil Nadu persists at lower levels of the atmosphere. Under its influence, light to moderate rainfall is likely over coastal Delta districts, Western Ghat districts, south coastal districts of Tamil Nadu and

Karaikal on April 27.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30-40 kmph are also likely at isolated places across Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on April 29 and 30.

Maximum temperatures are expected to remain above normal by 2-3 degrees Celsius in some interior pockets, while coastal districts, Puducherry and Karaikal are likely to record near-normal temperatures.

In Chennai, the maximum temperature is expected to touch 38 degrees Celsius on April 27, while the minimum temperature may hover around 28 degrees Celsius. Among the recorded temperatures, Karur Paramathi and Madurai Airport reported 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, while Erode recorded 103 degrees Fahrenheit. Three stations recorded 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Chennai Airport registered 101.48 degrees Fahrenheit on Sunday. Vellore recorded the highest maximum temperature in the state at 40.5 degrees Celsius, while Kodaikanal registered the lowest minimum temperature at 12.5 degrees Celsius among hill areas.

## Nilgiris forest fire: Strong wind hampers firefighting operations

COIMBATORE: With massive fire raging through the forests of the Nilgiris, the firefighting operations were hampered by strong winds on Sunday. Tamil Nadu: Gudalur villagers protest fatal wild elephant attack. The fire that broke out on April 15 in the Wenlock Down forest area under the Parsons Valley Range of the Nilgiri Forest Division has intensified, prompting a large-scale firefighting operation involving over 400 forest personnel. In addition, seven forest fire response vehicles have been stationed at strategic locations to assist in firefighting operations, said a statement.

Two teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and five teams from Fire and Rescue Services, over 100 members of Eco Development Committees have joined the ground operations, assisting forest officials in containment



efforts. Despite sustained efforts, the situation worsened over the last two days due to soaring temperatures and strong winds, causing fire to spread rapidly across new areas of the reserve. Following a request by the district administration, the Sulur

Air Force Station deployed two IAF MI-17 V5 helicopters with a Bambi bucket to douse the fire aerially. The helicopters gathered water from the Emerald dam, Moyar dam and Parsons Valley and poured it on the raging fire on Saturday. However, the

use of helicopters was disrupted on Sunday due to heavy winds. Officials said firefighting teams continue to battle the blaze on the ground, but challenging terrain, dry conditions and shifting wind patterns have made containment efforts extremely difficult.

## Tamil Nadu: Gudalur villagers protest fatal wild elephant

COIMBATORE: The death of a 37-year-old man in a wild elephant attack at O' Valley near Gudalur triggered violent protests on Saturday night, with angry villagers assaulting forest department personnel, vandalising vehicles, and clashing with police.

The deceased, Ravi alias Kalaiselvan, a carpenter from Arottuparai in 'O' Valley Panchayat, died on the spot in a wild elephant attack on Saturday, around 9 pm.

Soon after the incident, the forest and police teams rushed to the area. However, angry villagers refused to allow them to remove the body, while blaming

them for preventing elephant movement in the locality.

Tension escalated with a section of the crowd attacking the forest staff, while two vehicles of the forest department were also damaged. When police attempted to bring the situation under control, the villagers got into an argument, with some pulling off the name badge of a senior police official, resulting in a flare-up.

Following the incident, additional police forces were deployed, and the area was brought under thick security cover to prevent further violence. Police also arrested two persons identified as Mani (29)

## Tamil Nadu: Poll battle over, but war of words continues

CHENNAI: The political landscape in Tamil Nadu is in a state of suspended animation as all are waiting for the results of the Assembly elections that would be announced on May 4. However, that has not reduced the heat, with leaders from various parties continuing to kindle the embers.

Tamil Nadu launches special drive to curb sale of adulterated beverages

While the challengers, TVK and BJP, attacked the ruling party and its leader MK Stalin, DMK leader PK



Sekarbabu said Stalin would return and take oath as the Chief Minister after the results are declared.

Speaking to the media after inspecting the strong room housing ballot units at Loyola College in Nungambakkam

on Sunday, Aadhav Arjuna, TVK's general secretary for election campaign management and its Villivakkam candidate, accused the DMK of resorting to intimidation when confronted with electoral defeat.

"Whenever the DMK senses defeat, it resorts to rowdiness. We witnessed this in Harbour, where minister PK Sekarbabu mobilised supporters to create disturbances," he said, claiming that the political climate had significantly changed in the last four days of polling.

## Tamil Nadu launches special drive to curb sale of adulterated beverages

CHENNAI: The demand for ice creams and aerated cold drinks surges as the scorching heat prevails.

The State Food Safety Department has launched a statewide enforcement drive to curb the sale of substandard and adulterated products, directing district officials to intensify inspections and initiate stringent action against violators.

Senior officials said surveillance has been stepped up across manufacturing units and retail outlets to ensure strict adherence to food safety norms. Inspections will scrutinise

the hygiene of equipment, the quality of raw materials used, accurate labelling of manufacturing and expiry dates, and the mandatory display of valid FSSAI licence numbers.

"Non-compliance will not be tolerated. Stringent action will be taken against those compromising on public health," a senior department official told DT Next, indicating that the drive will continue through the peak summer months. The department has also flagged unsafe practices adopted by certain operators to capitalise on seasonal demand.

## Beware the Rise of Superweeds: Mowing's Unintended Consequences

Due to plant defense mechanisms, the flowers of silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*) are consumed less by natural predators like this tobacco hornworm (*Manduca sexta*) if the plant is frequently mowed. Research indicates that frequent mowing of *Solanum elaeagnifolium* enhances its defensive traits, making it more resilient and potentially a superweed. The study highlights the necessity for updated weed management practices that consider the adaptive responses of invasive plants to disturbances. Research on the effects of mowing on a common weed has found that what doesn't kill you can make you stronger.

Published in Nature's Scientific Reports, the study found that frequent mowing of *Solanum elaeagnifolium* may help create a "superweed." *Solanum elaeagnifolium* — also known as silverleaf nightshade — can be found from south Texas to South Africa and Greece, infesting fields and soaking up valuable nutrients intended for cash crops. The weed with purple flowers — sometimes white and light purple — has prickly spines and poisonous berries. Silverleaf nightshade, scientifically known as *Solanum elaeagnifolium*, is a perennial weed native to the United States and parts of Mexico but has spread to various regions worldwide. It is easily recognized by its silver-green leaves and purple, sometimes white, star-shaped flowers. The plant contains toxic compounds and bears yellow or orange berries that are also poisonous.

Relatives of the plant,



including *Solanum ptychanthum* or black nightshade, and *Solanum carolinense*, or Carolina horsenettle, also produce toxic berries and are native to Arkansas. It's a family that also includes some friendly crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and eggplants. Rupesh Kariyat, an associate professor of entomology and plant pathology with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, has been studying silverleaf nightshade for more than a decade. Kariyat began the study while at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, when he and his graduate student Alejandro Vasquez took on what turned into a five-year, two-part study to observe the effects of frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade. Kariyat joined the experiment station, the research arm of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, in 2022. Frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade develops more spines on the stem to protect its flowers from caterpillars. Credit: Alejandro Vasquez

Although studies have often highlighted weed fitness and defense traits resulting from disturbances like mowing,

most were limited to foliar, or leaf, defenses, Kariyat said. That changed when Vasquez and fellow master's biology students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley monitored fields of mowed, unmowed, and frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade in and around Edinburg, Texas.

"Alejandro's question was, 'how do these flowers differ between mowed and unmowed plants?'" Kariyat said. "And does that have consequences for the insects that actually feed on them?" Alejandro Vasquez, an entomology and plant pathology Ph.D. student at the University of Arkansas, was the lead author of a study on the effects of frequent mowing silverleaf nightshade. Credit: Alejandro Vasquez. Findings in both studies showed that the more silverleaf nightshade was mowed, the more it developed ways to avoid destruction, Kariyat said. The taproot went down further, nearly 5 feet deep, in the first generation of mowed plants. More spikes popped out on the stem as a defense against caterpillars feeding on the flowers. The flowers became more toxic to caterpillars, leading to

less pressure from natural predators.

Like time bombs, the plant produced some groups of seeds that germinated faster and others that were delayed. This "staggered" germination was the plant's way to ensure survival over the long haul. "You are trying to mow these plants so that the plants are getting eliminated," Kariyat said. "But what you are actually doing here, you are making them much worse, much stronger." Tilling areas with silverleaf nightshade also spreads the plant because the rhizomic roots, like many weeds, can propagate asexual-ly over multiple years and growing seasons.

The observations of mowed, unmowed, and frequently mowed areas with silverleaf nightshade provide evidence that could prompt further studies by weed scientists on best management practices, Kariyat said. Since the studies focus solely on silverleaf nightshade, Kariyat said other weeds — even the plant's family relatives — may or may not react the same way to frequent mowing. However, the study does provide more insight into the defensive capabilities of plants pitted against human disturbance. Rupesh Kariyat, associate professor of entomology and plant pathology with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, was the corresponding author of two studies observing the effects of frequently mowing silverleaf nightshade. Credit: U of A System Division of Agriculture photo by John Lovett. "This should be something that we consider when we make management plans," Kariyat said of the plant's defenses.

## Scientists Discover Unique Building Block of Human Vision

Research shows that infants primarily see high-contrast, simple patterns, forming an essential visual foundation for later development and influencing both human vision and AI training. What do infants see? What do they look at? The answers to these questions are very different for the youngest babies than they are for older infants, children, and adults. Characterized by a few high-contrast edges in simple patterns, these early scenes also contain the very materials needed to build a strong foundation for human vision.

That is the finding of a new study which was recently published in Science Advances by IU researchers Erin Anderson, Rowan Candy, Jason Gold, and Linda Smith. "The starting assumption for everybody who thinks about the role of experience in visual development has always been that at the scale of everyday experience, visual input is pretty much the same for everyone," explains principal investigator Linda Smith, a professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. "Yet, this study says, no, visual input changes with development. It's not the same for everybody. The daily life input for very young infants appears to be unique to that age." Prior studies in the laboratory and clinic had shown that young infants prefer to look at simple, high-contrast scenes of big black



stripes and checkerboards. The current study is the first to ask to what extent these preferences make up their daily life input. "To see what young babies see and look at," says Anderson, a former post-doctoral researcher in Smith's Cognitive Development Lab, she and her colleagues put head cameras on infants to wear in the home during daily life activities.

"You can buy 'baby flash cards' for newborns that show these simple, high-contrast images," she explains. "What the head-camera videos show, what this work shows, is that young infants find these types of images all around them in their daily life, just by looking at things like lights and ceiling corners." "What we found is a very special, early 'diet'

for visual development," adds Smith. "As with food, young infants do not start with rich, complex meals or pizza, but rather with simple, developmentally specific nourishment." Previous work has recognized the critical nature of this early period to the future development of human vision. For example, infants born with visual abnormalities such as cataracts or those in orphanages with limited visual experiences have been shown to have lifelong visual deficiencies. The current study offers some preliminary data for addressing these deficiencies. It also has important implications for the makings of AI visual systems, which likewise acquire stronger visual skills when training begins with the same simple, high-con-

trast visual content.

To identify the properties of visual input in infants at approximately three to 13 months old, the researchers placed head-mounted video cameras on 10 infants and 10 of their adult caregivers, collecting and analyzing 70 hours of visual documentation of at-home daily life. Clear differences emerge between the contents of the infants and adults' images with a higher concentration of simple patterns and high-contrast edges within the views of infants than in those of adults. Smith infers that the reason for these views is not only that infants will turn their heads to look at the features of the world they can see, but that parents or caregivers are likely to put them in places where they like to look at things. "You have to think why they are where they are. There is probably some natural knowledge implicit on the part of parents to leave infants where like to look at things. Mom's not gonna bother you if you're not fussing.

she observes. Yet, is this small group of participants from Bloomington, Indiana representative of infants more broadly around the world? To answer this question Smith's lab conducted the same experiment with a collaborator in a small, crowded fishing village in Chennai, India where electricity is minimal and much of daily life occurs outdoors. And while images from the head cameras of 6-month-olds and 12-month-olds looked very different from their Bloomington counterparts, the youngest infants share a common "diet" of high-contrast edges and simple patterns in both Chennai and Bloomington.

EDITORIAL

When Politicians Lose Sense Of Propriety

Indian politics has never been devoid of sharp rhetoric, but recent remarks by senior leaders indicate a worrying slide from criticism to outright denigration. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge at a press conference in Chennai on April 21 initially referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "terrorist" while criticising the AIADMK's alliance with the BJP. Later, Kharge justified that he didn't call PM a terrorist in a literal sense but in a way that he is "trying to silence people". Similarly, in another shocking video clip circulating on social media, Bihar MP Pappu Yadav (independent but supports Congress) is heard saying, "90% of women netas start their careers in men's bedrooms". The issue is no longer about political disagreement - it is about the erosion of basic democratic decorum. These statements are not isolated gaffes. They are symptoms of a larger degradation in public discourse where outrage replaces argument, and insult substitutes ideology. In a democracy, disagreement is natural; dehumanisation is not.

Erosion of institutional dignity

First, consider the remark targeting the Prime Minister. While political leaders must be held accountable and criticised vigorously, equating an elected head of government with a "terrorist" crosses a line. It undermines not just the individual but the institutional dignity of the office itself. The Prime Minister represents the sovereignty and democratic will of over a billion citizens. Even if the remark was later clarified or contextualised, the damage lies in normalising such language. This trend is not new. Indian political history is replete with personal attacks from 'mout ka saudagar' to 'chaiwala' jibes-but the intensity and frequency have increased in the age of 24/7 media and social platforms. Political communication is now driven by virality rather than responsibility. Leaders often speak not to persuade but to provoke.

Kharge is known to court controversy. Recently, during an election rally in Idukki, Kerala, ahead of the assembly polls, Kharge had referred to Gujaratis as 'illiterate' for electing BJP. Following the widespread backlash, Kharge had to express "sincere regret" for his comments. There is also a strategic dimension. Politicians often use extreme language to mobilise their base, polarise voters, and dominate news cycles. In the short term, this may yield political dividends. But in the long run, it erodes trust in democratic institutions. When leaders appear more interested in attacking opponents than addressing public concerns, citizens become cynical about politics itself. Calling a Prime Minister a "terrorist" diminishes the dignity of the highest executive office.

Crude insinuations

If the attack on the Prime Minister reflects declining respect for institutions, the statement by Pappu Yadav is even more troubling because it strikes at the dignity of an entire gender.

His claim that most women enter politics through sexual compromise is not only factually baseless but deeply misogynistic. It reduces women's political agency to exploitation and perpetuates harmful stereotypes that have long hindered their participation. The backlash to his remark was swift, with women's groups and political leaders condemning it as "despicable" and "shocking". Importantly, such comments ignore empirical reality. Women's representation in Indian politics, though still limited (among 4,666 MPs/MLAs across the country, only 464 or 10% are women) has been steadily improving through grassroots participation, reservation in local bodies, and increasing electoral success based on merit. Studies by bodies like the Election Commission and UN Women show that women voters now often outnumber men in turnout, and female candidates are gaining visibility across party lines. To suggest that women succeed only through compromise is to erase decades of struggle and achievement from village panchayats to Parliament. It also discourages aspiring women leaders by reinforcing a hostile narrative. It demeans half the population and reinforces regressive attitudes.

Normalisation of disrespect

Both statements reflect a failure to uphold the standards expected of public representatives. The deeper issue here is the normalisation of disrespect.

Political leaders are not private individuals; their words carry weight. When they resort to abusive or derogatory language, it legitimises similar behaviour among supporters, leading to a coarsening of public debate. This trickle-down effect is visible on social media, where political discussions frequently devolve into personal abuse rather than substantive engagement. Moreover, such rhetoric distracts from real issues. At a time when India faces pressing challenges - economic inequality, unemployment, gender justice, and governance reforms - public attention is diverted to controversies over statements. The recent debates around the women's reservation bill, for instance, should have been an opportunity for serious discussion on gender parity. Instead, they have been overshadowed by inflammatory remarks and political mudslinging. The recent controversies are not just about individual lapses; they signal a deeper crisis in political culture. Restoring civility in public discourse is not about silencing criticism - it is about ensuring that criticism remains rooted in respect, facts, and democratic values. Without that, politics risks becoming a theatre of insults rather than a forum for ideas.

The way forward requires collective responsibility. Political parties must enforce internal discipline and hold their leaders accountable for irresponsible remarks. Institutions like the Election Commission can strengthen codes of conduct, especially during elections. Media organisations, too, must avoid amplifying sensational statements without scrutiny. Most importantly, voters must demand better. Democracies ultimately reflect the standards their citizens are willing to accept. If abusive rhetoric is rewarded with attention and votes, it will continue. If it is rejected, political incentives will change.

Washington Hilton: History Repeating or the Weakness of American Democracy?



PRIYANKA SAURABH

The shooting at the prestigious Washington Hilton in Washington on Saturday night shocked the entire world. It wasn't just a security incident, but a moment that brought history, politics, and democracy together. When gunfire suddenly rang out during the White House Correspondents' Dinner, it was nothing short of a nightmare for the thousands of people present. Top leaders like Donald Trump, Melania Trump, and J.D. Vance were present. Within moments, the festive atmosphere turned into fear and chaos. The promptness of the US Secret Service brought the situation under control, but the incident raised many deep questions that face no easy answers. The most shocking and terrifying thing about this incident is that it's not the first time this has happened. This same hotel, sometimes known as the "Hinckley Hilton," has previously witnessed one of the most violent incidents in American history. In 1981, then-President Ronald Reagan was shot outside this very location by John Hinckley Jr. In that attack, Reagan was seriously injured and his press secretary, James Brady, suffered permanent disabilities. The same questions arose then—how did the security lapse occur? And today, nearly 45 years later, the same questions confront us again. The only difference is that the world is much more complex and the nature of threats has changed.



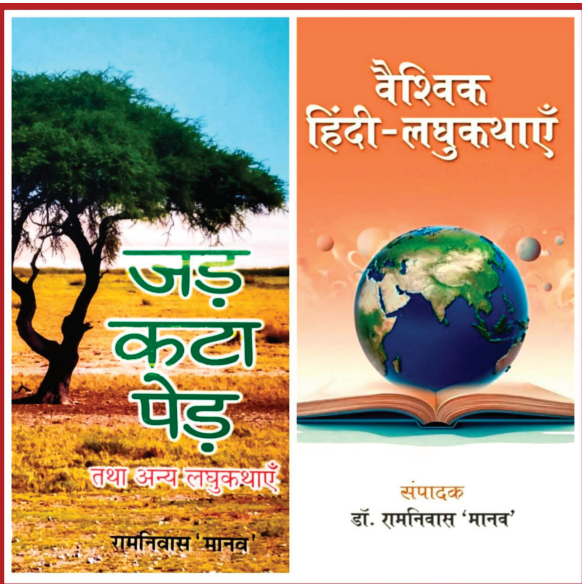
According to those present, everything was proceeding normally. A mix of laughter, speeches, media, and politics—this dinner has always been a unique tradition of American democracy. But the sudden gunfire shook this tradition. People began hiding under tables for safety, panic ensued, and within moments, the entire situation seemed to spiral out of control. While it's a relief that there was no major loss of life or property, the mental and psychological impact cannot be ignored. This incident is not just a security lapse, but also reflects growing political tensions in American society. Ideological polarization has increased sharply in the US over the past few years. Events like the January 6th Capitol riot have demonstrated that political differences are no longer confined to debate and discussion. They are being openly expressed on the streets, in institutions, and now even at high-level events. In this

context, the Washington Hilton incident does not appear to be an isolated incident, but rather part of a broader trend. Donald Trump's politics also plays a significant role in this entire scenario. While his policies like "America First" and "Make America Great Again" appealed to a large segment of society, they also generated discontent and opposition among a segment of society. His confrontations with the media, his use of terms like "fake news," and his harsh language against political opponents—all of this has further heightened the social climate. Therefore, when a violent incident occurs, it appears not to be the act of a single individual, but rather the result of a broader social and political environment in which dissent is often perceived as hostility. It's natural to raise questions about security. The U.S. Secret Service is considered one of the most capable security agencies in the world. Since the 1981 incident,

significant improvements have been made—the use of cutting-edge technology, more trained security personnel, and advanced surveillance systems. However, the occurrence of such incidents demonstrates that the risks at crowded public events cannot be completely eliminated. Today, threats stem not only from conventional weapons, but also from factors such as mental instability, online radicalization, and personal frustration. Another important aspect of this phenomenon is the digital age and the role of social media. Today, ideas spread at an extremely fast pace. Misinformation, conspiracy theories, and radical ideologies reach millions of people in a short time. While the influence of movies on John Hinckley Jr. was discussed in 1981, today the digital world and social media are seen as a greater influence on attackers. This shift presents new challenges for security agencies, as it has become more diffi-

cult than ever to identify and prevent threats in a timely manner. The impact of this incident cannot be ignored globally. The United States is considered the world's most powerful democracy, and events there serve as a signal to other countries. For countries like India, where large-scale political and social events are held, this is a warning. Strengthening security systems solely technically is not enough; it is also essential to promote social harmony, dialogue, and mutual trust. This incident also raises a profound question—is democracy truly secure? Democracy is not just about elections and institutions, but rather an ideology that embraces dissent and prioritizes dialogue. When conflict replaces dialogue in society, the foundations of democracy begin to weaken. The Washington Hilton incident points to this potential weakness. Its social implications are profound. The media, which is central to this event, itself became a part of the incident. Journalists, who were there to question the authorities and strengthen democracy, suddenly found themselves facing a crisis. This situation forces us to wonder whether growing intolerance in society regarding the freedom of the press and its role is also giving rise to such incidents. Ultimately, this incident is a warning not just for America, but for the entire world. History repeats itself, but each time it also offers a new message. Security improvements were made after the 1981 incident; this 2026 incident will likely require even more extensive changes. But the most important change should not be in technology or security, but in our thinking. Unless tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect are promoted in society, it will be difficult to completely prevent such incidents. This night at the Washington Hilton is not just an event, but a mirror—one in which we can clearly see both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy.

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT FOR SENIOR SHORT STORY WRITER DR. RAMNIWAS 'MANAV'



Dr. Satyawan Saurabh

Senior litterateur Dr. Ramniwas 'Manav' has achieved a distinct distinction in his capacity as a short story writer. The Government of India has released a list of 464 approved Hindi books, covering diverse subjects such as literature, culture, grammar, general knowledge, science, religion, philosophy, history, politics, and environment, published in the year 2024, for procurement by the libraries of all central ministries, public sector undertakings, institutions, and the Vivekananda Cultural Centers situated within Indian embassies abroad. Included in this list are two short story works by Dr. 'Manav': '\*Jadkata Ped aur Anya Laghukathayen\*' (The Rootless Tree and Other Short Stories) and '\*Vaishvik Hindi

Laghukathayen\*' (Global Hindi Short Stories). The collection '\*Jadkata Ped aur Anya Laghukathayen\*', published by Prabhat Prakashan, New Delhi, features ninety-nine representative short stories by Dr. 'Manav'; meanwhile, the anthology '\*Vaishvik Hindi Laghukathayen\*', published by Anil Prakashan, New Delhi, compiles four of the best short stories each from forty-four prominent short story writers spanning five continents and sixteen countries. Notably, Dr. 'Manav' stands as the only Hindi short story writer in the world to have two of his short story works included in this prestigious list.

It is worth noting that Dr. 'Manav' is a prolific creator active in over a dozen literary genres, having authored and edited sixty-four books across various disciplines. In addition to his four original short story collections, six translated collections, rendered into Punjabi (two volumes), Bhojpur, Marathi, Nepali, and English, have also been published. A recipient of numerous awards and honors, Dr. 'Manav' has been the subject of eight M.Phil.

Mamata Banerjee's Last-Bid Plan And BJP's Bhabanipur Push Collide

There is an old political saying: offence is often the best form of defence. Perhaps that is exactly the strategy Mamata Banerjee has chosen in the final stretch before the April 29 poll in Bhabanipur. In this last leg, she appears to have switched to a counter-offensive strategy to the BJP's high-voltage campaigning in her home turf. Here, BJP's Suwendu Adhikari is contesting against her. A striking example of her new approach came on Saturday in Bhabanipur. While addressing a gathering, she suddenly heard BJP campaign speeches blaring through microphones nearby. Visibly irritated, she reacted sharply, calling it unfortunate politics by the BJP. She said she had taken permission from the police to hold her meeting, yet she was being obstructed from speaking. She described the episode as indecent and unacceptable. At one point, she even made a phone call and declared that she would move court against what she called the BJP's political misconduct. Eventually, she cut short the event, saying she would return on Sunday and hold another rally there. In effect, it was a challenge, an announcement that she would not be pushed back. Meanwhile, the BJP camp led by Suwendu Adhikari has offered a counter-narrative. Their argument is that Mamata is complaining now, but when Adhikari held meetings in Bhabanipur, Trinamool workers disrupted them, created disturbances, and tried to prevent BJP speeches from being heard. In that sense, they say, this is tit-for-tat politics. At this stage, Mamata also understands the social composition of Bhabanipur. Nearly thirty per cent of the elec-



torate consists of non-Bengali voters, i.e., Hindi-speaking communities. Gujaratis, Marwaris, Punjabis and others. It is a deeply cosmopolitan constituency, with a significant young and urban electorate as well. That explains why her campaign here has a multilingual, cosmopolitan tone. In Bhabanipur, she is not limiting herself to Bengali; she is speaking in Hindi and English too. She has deployed Sayani Ghosh prominently as part of this outreach, a younger face who can engage across communities in multiple languages. Religious inclusion is also part of this strategy. Mamata has been speaking about tolerance while reaching out symbolically across faiths, visiting temples, attending aarti, reciting the Hanuman Chalisa, and even engaging with gurdwaras and Christian institutions. These are not isolated gestures; they are part of a wider message. But perhaps the most interesting part of her Bhabanipur strategy is something more intimate. Instead of relying primarily on giant rallies, she has shifted to direct voter contact. She is moving through narrow lanes

and bylanes, entering residential housing complexes, meeting residents in individual flats, and creating the feeling that the Chief Minister herself has come to people's doorsteps. That personal touch matters. She is going house to house, often holding people's hands, appealing to them directly, almost saying, "I hope you will support me; I am asking each of you personally." It is a deeply localised, emotional form of campaigning. She is covering so many narrow alleys and interior pockets that, at times, even the media and camera crews are unable to enter all those spaces. And that, perhaps, is another crucial layer of her strategy. This constituency has witnessed an unusually high-voltage contest. Amit Shah himself has held a roadshow here for Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, underlining how seriously the Bharatiya Janata Party is treating this battle. The BJP campaign has been aggressive and openly combative, built around the message that they will remove "goondas" from Bengal and that, having received a mandate in the earlier phase, their arrival in

power is inevitable. In that backdrop, Mamata initially appeared somewhat defensive. Earlier, she had often played the aggressor, projecting the election as a battle between Bengal and Delhi, as if the contest were not simply a state election but a direct political confrontation between her and the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah establishment. In many ways, she looked less like a chief minister and more like an opposition fighter taking on the centre. Perhaps the BJP recognised the effectiveness of that framing and shifted tactics, focusing more sharply on Bengal itself as the campaign progressed. As a result, Mamata was drawn into responding to allegations and was, for a period, pushed into a defensive posture. While the BJP is projecting force through spectacle, roadshows, aggressive rhetoric and high-voltage mobilisation, Mamata seems to be countering it with neighbourhood intimacy, symbolic outreach and personal political contact. One side is fighting through assertion. The other, through proximity. And in Bhabanipur, both strategies are colliding at full intensity.

# \$100 Oil, Hormuz Disruption Raise Risks For India's Economy: Union Bank of India Report

India could face renewed economic pressure as crude oil prices surge past \$100 per barrel amid tensions in West Asia and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, according to a report by Union Bank of India. In a note titled "From Hormuz to the Rupee: War, Oil and the Global Repricing of Risk," the bank warned that the situation "does not bode well for global or domestic macros and markets," pointing to the Strait remaining "still functionally shut and Brent trading above \$100/bbl". The report highlighted that elevated crude prices could fuel inflation, weaken the rupee, and widen India's current account deficit. It added that persistent high oil prices tend to "keep inflation risk alive, delay central-bank easing, pressure current accounts, tighten financial conditions, and weigh on risk assets, especially in energy-importing economies." For India — where nearly 85% of crude demand is met through imports — the impact is already becoming visible. The bank noted that escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict has disrupted oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz, pushing



prices higher and effectively creating what is described as an "energy tax" on the economy. This has translated into market stress, with the rupee sliding to record lows near 95 against the US dollar and equities correcting amid concerns over a widening current account deficit and imported inflation, the report said. The Reserve Bank of India, the report added, has taken steps to stabilise financial markets as volatility rises. US President Donald Trump on Sunday warned that "everything will be peanuts compared to Iran getting a nuclear weapon. And they will use it too. I can tell you

that." This comes after Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made it clear that there would be no direct negotiations with American government representatives during this visit. Foreign ministry spokesperson Esmael Baqaei said that no meeting is planned. Baqaei thanked the Pakistani government for its "ongoing mediation & good offices for ending American imposed war of aggression." The White House said earlier Friday that its envoys would meet Araghchi. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Friday that the US

does not plan to renew a waiver allowing the purchase of Russian oil and petroleum products that are currently at sea. And, he said, a renewal of the one-time waiver for Iranian oil at sea is totally off the table. Bessent's statements come as the world is on edge over the US-Israeli war in Iran, and global energy markets have been ensnared by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. India could face renewed economic pressure as crude oil prices surge past \$100 per barrel amid tensions in West Asia and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, according to a report by Union Bank of India. In a

note titled "From Hormuz to the Rupee: War, Oil and the Global Repricing of Risk," the bank warned that the situation "does not bode well for global or domestic macros and markets," pointing to the Strait remaining "still functionally shut and Brent trading above \$100/bbl". The US-Iran War will hit the 60-day mark on May 1. According to a law following the Vietnam War, a 60-day limit has been on the use of military force without congressional authorization. The Trump administration has not sought any approval for the Iran war, which will reach its 60th day. However, it's not clear about what will happen next with a fragile ceasefire and tensions over the closure of Strait of Hormuz. Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was due to return to Pakistan on Sunday as international mediators try to keep peace talks on track despite the US calling off envoys' planned trip, according to news agency AFP. Araghchi would again meet Pakistani officials to convey Iran's positions and views on the framework of any understanding to completely end the war, AFP reported, citing the Iranian news agency.

# Fourth cohort of students graduate from Amazon Data Center Skilling Program in Telangana

Hyderabad, April 2026: The fourth cohort of 51 students graduated today from the Amazon Data Center Skilling Program at a ceremony held at Vardhaman Engineering College in Shamshabad, Telangana. Currently in its fourth year, the program has trained 200+ candidates over the past three years. It equips participants with technical skills needed to build their careers in data center operations, supporting the growing demand for cloud infrastructure professionals in India. The ceremony was graced by Mr. Kovuri Pavan Kumar, Executive Director, Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Limited (TGIIC), as Guest of Honor. "As demand for cloud and AI services accelerates across India, building a robust talent pipeline to support data center infrastructure powering these technologies has never been more important," said Saji PK, Director of Data Center Operations for Asia Pacific, Japan and China at Amazon Web Services. "I'm proud to celebrate the achievements of our data center skilling program cohort. These graduates represent the future of

our industry, and I look forward to seeing them drive innovation and operational excellence as they help shape the next generation of cloud infrastructure in the region." The graduating cohort of 51 students completed comprehensive training in Critical Facilities Operations Management (CFOM) and Critical Compute Operations (CCOps). Developed in partnership with the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Data Center Operations team, the program provides theoretical and hands-on experience in managing cloud data center operations. AWS operates two cloud data center Regions in India located in Mumbai and Hyderabad with plans to invest a total of \$12.7 billion into cloud infrastructure in

India by 2030. AWS's infrastructure investment in India creates a positive ripple effect across the economy, including in digital skilling. The Data Center Skilling Program is part of Amazon's broader commitment to workforce skilling and development in India. AWS has trained more than 7 million individuals in India in cloud skills since 2017 through programs such as AWS Skill Builder, AWS Educate, and AWS re/Start. Through such initiatives, AWS aims to provide cloud computing skills training, helping individuals from diverse backgrounds build careers in technology. The program in Telangana creates pathways to employment in the technology sector while supporting the state's digital infrastructure ecosystem.

# Affordable home sales down 23 pc in Q1 2026 in top 8 cities, including Hyderabad



Hyderabad: Sales of affordable homes, costing less than Rs 50 lakh each, fell 23 per cent on-year in January-March to 16,273 units across eight major cities, including Hyderabad, mainly due to lower fresh supply in this price bracket, according to Knight Frank. All eight cities of Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata reported a fall in sales in the affordable segment, making it the steepest decline across all price categories during the period. Post-COVID-19

pandemic, the demand for luxury homes has surged. Builders are attributing the lower launches in the affordable housing segment to the high cost of inputs, especially land. As per the data, even the Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore category witnessed a decline of 12 per cent year-on-year during the first quarter of the 2026 calendar year to 23,567 units across the eight major cities. However, the housing sales in the Rs 1-2 crore segment rose 10 per cent to 24,657 units during January-March. In the Rs 2-5 crore category, the housing sales rose

17 per cent to 16,075 units. Sales in the Rs 5-10 crore price category dipped 3 per cent to 3,338 units. Housing sales in the Rs 10-20 crore category increased 12 per cent to 738 units, while sales in Rs 20-50 crore category jumped 80 per cent to 165 units. In homes costing more than Rs 50 crore, the sales declined 93 per cent to 12 units during the January-March period. Overall, across all price categories, Knight Frank data showed that the housing sales fell 4 per cent annually in January-March to 84,827 units across the eight cities

due to soft demand because of high prices and uncertainties caused by the West Asia conflict. "Market activity remained skewed toward the higher end even as growth moderated, while volumes continue to slide in ticket sizes below Rs 10 million (1 crore)," Knight Frank said in its report. The share of these lower segments (below Rs 1 crore) has declined to 47 per cent of the total sales, compared to 54 per cent in January-March 2025. Shishir Bajjal, International Partner, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India, said the moderation in residential demand follows a sustained multi-year upcycle. "While this phase can be partly attributed to a natural consolidation after strong growth, the continued rise in prices alongside softening volumes indicates growing pressure on affordability and absorption," he said. At the same time, Bajjal said the volatile geopolitical situation has also resulted in subdued interest in residential demand.

# INFOSYS DIVIDENDS: HOW YIELD COMPARES WITH TCS, WIPRO, HCLTECH?



Infosys paid a total dividend of Rs 48 per share for FY26, taking its dividend yield to 4.15%. But rival IT stocks Wipro, TCS and HCLTech offer higher yields based on current market prices. The comparison highlights why investors tracking dividend income often look beyond the rupee payout announced by companies. A lower dividend per share can still generate a higher return when the stock trades at a lower price. India's major IT companies have now announced their latest shareholder payouts for FY26, giving investors a clearer view of income returns across the sector. Yield Check Wipro leads the group with a dividend yield of 5.51%. HCLTech stands at 4.98%. TCS follows at 4.58%, while Infosys is at 4.15%. The ranking differs from the annual dividend paid per share. TCS declared the highest payout at Rs 110

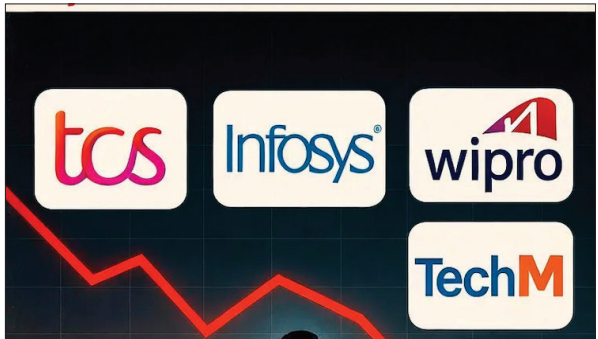
per share, followed by HCLTech at Rs 60, Infosys at Rs 48 and Wipro at Rs 11. Company Updates Infosys announced a final dividend of Rs 25 per share last week. That lifted its full-year FY26 dividend to Rs 48 per share. HCLTech announced a final dividend of Rs 24 per share on April 21 for FY26. It fixed April 25 as the record date and said payment will be made by May 5. That took HCLTech's total FY26 divi-

dent to Rs 60 per share after three interim dividends of Rs 12 each earlier in the year. Bloomberg estimates had valued FY26 dividend at Rs 57.12. Tata Consultancy Services recommended a final dividend of Rs 31 per share on April 9 with its fourth-quarter results. That raised total FY26 dividend to Rs 110 per share, including Rs 79 already paid earlier. The company has not yet announced the

record date for the final dividend payment. Wipro did not announce a fresh dividend with its March quarter results on April 16. Its FY26 payout remains Rs 11 per share, made up of Rs 5 in Q1 and Rs 6 in Q3. The dividend decision came alongside consideration of a Rs 250 per share buyback, the company's first in three years. The cumulative buyback size stands at Rs 15,000 crore.

# IT HIRING SLUMP: TCS, INFOSYS, HCLTECH, WIPRO & TECHM RECORD 7,000 NET JOB CUTS

India's top IT services firms dialled back hiring in FY26, reversing the modest recovery seen a year earlier. Combined, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro, HCLTech and Tech Mahindra reported a net reduction of 6,981 employees during the fiscal. This compares with a net addition of 12,718 employees in FY25. TCS led the decline, cutting 23,460 roles over the year, while Tech Mahindra reduced headcount by 1,108 employees, the Economic Times reported, based on information collated from official company filings. In contrast, Infosys, Wipro and HCLTech continued to add workers, albeit at a slower pace, reflecting tighter control over utilisation and margins. The hiring slowdown comes amid persistent demand uncertainty, delayed client decision-making and a growing reliance on AI-driven efficiencies, all of which have reshaped workforce strategies. Shift



Towards Skills-Led Hiring The report highlights a broader transition from scale-led expansion to a skills-first approach. While hiring has not dropped to FY24 levels, when the sector shed over 69,000 jobs, visibility on growth remains limited. Analysts, as cited in a Times of India report, point to a clear pivot towards efficiency-focused operations. Companies are increasingly prioritising AI-native talent, along with specialists in artificial intelligence, cloud, data and cybersecurity, marking a departure from the traditional model where

growth was closely tied to headcount expansion. Despite caution among large IT firms, overall industry employment continued to inch higher. Total headcount rose by 1.4 lakh to 59 lakh in 2026, according to Nasscom, slightly above the 1.3 lakh increase recorded a year earlier. Much of this incremental growth has been driven by the continued expansion of global capability centres (GCCs), which are scaling up their India operations for the third straight year. Hiring trends remain muted at the start of FY27.

# A 17th Century 'supercomputer' once owned by Indian royalty heads for auction

A spectacular brass astrolabe - or a hand-held astronomical computer - from the 17th Century, once part of the royal collection of Jaipur city in western India, will go under the hammer at Sotheby's in London on 29 April. The object is "perhaps the largest in existence" and has never been exhibited before, Benedict Carter, head of the department of Islamic and Indian Art at Sotheby's, told the BBC. Known to be part of the royal collection of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II of Jaipur, it was passed on to his wife Maharani Gayatri Devi, one of the most glamorous women of her time, after his death. It then moved to a private collection during her lifetime. Astrolabes are metal disks with multi-layered, interlocking components that were historically used to tell the time, map the stars, the direction of Mecca and the motion of the sky. "They are essentially a two-dimensional projection of a three-dimensional universe. I compare them to modern-day smart



phones because you can do so many things with them," says Dr Federica Gigante of the Oxford Centre for History of Science, Medicine and Technology. "You can calculate the time of sunset, sunrise, the height of a building, the depth of a well, distance and even use them to predict the future. Along with an almanac they were once used to cast horoscopes." Astrolabes were first developed in ancient Greece in the 2nd Century BCE and spread to the Islamic world by the 8th Century. Over the fol-

lowing centuries, centres of production flourished across Iraq, Iran, North Africa and Andalus (in present-day Spain). This particular instrument was made in the early 17th Century in Lahore, now in Pakistan, at a time when the city had become a leading hub of astrolabe-making in the Mughal world. It was created by two brothers, Qa'im Muhammad and Muhammad Muqim. The pair were part of the so-called "Lahore School", one of the most renowned centres

of astrolabe production of its time. The craft itself was kept within a single family and passed down generations. Only two astrolabes are known to have been jointly made by the brothers; the other, a much smaller one, is kept in a museum in Iraq. This one was commissioned by Aqa Afzal, a nobleman who administered Lahore during this period. Originally from Isfahan in Iran, he held several senior posts under the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The object's massive size and opulence reflect the patron's stature. "It weighs 8.2kg, measures nearly 30cm in diameter and stands about 46cm tall - almost four times the size of a typical astrolabe from 17th Century India," said Carter. "It also has a striking cross-cultural element. The star pointers carry their standard names in Persian, alongside Sanskrit equivalents etched in the Devanagari script." According to Sotheby's, the piece contains 94 cities inscribed within it, each marked with their respec-

# Trump and his officials 'likely' targets of suspected gunman, acting attorney general says

Our royal correspondent reported earlier that King Charles will probably still travel to the US for his state visit tomorrow, despite last night's attack in Washington. Now, the UK ambassador to the US has told CBS News that King Charles is still expected to travel to the US. Christian Turner says the King is still due to arrive at the White House on Monday, and his presence will be honoured at a dinner the following night. Los Angeles County's voter registration records appear to show he had registered no party preference. According to a Federal Election Commission record, seen by BBC Verify, in October 2024 Allen donated \$25 (£18.5) to the fundraising platform ActBlue with the money earmarked for Kamala Harris' presidential campaign. Allen describes himself as a mechanical engineer, game developer and teacher on LinkedIn. According to his profile, he



studied mechanical engineering at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) - a highly competitive university - where he took part in its Christian fellowship. He graduated with a master's in computer science in 2025 from California State University, Dominguez Hills, marking the milestone by sharing a photo of himself in

graduation robes to LinkedIn. He also developed and released a game called "Bohrdom" to the gaming platform Steam. On Facebook, photos of Allen, which we've matched to those of his arrest at the hotel, show him smiling in family photographs at Christmas and graduation events. In December 2024 he was named

teacher of the month by C2 Education, which offers tutoring and college test preparation to students, according to the organisation's Facebook post. He has been a part-time teacher there since 2020, his LinkedIn profile says. BBC Verify is continuing to look into Allen's social media and online presence. Continuing

his round of US media outlets, acting US Attorney General Todd Blanche has given CNN more details about the shooting. Suspect appears unknown to police: Blanche says it appears the suspect bought the two firearms he had "in the last couple of years", and reiterated that there is "not any indication yet" he was on the radar of the authorities. Electronic devices seized: Authorities "executed a number of search warrants" last night and are investigating electronic devices they've seized, believed to belong to the suspect. Not ruling out further charges: It "remains to be seen" whether more charges than the two already announced will be raised against the suspect on Monday - Blanche says "absolutely" he could be charged with attempted assassination depending on the evidence. Even before last night's shooting incident in Washington DC, security for

the King and Queen's state visit was going to be very tight. Now it will be going up another level. It sounds as though the royal visit to the US is still going ahead, but with the potential for some adaptations in the light of any security concerns. That presumably would mean thinking about times when the visitors would be in sight of the public - and King Charles usually likes to meet the crowds. It's often a highlight of such trips, as he's good with people. When President Trump visited the UK last autumn, almost all the events happened inside Windsor Castle. He was helicoptered in and out of that secure bubble and behind those walls and so was kept away from any contact with the public. For those planning the King and Queen's trip, which starts on Monday, it was already diplomatically complicated, and now there are last-minute decisions of another kind to consider.

## How the Irish novelty song that 'toppled' Céline Dion is making a comeback



An Irish comedic singer who "toppled" the likes of Céline Dion and The Prodigy in the charts 30 years ago has earned a whole new audience as the hit song has taken social media by storm. Richie Kavanagh's 'Aon Focal Eile', which plays on a four-letter swear word, has been re-released by the singer and his young grandson CJ to mark three decades since its Irish charts success. The clip has received over half a million views on TikTok alone as Kavanagh and his grandson sing the song side by side. "I'm probably more popular now than I was

when we had the number one hit," said Kavanagh. The County Carlow singer-songwriter spent seven weeks at the top of the Irish charts with Aon Focal Eile from March to May 1996 and the song went triple platinum. While Dion's 'Because You Loved Me' and The Prodigy's 'Firestarter' were dominating the US and UK charts at the time, Kavanagh's track had captured the attention of the Republic of Ireland. Known for having a habit of pushing the boundaries with his lyrics, Kavanagh said the BBC avoided playing Aon Focal Eile on the airwaves.

## Georgia declares state of emergency as wildfires destroy dozens of homes



Wildfires in Georgia have burned more than 39,500 acres and destroyed more than 120 homes, officials have said. Two major fires in the south-east of the state - the Pineland Road Fire and the Highway 82 fire - prompted Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to declare a 30-day state of emergency in 91 of the state's 159 counties. "Right now conditions are so dry that even one small spark can quickly turn into a dangerous wildfire," Georgia Forestry Commission Director Johnny Sabo said in a video statement. Emergency officials are also battling a range of smaller blazes, reporting 32 new wildfires that consumed 50 acres on Saturday. "We are in extreme drought conditions, and wildfire activity has already surpassed our five year average," Sabo added. The fires began sprouting up on 18 April and Kemp declared a state of emergency four days later. A foil balloon that came into contact with a power line is believed to have sparked the Highway 82 fire, which has consumed about 7,500 acres so far,

according to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). The blaze was about 10% contained, they said. A stray spark from a welding operation is believed to be the source of the Pineland Road Fire which has scorched 32,000 acres, the GFC said. Officials said in an update on Friday that at least 35 "minor structures" had been lost in Pineland fire and 187 homes remained threatened. Ninety-one counties in the state have been placed under an outdoor burn ban, which prohibits the burning of rubbish and agricultural materials. The Dudek family watched the flames reach their property line as they started to gather belongings, they told CBS News, the BBC's US media partner. As they evacuated their children and pets, Anna Dudek watched through her phone's security camera feed as the flames engulfed their home. "When both of my devices were offline, and it was black and I couldn't see no more, it was so gut-wrenching because then I knew, like, they got... what I call home," she told CBS News.

## Teenage motorcyclist dies after collision



A teenager has died after a road traffic collision on Saturday afternoon. It happened on the R252 at Cloghan at about 16:30 local time. Gardaí (Irish police) said it involved a car and a motorbike. The motorcyclist, a male in

his teens, was pronounced dead at the scene. No one else was injured. Anyone with information including dashcam footage and were travelling in the area between 16:00 and 17:00 have been asked to get in contact with gardaí.

## TRUMP CANCELS US ENVOYS' TRIP TO PAKISTAN FOR TALKS ON IRAN WAR

Donald Trump cancelled a planned trip by US officials to Pakistan for talks on the Iran war on Saturday, shortly after Tehran's delegation had left Islamabad. The US president said special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner would be wasting "too much time", adding that if Iran wanted to talk "all they have to do is call". Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi held talks with mediator Pakistan, saying afterwards he had shared Iran's position on ending the war but was yet to see whether the US was "truly serious about diplomacy". Diplomatic efforts have stalled despite Trump's extension of a ceasefire that had been due to expire on 22 April to allow talks to continue. Both sides have been



locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz, with Iran restricting passage through the key shipping route in the wake of the US and Israel commencing strikes in February, as well as over Tehran's nuclear ambitions. The US has since increased its naval presence in the strait - through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply passes - to block Iranian

oil exports. The White House had said the Iranians "want to talk" when the trip was announced on Friday, but Iran said there were no plans for a direct meeting. Trump said the ceasefire would hold on Saturday despite hopes of another round of face-to-face talks fading. Asked whether the cancelled US trip meant the war would resume, he told news site Axios: "No, it

doesn't mean that. We haven't thought about it yet." Announcing the trip had been called off on Saturday, Trump said there was "tremendous infighting and confusion" within Iran's leadership and that "nobody knows who is in charge, including them". He wrote on his Truth Social platform: "Also, we have all the cards, they have none! If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!" The White House said on Friday that US Vice-President JD Vance had been "on standby" to join the talks had they proved successful. He had led the US delegation in the first round of talks earlier this month and his absence from the initial planned delegation perhaps signalled that a major breakthrough was not expected.

## Rights groups critical as Venezuela prisoner release scheme 'coming to an end'

Human rights groups in Venezuela have criticised interim President Delcy Rodríguez for saying a scheme to release political prisoners was "coming to an end", having been in place for just nine weeks. Nearly 500 political prisoners have been released under the amnesty law brought in by the country's National Assembly, prisoner rights group Foro Penal says, but many more are thought to still be in jail. The group said Rodríguez lacked the power to end the releases, while watchdog Provea called the move "arbitrary and unconstitutional". Despite being a lieutenant of former President



Nicolás Maduro, Rodríguez has enjoyed the support of Donald Trump since US forces seized Maduro in January. The US president surprised many by backing Rodríguez over opposition leader María Corina Machado, and the release of political prisoners - includ-

ing Machado's colleagues - was a key concession to the US by the interim administration. The president of the National Assembly Jorge Rodríguez - Delcy's brother - who initially announced the law, had said 1,577 political prisoners had applied for amnesty, noting the leg-

islation would eventually cover 11,000 people. Foro Penal said that, as of 20 April, 473 people it classifies as political prisoners had been released, while more than 500 are thought to remain incarcerated. "In a meeting of justice officials in the capital, Caracas, on Friday, Delcy Rodríguez said 8,616 people had been freed under the amnesty law, which she credited as being "very successful in terms of its scope and the number of beneficiaries". She added that for cases that had not been covered by the law, "there are other avenues through which they can be addressed".

## ORBÁN STEPS DOWN FROM HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENT AFTER LANDSLIDE DEFEAT



Hungary's outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said he will not take up his seat in parliament after his party was defeated in a landslide that ended his 16-year rule. "I am now needed not in parliament, but in the reorganisation of the patriotic movement," he said in a video statement released on social media on Saturday evening. Despite his nationalist party Fidesz going from 135 seats to 52 in the 12 April vote, Orbán was re-elected as an MP on its proportional representation list. Tisza, led by former Fidesz insider Péter Magyar, won more than a two-thirds majority in the 199-seat parliament, paving the way for a reset of both Hungary's domestic policies and its global relationships. Following a meeting of Fidesz officials, Orbán, 62, said the party's parliamentary bloc would be led from Monday by Gergely Gulyás, who until now has served as the minister overseeing the prime minister's office. "The mandate I obtained as the lead candidate of the

Fidesz-KDNP list is, in fact, a parliamentary mandate of Fidesz. For this reason, I have decided to return it," Orbán said. About half of Hungary's parliamentary seats are divided among political parties according to their national vote share, while the other half represent individual constituencies. Orbán has held a seat through one electoral format or the other since 1990, and has led Fidesz throughout that period. He has served as Hungary's prime minister since 2010, becoming the predominant figure in Hungarian politics. However, voters abandoned him in their droves amid brewing public unhappiness over allegations of corruption and graft while living standards slipped. Hungary's incoming PM has promised to reverse Orbán-era changes to education and health, tackle corruption, restore the independence of the judiciary and kill off the widely loathed system of patronage known as NER that helped enrich party loyalists and squander state resources.

## NETANYAHU ORDERS ARMY TO 'VIGOROUSLY ATTACK' HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered his military to "vigorously attack Hezbollah targets" in Lebanon, two days after a ceasefire was extended by three weeks. Fresh Israeli attacks followed the directive, which came after at least six people were killed in strikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday. Further cross-border exchanges between the two sides have strained the truce agreement, highlighting the precariousness of the ceasefire. The agreement, which has seen a reduction in fire rather than a complete halt, was extended on Thursday after talks between the countries' envoys in Washington. Earlier on Saturday, Israeli strikes on a truck and a



motorbike in the town of Yohmor al-Shaqeef in the Nabatieh district killed four people, Lebanon's health ministry said, according to Agence-France-Presse. Another two people were killed and 17 injured in an attack on the town of Safad al-Battikh, in the Bint Jbeil district, it said. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) said it had "eliminated" three

Hezbollah members on Saturday who were driving "a vehicle loaded with weapons", as well as another one riding a motorcycle. It said two more armed members of the group were killed in the Litani area, where Israel has kept soldiers in the self-declared buffer zone, saying they "posed a threat to the IDF soldiers operating in southern Lebanon". The

IDF later said a "suspicious aerial target was identified" in the area of Malkia, adding the "incident constitutes an additional violation of the ceasefire". Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it targeted an Israeli army vehicle in south Lebanon in retaliation for the attack on Yohmor al-Shaqeef, AFP reported. Following Netanyahu's order to attack the group, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported a pair of strikes in quick succession in a town in Bint Jbeil district, another in a town in Tyre district, and strikes on two more towns in Nabatieh district. The Israeli military said it "struck Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure used for military purposes across southern Lebanon".

## Hope in Gaza as 300 couples get married at one time



Hope in Gaza as 300 couples get married at one time



## IPL 2026: Kolkata Knight Riders Set 155/7 Target for Lucknow Super Giants



KKR's Rovman Powell injured himself badly while taking the catch of Mitchell Marsh running back from mid-on. He fell on the ground while completing the catch. Powell was taken off the ground. Earlier, Mohsin Khan picked a five-wicket

haul before Rinku Singh's unbeaten fifty gave KKR something to fight against LSG in their IPL 2026 game in Lucknow. Mohsin returned figures of 5 for 23 to dent KKR, but Rinku's 83 not out off 51 balls, laced with seven fours and five sixes led KKR's fight-

back. He smashed a total of four sixes in the final over bowled by Digvesh Singh Rathi, propelling KKR to 155/7. Only one run and a wicket came off Vaibhav Arora's first over. He bowled three dot balls to Rishabh Pant before the LSG captain

took a single to get off the mark. Arora then bowled a dot ball to Aiden Markram to finish the over. An early wicket for KKR! They are turning things around. Rinku Singh started it with a fighting knock, and now Vaibhav Arora has dismissed Mitchell

Marsh with the very first ball of his spell. LSG are one down in the chase. Rovman Powell took the catch at mid-on and hurt himself badly in the process. He is walking off the field. That is a good shot from Aiden Markram. There was nothing wrong with the delivery as Anukul Roy bowled a good-length ball on the stumps. Markram got deep into the crease and punched it past cover for a four. 6, 6, 6, 6— What an over for KKR! Some poor captaincy from Rishabh Pant saw him hand the ball to Digvesh Singh Rathi in the final over, and Rinku Singh slammed the spinner for four consecutive sixes. A total of 26 runs came off the final over, and KKR would suddenly feel they have a fighting score on the board. Mohammed Shami leaks 17 runs in his final over. Rinku Singh started the over with a six over point and then smashed a four to race to his half-century. He followed it with yet another boundary. Shami ends his quota of four overs with figures of 0 for 34.

### CSK STAR FACES HORRIFIC INJURY SCARE, SPARKS LUNGI NGIDI-LIKE CONCERNS



Chennai Super Kings overseas star Akeel Hosein faced a major injury scare during the IPL 2026 match against Gujarat Titans on Sunday. The incident happened in the sixth over of the GT innings when Shubman Gill slammed the ball on the off-side and Hosein tried to run towards the right in an attempt to complete the catch. However, he ended up slamming his right cheek on the ground and that led to a small halt in play. The physios rushed to the ground and even performed a mandatory concussion check but although the player looked in a bit of discomfort, he resumed play soon after. However, his injury sparked concerns after Delhi Capitals' Lungi Ngidi's head injury during the match against Punjab Kings.

## Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Reveals Advice From 'Yash Bhaiya' That Led To His 36-Ball Century vs SRH

Rajasthan Royals prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi shed light on his chat with opening partner and senior marksman Yashasvi Jaiswal ahead of their clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday. Sooryavanshi and Jaiswal have formed one of the most destructive opening pairs this season, consistently giving RR fiery starts at the top. Against SRH, Sooryavanshi smashed his second IPL century, slamming 103 off 37 balls. His record-breaking knock included 12 sixes and five fours, powering the Rajasthan Royals to a massive total of 228/6. In a viral video, Sooryavanshi revealed that Jaiswal told him to attack from the very



first ball. "When we went out to bat after winning the toss, Yash bhaiya (Yashasvi) told me, 'Vaibhav, we should go hammer and tongs today.' I replied that we should just go out there and hit sixes," Sooryavanshi said in a

video posted by RR. After the match, SRH captain Pat Cummins noted that Sooryavanshi has made an impressive start to his career and credited his fearless style of play for capturing attention. "He's had a great start to his

career and I love the way he plays, he takes the game on," he added. RR posted a strong total of 228/6, powered by a sensational 103 off 37 balls from Sooryavanshi and a 35-ball 51 from Jurel. Donovan Ferreira also added a quick cameo off 16-ball 33 late in the innings. In reply, SRH lost Travis Head early but recovered strongly as Ishan Kishan (74 off 31) and Abhishek Sharma (57 off 29) put on a 132-run stand, setting up the chase. Despite a few late wickets, Heinrich Klaasen (29) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (36) ensured the required rate stayed under control as SRH completed the chase comfortably in 18.3 overs.

## MS Dhoni Fit But 'Choosing' To Not Make CSK Comeback? Report Makes Big Claim

MS Dhoni has recovered from injury but the Chennai Super Kings veteran is willingly denying his comeback in order to not disturb the team combination ahead of the IPL 2026 match against Gujarat Titans, according to a report by The Indian Express. Dhoni, who suffered a calf strain, has not played a single match for his franchise this season despite attending net sessions in the past week. The report claimed that Dhoni successfully completed his fitness test but he is reluctant to take the sport of a youngster and 'disturb the combination in the last couple of fixtures. While the CSK middle order has not performed quite well this season, the decision to make a comeback reportedly lies



completely with Dhoni. Thursday's clash against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium, as he continues to recover from the injury that initially ruled him out for two weeks on March 28. There had been speculation that Dhoni could return as a specialist batter using the Impact Player rule, especially with Sanju Samson and Kartik

Sharma available as wicket-keeping options. However, Hussey dismissed that possibility, indicating Dhoni would be back in his usual role behind the stumps. "Oh, I'm pretty sure he'll be behind the stumps. The biggest thing for him is that he's had the calf injury, it's just the running and late in innings, if he comes in, having to scamper those ones and twos, he just needs to make sure the calf is strong enough to withstand that," Hussey told the broadcaster during a mid-match interview. "But certainly from a skill perspective, we know what he can do as a keeper. We know he's batting, he's batting really well, so it's just hopefully getting that confidence in the calf," Hussey said.

## Tottenham Win At Last But Stay In Drop Zone After Late Drama At West Ham

A first Premier League win in 2026 wasn't enough to lift Tottenham out of the relegation zone. Spurs beat relegated Wolves 1-0 on Saturday to hand Roberto De Zerbi his first victory as coach. But it remained in the drop zone, two points behind West Ham, which clinched a 2-1 win against Everton through Callum Wilson's stoppage time goal at London Stadium. Liverpool moved up to fourth on goal difference by beating Crystal Palace 3-1. The defending champion leapfrogged Aston Villa which lost to Fulham 1-0. Arsenal was playing Newcastle later Saturday with the chance to move back to the top ahead of Manchester City. City was playing in the semifinals of the FA Cup against second

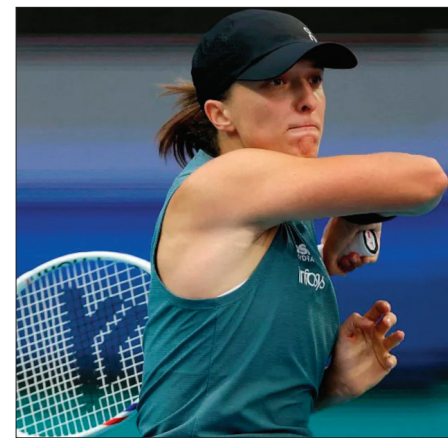


division Southampton at Wembley Stadium. For a short while everything seemed to be going Tottenham's way. First, midfielder Joao Paulinha managed to stay outside to slide Spurs into an 82nd-minute lead at Molineux and survive a VAR check. Moments later, Everton's Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall leveled the score at West Ham - cancelling out Tomas Soucek's opener and temporarily

helping Spurs climb out of the relegation zone. But Wilson's winner for West Ham in the 92nd - after coming on as a late substitute - saw the fight for survival take another twist. Spurs' win was its first in the league since Dec. 28, and further evidence of a lift in form under De Zerbi, who was appointed last month. The Italian has been in charge for three games and picked up four points.

## Iga Swiatek Retires From Madrid Open After Viral Illness; Aryna Sabalenka Enters Last 16

Iga Swiatek was forced to retire in the third round of the Madrid Open on Saturday due to a viral illness, while reigning champion Aryna Sabalenka extended her winning run to 14 matches. A champion in the Spanish capital in 2024, Swiatek rebounded from a one-set deficit against American 31st seed Ann Li to level the contest but put an end to proceedings while down 0-3 in the decider. The Polish six-time Grand Slam champion asked for the doctor after getting broken early in the third set and got her vitals checked. She tried to break Li back but when her opponent held for a 3-0 advantage, the fourth seed realised she was unable to continue. She revealed after the match that she has been fighting a stomach virus for the last two days and was hoping she could still find a way to win despite feeling "terrible". "I heard there is something going on between players, that the virus is somewhere on site. I'm sure I'll be fine in a couple of days, but I had zero energy and zero stability and just felt really bad physically, and yesterday even worse," said Swiatek.



It is Swiatek's earliest ever exit in five appearances in Madrid. "On the court before the tournament I felt like I'm playing great, so actually it's sad for me that I can't play, because I was feeling really good with my game, and I was moving forward in the process, so, this was positive," she said. "But for me the tournament has just started and I couldn't even compete today, so it's disappointing."

## Atletico Madrid Build Confidence Before Arsenal Clash But Star Midfielder Suffers Injury



Alexander Sorloth struck twice as Atletico Madrid built confidence for their Champions League semifinal clash against Arsenal with a 3-2 win over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday in La Liga. However Diego Simeone's side were also left sweating on the fitness of midfielder Pablo Barrios, who walked off injured midway through the second half. Atletico have little to play for in La Liga, sitting fourth and now 10 points clear of Real Betis in fifth. Their hopes of silverware this season are pinned to European success and a potential first ever Champions League triumph. Losing energetic midfielder Barrios could be a blow for the Rojiblancos, with the first leg clash against the Premier League leaders approaching on Wednesday at Atletico's Metropolitan stadium. The Spaniard had only just returned from a thigh injury

after missing both legs of their quarter-final win over Barcelona. "We all know Pablo is a hugely important player for us... and he's a friend and it hurts to see him like that," said Atletico playmaker Alex Baena. "He's a player and a person who looks after himself 100 percent, and these things happen in football, we don't know why, no matter how much care you take. "So I hope it's just as minor as possible." Before facing Ernesto Valverde's Athletic Bilbao, Atletico had lost seven of their last eight games, including the Copa del Rey final last weekend. The visiting mid-table Basques took the lead after 23 minutes through Aitor Paredes's powerful header from Inigo Ruiz de Galarreta's corner. French forward Antoine Griezmann, who is leaving at the end of the season to join MLS side Orlando City, pulled hosts Atletico level in the 49th minute.

## Evans regains WRC lead as Ogier wins in Canaries

Elfyn Evans has returned to the top of the World Rally Championship (WRC) standings after finishing second behind Sebastien Ogier at Rally Islas Canarias. The Welsh driver, who collected a maximum 10 Sunday bonus points alongside 17 as runner-up, now leads Toyota team-mate Takamoto Katsuta by two points after five of the 14 rounds. Evans, 37, finished 19.9 seconds behind eight-time world champion Ogier. Finland's Sami Pajari was third with Japan's Katsuta and Irish co-driver Aaron Johnston fourth, as Toyota's Gazoo Racing filled the top four



places. "It has been a solid weekend," said Evans. "It was a poor start and that put us out of the fight for

the win. I have had mixed feelings. Congrats to Seb, he has driven an exceptional weekend." Josh

McErlean finished eighth in the Spanish round of the championship, while Motorsport Ireland and M-

Sport Ford team-mate Jon Armstrong placed 11th. It was the most testing rally so far for Armstrong on his debut season in WRC1, losing more than two minutes on Saturday when spectators had to help his car back onto the road. "It has been quite a challenging weekend there is no doubt about that," said the 31-year-old Fermanagh driver. "It has taken a long time to get on top of a tyre on this rally. I think we have been progressing and we need to understand how we can improve. "It has not been a great rally, but sometimes you will have worse ones than good ones." Toyota had been on course to claim the top

five spots, but Rally Monte Carlo winner Oliver Solberg crashed out on the penultimate stage. Solberg - who won six of the weekend's 18 stages - had been second on the road, two seconds behind Ogier, but was forced to retire his badly damaged Yaris, leaving him with no points for round five. It was a first win of the season for the 42-year-old Frenchman, who had sat out Rally Sweden - won by Evans - and the previous round in Croatia where Katsuta took his second victory in a row following success in Kenya. The teams now head to Portugal for round six from 7-10 May.

## Anjali Joins Vishal's Makutam as Female Lead; Concept Video Sparks Laughter

Actor Vishal is gearing up for his most ambitious next project Makutam, which marks the 99th film under the prestigious Super Good Films banner, produced by RB Choudary. Interestingly, Vishal is also taking on the roles of director and screenplay writer, adding a strong personal creative touch to the film. From the posters and early promotional material released so far, Makutam appears to be a distinctive action entertainer with a fresh narrative approach. Adding to the excitement, it has now been officially confirmed that actress Anjali will star opposite Vishal. The duo, known for their successful collaborations and strong on-screen chemistry, are reuniting once again, raising expectations. To announce her inclusion, the makers released a quirky and engaging concept video featuring both Vishal and Anjali. The video unfolds like a mock narration session, with Vishal, as the director, approaching Anjali to pitch the story. However, instead of listening quietly, Anjali playfully interrupts him at every turn. When Vishal begins with a typical line like "It's a beautiful village..." she humorously cuts him off, saying such details are the production team's responsibility and urging him to get to the actual story. As Vishal continues narrating



in a rather vague manner, Anjali keeps delivering witty jabs and sarcastic remarks. Eventually, she bluntly questions whether he even has a proper story, leaving Vishal flustered. Unable to handle her sharp counters, he comically walks away, promising to return with a better narration the next day. The video ends on a humorous note, highlighting their natural chemistry and comic timing. The entertaining concept video has sparked laughter and has quickly gone viral across social media platforms, drawing praise for its creativity and humor. On the

technical front, the music for Makutam is composed by GV Prakash Kumar, while cinematography is handled by Richard M Nathan. NB Srikanth serves as the editor, and Durairaj is in charge of art direction.

## NO POSITIVE VIBES FOR SAI PALLAVI'S HINDI DEBUT



Sai Pallavi's much-awaited Hindi debut Ek Din is heading toward its theatrical release on May 1, 2026, but the film seems to be surrounded zero positive vibes in the final stretch. Produced by Aamir Khan Productions, the romantic drama stars Sai Pallavi alongside Junaid Khan, with direction by Sunil Pandey. Initially, the project generated decent buzz, especially as it marked Sai Pallavi's entry into Bollywood. However, the momentum has gradually dipped. The teaser and trailer received mixed responses, with many pointing out that the storyline feels familiar and lacks freshness.

## RASHMIKA MANDANNA'S PAN INDIA ACTION DRAMA 'MAISA' BEGINS 15-DAY BRUTAL ACTION PACKED SHOOTING SCHEDULE IN KERALA

National crush Rashmika Mandanna is playing the most challenging role of her career with the pan India action drama 'Maisaa'. The film has already created a good buzz with its intense glimpses. The film is being produced by Unformula Films under the direction of Ravindra Pulle. A 15-day brutal action-packed shooting schedule has recently begun in Kerala. Kecha Khampakki Master is providing high voltage action choreography. This action schedule, which features Rashmika along with key actors, is going to be a major highlight of the film. Rashmika plays a Gond tribal girl in 'Maisa'. This role requires emotional depth as well as physical strength. For this, Rashmika went to Bangkok under the supervision of international action director Andy Long and underwent rigorous stunt and combat training. She spent about eight hours a day learning advanced stunts, hand-to-hand fighting, and high-speed action techniques. Rashmika is gearing up to create a sensation in a never-before-seen intense and explosive avatar in Maisa. Easwari Rao, Guru Somasundaram, and Rao Ramesh are playing key roles in this film. Cinematography is handled by Shreyas P



Krishna, while music is composed by Jakes Bejoy. International stunt choreographer Andy Long is supervising the action sequences.

## ALLU ARJUN SETS A STRICT 200 DAYS RULE!



Theaters are bone dry as small and medium-range films are not attracting enough footfalls and the stars are struck in Pan-India movies taking three years minimum for each film. Audiences are losing the habit of watching the films in theaters as a result. At this rate, 40% of the Single Screen theaters are closing very soon. Only Prabhas is a bit better doing films simultaneously. When the Single Screens are closed, the Multiplexes' Shares will be barely enough and the big stars will also face the heat very soon. It is important for the Big Stars to increase

the speed or do two films simultaneously. Allu Arjun reportedly took the decision to do two films simultaneously in future. He will begin Lokesh Kanagaraj film from October. From April 2027, he will start another film with a Top Telugu director. He will shoot for that film for around 200 days and is likely to begin another film with Basil Joseph in parallel. Every film of Allu Arjun will have 200 solo days. If the shoot extends above that, the star will begin another film simultaneously. This is a very good decision by the star which will be welcomed by the fans as well as the trade.

## SHRADDHA KAPOOR & NORA FATEHI GET A CLEAN CHIT



Bollywood actors Shraddha Kapoor and Nora Fatehi have received major relief in the much-

discussed 2022 Mumbai drugs case. According to the latest reports, the Mumbai Police have found no evidence linking either of them to the alleged drug network. The case dates back to August 2022, when the Anti-Narcotics Cell arrested a suspected drug supplier and recovered banned substances. During the investigation, several high-profile names surfaced based on statements given by the accused. This led to both Shraddha Kapoor and Nora Fatehi being questioned by officials in 2025. However, after a detailed probe, officials confirmed that there is no concrete

proof connecting the actresses to the case. As a result, their names are expected to be dropped from the supplementary chargesheet, which will focus only on those directly linked to the drug supply network. This development brings clarity to a case that had created significant buzz due to the involvement of celebrities. While the investigation continues against the main accused, the clean chit for Shraddha and Nora comes as a big relief for their fans and the industry.



## GMB Entertainment Presents, Satya Dev, Deepa Thomas, Venkatesh Maha, A+S Movies & SriChakraas Entertainments' Rao Bahadur Worldwide Release On June 5

Superstar Mahesh Babu and Namrata Shirodkar's GMB Entertainment proudly present acclaimed filmmaker Venkatesh Maha's much-awaited psychological thriller Rao Bahadur, starring the versatile Satya Dev in the lead. The film is jointly produced by A+S Movies and SriChakraas Entertainments. As officially announced, Rao Bahadur will hit cinemas on June 5th. The timing appears strategic, aiming for a window just before the academic season begins. The release date poster features Satya Dev in a regal avatar, dressed in deep-toned traditional attire with a commanding presence that exudes authority and mystery. An intriguing detail that stands out is an insect perched on his turban, hinting at symbolic layers the film may explore. The grand palace backdrop, entwined with creeping vines, further enhances the mood, suggesting a narrative rooted in legacy, power, and hidden truths. Following an uncon-

ventional first glimpse, the film's first single O Sundari turned into a chart-buster, admired for its melodious composition and elegant presentation. The romantic track, featuring Satya Dev and Deepa Thomas, beautifully captures a bygone era, adding to the film's appeal with its period setting and visual richness. Rao Bahadur blends psychological drama with the fading echoes of an aristocratic past. Venkatesh Maha, who handles writing, direction, and editing, seems to be shaping a story that is deeply rooted in local sensibilities while carrying universal emotional resonance. The film is backed by a strong technical team, with Kartik Parmar handling cinematography, Smaran Sai composing the music, and Rohan Singh crafting the film's distinctive production design. With its blend of regal imagery and cryptic undertones, Rao Bahadur is shaping up to be a film that draws audiences into a world where every detail may hold deeper meaning.



## NRI FILES RS. 9.35 CR FRAUD CASE AGAINST ASHU REDDY



A case has been registered against Bigg Boss fame Ashu Reddy at Hyderabad CCS following a 9.35 crore fraud complaint. An NRI software engineer alleged she trapped him in a love affair and made him buy car, gold, and properties before refusing marriage. Police have begun an investigation.