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weather report

Kolkata Weather

36 °C | °F

Precipitation 0%

Humidity 69%

Wind 16 km/h

Sunny

Indian Indices

NIFTY 50		
22679.40	348.00	1.56
SENSEX		
73134.32	1,186.77	1.65
NIFTY BANK		
51448.65	1,173.30	2.33
NIFTY IT		
29669.05	606.45	2.09
NIFTY Auto		
24238.85	469.25	1.97

Gold Rates

Today gold price in Kolkata
1,52,950 1,40,200
»
Today gold price in Bangalore
1,52,950 1,40,200
»
Today gold price in India
1,52,950 (₹3,440) 1,40,200 (₹3,150)

THURSDAY, 2 APRIL 2026. KOLKATA VOLUME 3 ISSUE 328 . PAGES-8 . RS : 4/- MORNING DAILY

Auto LPG Price Soars by ₹12.28 Overnight, Commercial Cylinder Up by ₹218; Commuters Brace for Fare Hike in Kolkata
–Pg : 2



Actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee's Final Screen Appearance Turns Into a Lasting Legacy
–Pg : 3



Fuel Shock in the Capital: Premium Petrol, Diesel and ATF Prices Surge Amid Global Tensions
Pg : 7



Jadeja's Emotional Return and Vaibhav's Fearless Fireworks Light Up a Memorable Night
–Pg : 8





Mourners gather during a funeral procession for Alireza Tangsiri, head of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, and others killed in Israeli strikes in late March, in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday.

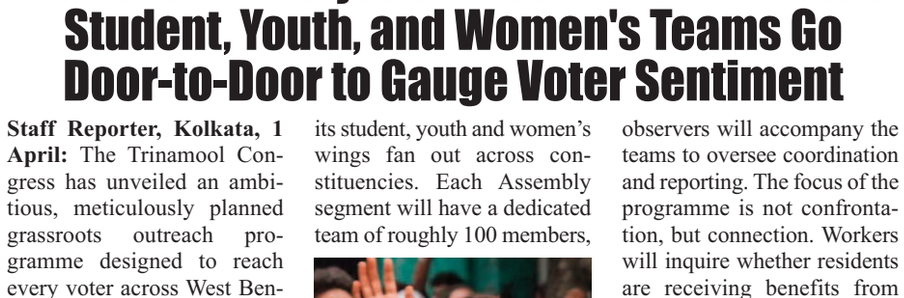
Supreme Court Tightens Scrutiny on Voter Form 6, CM Mamata Banerjee Welcomes Order Amid Heated West Bengal Poll Battle

ANIKET NASKAR

Kolkata, 1 April: The Bengal Election 2026 underway, the political temperature in West Bengal has soared over allegations of wrongful deletion and questionable inclusion of voter names. In a significant development, the Supreme Court has issued fresh directions to the appellate tribunals regarding the handling of Form 6 applications, mandating strict verification of documents before any new submission is accepted. The directive has drawn an immediate and enthusiastic response from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who hailed the order as a victory for electoral integrity. Form 6, the statutory application used for inclusion of names in the electoral roll, has become the focal point of intense political controversy in the run-up to polling scheduled later this month. Allegations of large-scale submissions and improper verification have triggered accusations and counter-accusations between rival political formations, further polarising the electoral landscape. Addressing a campaign rally, Banerjee expressed satisfaction with the apex court's clarification, asserting that attempts were being made to manipulate the voter list through bulk submissions. "I am happy today. The Supreme Court has delivered a good order," she said, alleging that sacks filled with Form 6 applications were being deposited to insert names from outside the state into the voter rolls. Her remarks underscore the high political stakes attached to the voter list revision process. The controversy escalated after senior Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee alleged that efforts were underway to enrol voters from states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh into West Bengal's electoral rolls through mass Form 6 filings. He publicly challenged the Election Commission to release CCTV footage of submission



centres, claiming that leaders from the opposition were submitting thousands of forms at once. The issue reached the Supreme Court amid concerns about procedural fairness and transparency in the appeals process related to voter list disputes. In its earlier observation, the court had stated that appellate tribunals should not accept any new documents that were not previously submitted before judicial officers. However, after concerns were raised by petitioners regarding practical difficulties, the court modified its directive. It clarified that tribunals may accept fresh documents, but only after thoroughly verifying their authenticity. The court further directed that all judicial officers associated with the tribunal process must receive training immediately to ensure consistent handling of both online and offline appeals. The instruction to conduct training sessions without delay signals the judiciary's intent to streamline procedures before the impending voting dates of April 23 and April 29. The Election Commission, for its part, has maintained that the submission of Form 6 is a continuous process permitted under electoral rules and that every application undergoes due verification before acceptance. Commission officials argue that no form is automatically approved and that field-level scrutiny ensures compliance with legal standards. Nevertheless, the sheer scale of alleged submissions has intensified scrutiny. Adding another dimension to the controversy, senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee raised concerns before the Commission, alleging that a single individual had submitted nearly 30,000 Form 6 applications even after the publication of the final electoral roll. He questioned the propriety of entertaining such submissions at a stage when the rolls were largely settled and judicial processes concerning disputed names were already underway. The Supreme Court's revised directive attempts to strike a balance between procedural flexibility and safeguarding against misuse. By emphasising verification before acceptance, the court has reinforced the principle that electoral rolls must reflect genuine, lawfully qualified voters.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee greets the gathering during a public rally ahead of the state Assembly elections, in Birbhum, Wednesday.

Sitalkuchi's Shadows to a Show of Strength: Abhishek Banerjee Signals Political Shift Amid Massive Rally Turnout

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 Kolkata: Sitalkuchi, once etched into Bengal's political consciousness by the tragic events of April 10, 2021, returned to the centre of electoral discourse on Wednesday as Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee addressed a massive gathering at the Sitalkuchi Panchayat Samiti playground in Cooch Behar district. With an unmistakable tone of defiance and resolve, Banerjee invoked the memories of the violence that marked the Assembly polls four years ago and called for what he described as a decisive political shift in the region.Standing before a sea of supporters, Banerjee declared that if the crowd present were to stand in line and cast their votes, the BJP would struggle to find polling agents in Cooch Behar for the next decade. His statement drew loud cheers, underscoring the charged atmosphere at the rally in a constituency that the BJP had wrested in the 2021 Assembly elections.

At the outset of his speech, Banerjee revisited the Sitalkuchi firing incident during the fourth phase of polling in 2021, when four young villagers — Hamidul Miya, Moniruzzaman Miya, Samiul Haque and Nur Alam Hossain — were killed in firing allegedly by central forces outside a booth in Jorpatki. The episode had sent shockwaves across the state and remains a deeply emotive subject in the region. Banerjee accused the BJP and its allies of capturing votes "at gunpoint" and said the memory of that day still lingers in the hearts of the people. Describing the upcoming election as a "vote of protest" and a "vote of resistance," he urged supporters to respond democratically and decisively. He also expressed gratitude for the turnout at the rally, stating that the affection shown by the people of Sitalkuchi would remain a lifelong debt he intended to repay through development. Banerjee went on to outline various initiatives undertaken by the state government in Sitalkuchi and across Cooch Behar district. He cited the construction of new bridges in areas such as Rathardanga, Kacharighat and Naodabas, the establishment of English-medium government schools, the development of a Kisan Mandi, a Karmatirtha centre in Khalsamari and a new fire station.

Abhishek Banerjee's Directive! Trinamool's Student, Youth, and Women's Teams Go Door-to-Door to Gauge Voter Sentiment

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 April: The Trinamool Congress has unveiled an ambitious, meticulously planned grassroots outreach programme designed to reach every voter across West Bengal. The strategy, inspired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and articulated by party leader Abhishek Banerjee at a recent workers' meeting in Bhabanipur, centers on a simple yet powerful principle: meet every household not once, but three times. At the Bhabanipur gathering called by the Chief Minister, Abhishek made it clear that electoral success would hinge not merely on rallies or slogans, but on sustained, personal engagement. Acting on that directive, the party has structured a three-phase, Assembly-wise campaign that will see separate teams from its student, youth and women's wings fan out across constituencies. Each Assembly segment will have a dedicated team of roughly 100 members,



divided into smaller groups to ensure complete coverage. The outreach will proceed in phases. First, members of the student wing will visit homes with campaign leaflets and initiate conversations. They will be followed by youth wing representatives, and finally by women's wing members, who will engage especially with women voters. Constituency observers will accompany the teams to oversee coordination and reporting. The focus of the programme is not confrontation, but connection. Workers will inquire whether residents are receiving benefits from flagship welfare schemes such as Kanyashree, Lakshmir Bhandar, Yuvashree and Karmashree. They will also seek feedback, listen to grievances and offer guidance on resolving issues. Minor concerns will be addressed locally, while serious matters will be escalated to the state leadership. Importantly, this outreach will run parallel to the candidates' own campaign schedules. While nominees will conduct rallies and public meetings, the three-pronged teams will independently maintain door-to-door engagement, ensuring no voter feels overlooked.

'Joy Bangla' Slogan Raised Against Suvendu Adhikari in Nandigram— Leader of the Opposition Steps Out of Car and Charges Forward!



CHITTAJIT DUTTA

Kolkata, 1 April: Suvendu Adhikari lost his composure after being greeted with chants of "Joy Bangla" during a visit to a local Muslim household. The slogan, politically associated with the ruling Trinamool Congress, appeared to irk the BJP leader, prompting him to step out of his vehicle and directly address those raising the chants. The incident took place inside the Nandigram Assembly constituency, a politically sensitive battleground that has remained in sharp focus since the 2021 elections. Adhikari had gone to meet members of a Muslim family as part of his outreach programme when a group of locals surrounded his vehicle and began chanting slogans. Witnesses said the atmosphere grew tense for a few minutes as the chants grew louder. Visibly agitated, Adhikari got down from his car and turned toward the crowd. In a firm tone, he warned, "I will not allow what happened in 2021 to happen again. Times have changed. Do not behave like this." He added that he has every right to visit any household in his constituency and insisted that he has extended help to people from all communities through his MLA office. "I will go to every Muslim house. Everyone has received assistance from my office. Do not act like this when you see me," he was heard saying. The exchange briefly heightened tensions in the area, though there was no major breach of law and order. Police personnel and central forces were already deployed nearby, given the heightened political activity in the run-up to the Assembly elections. Officials acted swiftly to prevent any escalation, and calm returned shortly after Adhikari left the locality. The Trinamool Congress wasted no time in reacting to the episode. Party leaders claimed that the incident reflected Adhikari's anxiety ahead of the polls. According to them, he has realised that his political ground in Nandigram is weakening. Trinamool representatives alleged that Adhikari is now attempting to reach out to Muslim voters after sensing discontent among sections of his traditional support base. As Nandigram once again becomes the stage for high-voltage political drama, Wednesday's episode underlines how emotionally charged the campaign trail has become, with slogans alone capable of igniting confrontation in one of Bengal's most closely watched constituencies.

Fraud Allegations Rock TMC Star Candidate Soham Chakraborty Ahead of Karimpur Battle

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 April: As Trinamool Congress' star candidate and outgoing MLA Soham Chakraborty faces allegations of financial fraud, with a case now filed against him in the Calcutta High Court. The development has injected a new layer of political tension into the Karimpur Assembly contest, where Soham has been fielded by the ruling party after a shift from his earlier Chandipur seat. The complaint has been lodged by Shahid Imam, who alleges that in 2021 he entered into a financial agreement with the actor-turned-politician for the production of a film. According to the petition, a deal worth ₹1 crore was struck, and Soham received ₹68 lakh in installments. However, the film was never completed, and the money, the petitioner claims, was not fully returned. The matter is expected to come up for hearing next week before the bench of Justice Gaurang Kant. Imam, who was arrested in 2022 in connection with a recruitment scam and later released on bail after nearly two years in custody, has stated that he had been associated with the Trinamool's youth wing at the time he extended the loan.

CEO's Office Becomes a 'Hotspot': Turmoil Erupts Amidst SUCI Protests; Section 163 Imposed on Strand Road

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 April: The Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) outside the office of the Chief Electoral Officer turned volatile, triggering clashes with police and bringing traffic along Strand Road and parts of Hare Street to a grinding halt. The agitation, centered on allegations of deletion of names of valid voters from the electoral rolls, added another layer of tension to an already politically charged atmosphere in the city.For the past two days, the CEO office has emerged as a political flashpoint. On Tuesday, confrontations between BJP and Trinamool Congress supporters had heightened tensions, while Trinamool-affiliated booth-level officers staged an overnight demonstration over allegations that large numbers of Form 6 applications were being submitted under questionable circumstances. Section 144 had been imposed around the office premises to prevent unlawful assembly.

On Wednesday, as SUCI supporters marched toward the CEO office protesting what they described as the inclusion of fake voters and exclusion of genuine ones, police had already erected barricades along the expected route of the procession. As the marchers reached Strand Road, tempers flared. Protesters attempted to break through the barricades, leading to heated arguments and physical scuffles with police personnel deployed in large numbers to secure the area.The unrest caused severe disruption to traffic movement. Buses headed toward Howrah were stranded for hours, leaving daily commuters stuck in long queues under sweltering conditions. Office-goers and residents expressed frustration as the standoff between protesters and law enforcement turned the busy thoroughfare into a virtual no-go zone.

Authorities enforced Section 163 outside the CEO office gate as a preventive measure amid fears of escalation. Senior police officials were seen monitoring the situation closely to prevent further deterioration of law and order. The commission's office with a bag full of Form 6 applications. Trinamool-affiliated booth-level officers claimed to have intercepted him, sparking protests. The Election Commission subsequently clarified that any citizen has the right to submit claims and applications as per procedure.

India Poised to Resume Iranian Oil Imports After Seven Years, Signaling Strategic Shift Amid Global Turmoil

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: India appears poised to resume crude oil imports from Iran after a gap of nearly seven years. According to shipping intelligence sources, a vessel carrying approximately 600,000 barrels of Iranian crude has set sail from Kharg Island and is expected to dock at a port in Gujarat in the coming days. If confirmed, the shipment would mark the first significant movement of Iranian oil to Indian shores since 2019, when imports were halted under pressure from United States sanctions imposed during the presidency of Donald Trump. The reported shipment has sparked intense speculation within diplomatic and energy circles. Vessel tracking firm Kpler has indicated that the tanker Ping Shun, operating under the flag of Eswatini, departed from Iran's Kharg Island terminal loaded with crude and is currently charting a course that suggests Gujarat as its likely destination. The vessel is expected to anchor around April 4, though experts caution that ships carrying sanctioned crude often alter their declared routes at the last moment to avoid scrutiny. Despite such uncertainties, industry observers believe the cargo may indeed be headed to India. Before the sanctions regime took effect, India was Iran's second-largest oil customer. The bilateral energy partnership had deepened significantly in the early 2000s, with Iranian crude forming a critical component of India's diversified import basket. The arrangement



offered India favorable payment terms and logistical advantages, particularly for refineries configured to process Iranian grades. However, that longstanding trade relationship was abruptly severed in May 2019 after Washington withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and reinstated sweeping sanctions, warning of punitive measures against countries continuing to purchase Iranian oil. Faced with the prospect of secondary sanctions, New Delhi complied and ceased all imports from Tehran. The decision marked a difficult recalibration of India's strategic autonomy, as it sought to balance energy security needs with its growing ties to the United States. Over the subsequent years, India diversified its sourcing, significantly increasing purchases from Russia and other suppliers to cushion the impact. The present geopolitical landscape, however, appears to be shifting. The ongoing conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States has severely disrupted global oil markets, triggering volatility in prices and supply chains. In response to mounting pressure from energy-importing nations, the U.S. administration has reportedly relaxed its stance toward certain oil transactions involving sanctioned producers. Observers note that Washington's evolving posture reflects pragmatic concerns over stabilizing global energy flows during a period of heightened instability. Against this backdrop, India's potential re-entry into the Iranian oil market is being interpreted as both an economic and diplomatic maneuver. Securing access to Iranian crude would provide Indian refiners with greater flexibility at a time when international prices remain unpredictable.

Tension Erupts Outside CEO Office Over Form 6 Allegations; Heavy Security Blanket Ensures Calm After Night of Sloganeering

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 1 April : The Chief Electoral Officer's office on Strand Road began Tuesday afternoon, with protests, counter-slogans and a heavy police deployment transforming the administrative zone into a high-alert security corridor. Though the immediate unrest subsided by Wednesday morning, the reverberations of the confrontation continue to echo across the state's charged pre-election landscape.

The flashpoint emerged when several booth-level officers aligned with the ruling Trinamool Congress gathered outside the newly established CEO office, alleging that individuals had arrived carrying bags filled with Form 6 applications to submit directly at the office. Form 6 is used for inclusion of names in the electoral roll, and any irregularity connected to its submission is bound to trigger suspicion during an election season already marked by intense scrutiny.

Raising slogans and demanding action, the protesting booth-level officers claimed that the submission of bulk applications at the CEO office was irregular and warranted immediate intervention. The situation escalated swiftly when BJP workers also reached the spot. Within minutes, the administrative stretch outside the CEO headquarters became a theatre of political confrontation, with both sides shouting slogans against each other and accusing their rivals of manipulating electoral procedures.

Police personnel, supported by central forces, were deployed in significant numbers to prevent physical clashes. Barricades were erected to keep the two groups apart, and officers were seen struggling at times to contain the swelling crowd and rising tempers. As evening descended, the standoff showed little sign of dissipating. The tension lingered well into the night, with sporadic sloganeering and confrontational exchanges continuing under tight security watch.

However, by Wednesday morning, the visible crowd had dispersed. There were no fresh gatherings outside the CEO office, though the security presence remained strikingly heavy.

Auto LPG Price Soars by ₹12.28 Overnight, Commercial Cylinder Up by ₹218; Commuters Brace for Fare Hike in Kolkata

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 1 April : In a single stroke, the price of auto gas has increased by ₹12.28 per litre, pushing the cost from ₹70 on Tuesday to ₹80.96 from Wednesday morning. With this latest revision, the cumulative increase in auto LPG prices over the past month now stands at approximately ₹25, placing immense pressure on thousands of auto-rickshaw drivers who rely on the fuel for their daily livelihood.

The sudden spike has triggered anxiety among transport operators and passengers alike. Auto drivers have made it clear that absorbing such a steep increase is no longer viable. Many have indicated that fare hikes are now unavoidable, with several routes already witnessing revised rates. Drivers operating on routes where fares had remained unchanged are now preparing to demand similar revisions, arguing that operational costs have surged beyond sustainable levels.

According to industry data, the current hike is part of a broader upward trend that began in March. On March 11, the price of auto LPG rose by ₹5, increasing from ₹57.68 per litre to ₹62.68. Later, on March 31, another hike of ₹7.32 pushed the price to ₹70 per litre. Wednesday's increase of ₹12.28 marks the steepest single revision in this cycle, bringing the cumulative monthly rise to nearly ₹25 per litre. The new rates came into effect immediately upon the issuance of the official directive.

Auto drivers across Kolkata have expressed frustration, stating that while fuel prices climb steadily, fare revisions are often delayed due to regulatory processes and public resistance. For many drivers, daily earnings are already strained by rising maintenance costs, loan repayments, and household expenses. They argue that without a proportional fare adjustment, sustaining operations becomes increasingly difficult. Several driver unions are expected to hold meetings to discuss coordinated action regarding fare revisions.

The impact of rising fuel prices is not limited to the transport sector. On the same day, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder was hiked by ₹218, taking the new cost to ₹2,208. The revised rate has also come into immediate effect. This marks yet another substantial increase in commercial cooking gas prices in 2026. At the start of the year, on January 1, commercial cylinder prices were raised by ₹111. A further ₹49 increase followed on February 1, and in early March, prices climbed by another ₹31. The latest hike continues this upward trajectory, compounding the financial strain on restaurants, small eateries, caterers and other commercial establishments.



Industry observers point to global fuel supply disruptions as a major contributing factor behind the persistent price escalation. Since February, geopolitical tensions and conflict in West Asia have disrupted energy markets worldwide, triggering supply constraints and price volatility. India, which relies heavily on energy imports, has not been immune to these developments. The ripple effects are now being felt across multiple sectors, from transportation to hospitality and household consumption.

For daily commuters in Kolkata, the prospect of higher auto fares adds to existing financial burdens. Autos serve as a critical last-mile connectivity option in the city, especially in areas not directly served by metro or bus routes. Even a marginal fare increase can significantly impact regular passengers, including office-goers, students and small traders who depend on affordable shared transport.

Restaurant owners and small business operators are also grappling with tough decisions. The sharp rise in commercial LPG prices may force eateries to reconsider menu pricing. Many small establishments operate on thin profit margins and struggle to pass on increased costs to customers without risking a drop in footfall. Some owners have indicated that further hikes may compel them to adjust food prices in the coming weeks.

The cascading effect of fuel price inflation underscores the delicate balance between global energy dynamics and local economic realities. While policymakers continue to monitor the situation, immediate relief appears uncertain. Fuel pricing remains closely tied to international benchmarks, and volatility in global markets often translates into domestic adjustments. As Kolkata navigates this latest surge in fuel costs, both transport operators and consumers find themselves in a difficult position.

ED Conducts Pre-Poll Raids in Kolkata: Businessman 'Sona Pappu' Under Scanner in Alleged Multi-Crore Construction Deal Probe

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 1 April : As officials of the Enforcement Directorate carried out search operations at multiple locations in Kolkata, including the residence of businessman Biswajit Poddar, popularly known as Sona Pappu, in the upscale Ballygunge area of South Kolkata.

The early morning raid at Sona Pappu's residence sent ripples across the city's political and business circles. Simultaneously, search operations were also conducted at several other premises linked to construction firms under scrutiny, including an office located on Ashwini Dutta Road. According to preliminary information from investigative sources, the action is part of an ongoing probe into alleged multi-crore illegal financial transactions involving certain construction companies and individuals associated with them.

Officials are reportedly examining documents, financial records and digital data to determine whether large sums of money were routed through dubious channels. Investigators are particularly focusing on whether any portion of the alleged funds was diverted to influential individuals. While the agency has not yet issued an official public statement detailing the exact nature of the case, sources indicate that the probe revolves around suspected irregularities in financial dealings linked to real estate and infrastructure operations.

Sona Pappu, known in business and political circles, has often been described as being close to leaders of the ruling Trinamool Congress. His name had recently surfaced in connection with a clash near Rabindra Sarobar, although no formal charges were publicly detailed in that instance. Wednesday's search operation has once again thrust him into the spotlight, particularly given the timing—just ahead of the state's crucial electoral battle.

The political undercurrents surrounding the raid have further deepened speculation. Notably, Ballygunge, the constituency where Sona Pappu resides, is represented by outgoing MLA and Trinamool Congress candidate Debasish Kumar, who was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate only days ago in connection with a separate investigation. The back-to-back actions have prompted questions within political circles about the broader implications of the agency's moves during the election season.

Reacting to the developments, Sona Pappu's legal counsel termed the raid politically motivated. Speaking to reporters, the lawyer stated that his client and his client's wife were not present at home when officials arrived. According to him, he learned about the incident from his client's wife, who returned to the residence while the search was underway. The counsel emphasized that his client has no pending land-related cases and claimed that the agency had not clearly communicated the specific grounds for the search at the time of his statement.He further alleged that his client was being repeatedly targeted due to political affiliations. Maintaining that the action amounted to harassment, the lawyer said they would respond appropriately once the Enforcement Directorate formally conveyed the details of the allegations or provided documentation outlining the basis of the investigation.

TMC Writes to Calcutta High Court Chief Justice, Seeks Wider Access to Voter List Tribunals Amid Mounting Deletions Before Bengal Election 2026

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 1 April : The Trinamool Congress has formally approached the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court with a series of proposals aimed at making the newly constituted tribunals more accessible and transparent. The developments come in the run-up to the crucial Bengal Election 2026, intensifying political and legal scrutiny over the voter verification process.

With names being struck off from the rolls following publication of supplementary lists, affected individuals have been advised by the Election Commission to approach designated tribunals for redress. These tribunals have been set up in accordance with directives from the Supreme Court of India to hear pending cases relating to voter eligibility across districts in the state. A notification has already been issued for the formation of 19 such tribunals to examine applications from those whose names are under dispute or have been deleted.

Against this backdrop, the Trinamool Congress has sought structural and procedural reforms to ensure that appellants are not denied practical access to justice. In its letter to the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, the party has requested that individuals be allowed to file appeals not only at a single centralized location but also physically at Block Development Office premises across districts. The proposal argues that limiting access to specific offices could create logistical hurdles, particularly for elderly and economically disadvantaged citizens residing in remote rural areas.

The party has further urged that applications should be accepted at District Magistrate and Sub-Divisional Officer offices in addition to BDO offices, thereby decentralizing the process and reducing administrative bottlenecks. While the option of online submission has been acknowledged, the Trinamool has stressed the immediate need for a parallel offline appeal mechanism. It has called for the prompt issuance of a notification enabling offline filing, warning that reliance solely on digital platforms may exclude a significant section of the population with limited internet access or digital literacy.

Among the key recommendations is the introduction of a structured system allowing appellants to choose between physical and virtual hearings before the tribunals. The party has suggested that applicants be formally notified of their hearing dates through clear and timely communication channels. It has also recommended that the online portal for filing appeals provide a dedicated option for uploading supporting documents, ensuring that applicants can attach relevant records without procedural ambiguity.

For those opting to file appeals in person, the Trinamool has proposed that a standardized form be prescribed, accompanied by a clear list of permissible supporting documents. The letter further emphasizes that appellants submitting applications physically should be issued official receipts acknowledging submission, thereby safeguarding them against future disputes over procedural compliance.

In addition, the party has appealed for daily publication of tribunal outcomes, particularly in light of the compressed timeline ahead of the Assembly polls. With the election schedule looming large, concerns have been raised about whether decisions on appeals will be delivered swiftly enough to enable eligible voters to participate in the democratic process. The Trinamool has argued that publishing outcomes on a daily basis would enhance transparency and reduce anxiety among affected citizens.

The supplementary voter list controversy has already assumed political significance, with allegations and counter-allegations being traded between parties over the integrity of the revision process. While the Election Commission maintains that the tribunal route provides a lawful and structured avenue for redress, the Trinamool's intervention seeks to ensure that procedural technicalities do not effectively disenfranchise voters.

Legal observers note that the Supreme Court's direction to establish tribunals was aimed at expediting the resolution of disputes while maintaining judicial oversight. However, the operational details of how citizens can access these forums remain critical. Administrative efficiency, technological accessibility and geographical reach will determine whether the mechanism functions as an effective safeguard or becomes another layer of complexity.

Houthis Claim 'Third Joint Missile Operation' Targeting Israel

Staff reporter, Gaza, 1 April : The Yemeni Armed Forces have announced the execution of their "third joint operation" in coordination with allied groups in Iran and Lebanon, targeting "sensitive sites" in "south of occupied Palestine."In a post on X, the official spokesperson of the Yemeni Armed Forces, Yahya Saree, said the operation involved cooperation with "Brother Mujahideen" in Iran and Hezbollah. The statement claimed that a salvo of ballistic missiles was launched at "sensitive sites of the Israeli enemy, south of occupied Palestine."

Meanwhile, according to the IDF's official Telegram channel, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Wednesday identified missiles launched from Iran towards Israel. According to the IDF, defensive systems were operating to intercept the threat. The Home Front Command had sent a precautionary directive directly to mobile phones in the relevant areas.

Earlier, on Sunday, Yemen's Houthis announced a "second military operation" targeting Israel in a significant escalation of the ongoing West Asia conflict, using a barrage of cruise missiles and drones against what it described as "vital and military sites" in southern occupied Palestine.

In a statement posted on Telegram, Yahya Saree, the Houthis' military spokesperson, said that the operation was launched as part of the "Holy Jihad Battle" and coincided with military actions by allied groups, including forces in Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. He added that the second operation "successfully achieved its objectives."

"Forces carried out the second military operation in the "Holy Jihad Battle" with a barrage of cruise missiles and drones targeting several vital and military sites belonging to the Zionist enemy in southern occupied Palestine. This operation coincided with the military operations being carried out by our mujahideen brothers in Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and, by the grace of Allah, it successfully achieved its objectives," the statement read. This came moments after the Iranian-backed group in Yemen officially joined the conflict in the region, earlier on Saturday.According to Iran's Tasnim News Agency, the Yemeni Armed Forces said the latest strike was conducted "in support of the resistance fronts" and marked their third such coordinated operation.

Russian Military Plane Crashes Into Crimean Mountains During Drill, All 29 Aboard Feared Dead Amid War-Time Tensions

Staff reporter, Moscow, 1 April : A Russian transport aircraft crashed into mountainous terrain in Crimea, killing all 29 people on board. The aircraft, identified as an Antonov An-26, went down shortly after takeoff during a scheduled training sortie, prompting immediate rescue operations and raising urgent questions in the midst of the ongoing war with Ukraine.

According to statements cited by Russian state news agency TASS, the aircraft had taken off with 29 personnel aboard as part of a routine drill organized by the Russian armed forces. However, within minutes of departure, communication with the aircraft was reportedly lost. Subsequent reports confirmed that the plane had collided with a mountain near Crimea and was completely destroyed in the crash.

Emergency response teams were swiftly dispatched to the crash site. Images and preliminary accounts described a scene of scattered debris across rugged terrain, complicating rescue and recovery efforts. Officials later confirmed that there were no survivors among the 29 individuals on board. The identities of the victims have not yet been officially disclosed, but they are believed to include military personnel participating in the exercise.

The aircraft involved in the crash was an Antonov An-26, a twin-engine turboprop transport plane widely used for both military and civilian purposes. Designed in the Soviet era, the An-26 first entered service in the late 1960s and has since been deployed for short- and medium-range transport missions, troop movement, cargo delivery, and training exercises. Capable of carrying up to 40 passengers along with freight, the aircraft has long been a workhorse in several countries' fleets.

Russian defense authorities have dismissed speculation that the crash may have been caused by hostile action. In the tense climate of the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, social media and some independent commentators were quick to question whether the aircraft might have been targeted. However, the Russian military has stated that preliminary findings point toward a technical malfunction rather than any external attack. Officials emphasized that a full investigation is underway and that the final cause will be determined after a thorough technical and forensic analysis.



The timing of the incident has inevitably amplified scrutiny. With the war between Russia and Ukraine continuing to shape regional security dynamics, any military accident is bound to draw intense attention. Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014 and remains a strategically significant region, has been at the center of military deployments and logistical operations. Although authorities insist that there is no evidence of sabotage or missile strikes in this case, the broader geopolitical backdrop has fueled widespread speculation.

The An-26 has been involved in several fatal accidents in recent years, underscoring concerns about aging military aircraft still in service. In 2020, an An-26 crashed near Kharkiv in Ukraine during a training flight, killing 28 people. The same year, another An-26 accident in South Sudan claimed eight lives. Reports indicate that another crash involving the aircraft type occurred in 2022. Aviation analysts have often pointed to maintenance challenges and the operational strain placed on older fleets as contributing factors in such incidents.

While the Russian military has stressed that the aircraft was undergoing a standard exercise, questions remain about maintenance protocols and fleet modernization. Many Soviet-era aircraft continue to serve due to their rugged design and reliability over decades of service, but experts argue that extended operational lifespans increase vulnerability to mechanical failure if upgrades and inspections are not meticulously maintained.

In its initial statement, the Russian Defense Ministry described the flight as a routine drill and confirmed that contact was lost shortly after takeoff. Investigators are expected to examine flight data recorders and maintenance logs to determine whether engine failure, navigational error, or another mechanical issue precipitated the crash. Weather conditions at the time of the incident have not yet been officially detailed, though mountainous terrain can present significant challenges even under normal circumstances.

As recovery operations continue in Crimea, the tragedy has cast a somber shadow over military operations in the region. Families of the victims are awaiting official confirmation and further information, while the armed forces confront yet another aviation disaster amid ongoing wartime pressures.



Today's Horoscope



ARIES : Career decisions and money matters will keep you busy today. And after all the work, you will want to spend some leisure time and take it easy. A leisure trip may materialise.



TAURUS : You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesha. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Job aspirants may look forward to belated success in interviews.



GEMINI : Your business rivals may compete with you in sales and deals today, warns Ganesha. Care and concern must be the two watchwords in all your dealings.



CANCER: Today, you may have to do a lot of multi-tasking at work, predicts Ganesha. And you are likely to do it with the dexterity of a juggler. You will finish your pending tasks with ease.

LEO : You will exercise your will today and will be in the mood to soar like a free bird today. You will not be in the mood to listen to anyone. Work related travel will be beneficial.

VIRGO: Today you need to carry on with your success without resting on your past laurels. You will also need to stay focused and organised to continue with the same success level that you enjoyed in the past.

LIBRA: If there's a knock on your door today, there's a very strong possibility it might be a marriage proposal. Don't get startled, and grab opportunities that come knocking (literally!).

SCORPIO: It seems, the book, 'How to win friends and influence people' has left a great impact on your mind, bringing about a lot of change in your practical life too.

SAGITTARIUS: Running helter-skelter and muddling of affairs is on the menu. Expect not to find even a moment's peace. But take a break, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN: Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, say Ganesha. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day.

AQUARIUS: Lady Luck gazes lovingly upon you today! Bosses are pleased, colleagues are happy, and this makes work seem like leisure. You may want to get in touch with old friends who have moved far away.

PIECES: You will have frequent mood swings today but you will still manage to fix a work related goal. Your mood will be better if you focus on work.



Bollywood actor Neha Sharma poses for photographs during the Grazia Fashion Awards 2026, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

A Bundle of Joy for the Ahujas: Sonam Kapoor and Anand Ahuja Welcome Their Second Son, Reha Shares First Glimpse

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 1 April: Bollywood actress Sonam Kapoor and entrepreneur Anand Ahuja, March 29 marked such a cherished moment as they welcomed their second child, a baby boy, into their lives. The joyous announcement sent social media into a frenzy, with congratulatory messages pouring in from fans, friends, and colleagues across the industry.Sonam Kapoor, known for her elegance and distinctive voice in fashion and cinema, shared the delightful news with heartfelt gratitude. Expressing her happiness, she revealed that she and Anand had once again been blessed with a son. In her message, she wrote about how their family had grown larger and even more vibrant with the little one's arrival. The couple's elder son, Vayu, she noted, was thrilled to welcome his younger brother into the world. With poetic warmth, Sonam reflected that this new chapter would allow the family of four to script yet another beautiful story together.

The announcement quickly became a trending topic, as admirers eagerly sought a glimpse of the newborn. The curiosity was only natural; celebrity babies often capture public imagination, and every detail becomes a subject of fascination. The first visual introduction, however, did not come directly from the proud parents but from Sonam's sister, producer and stylist Reha Kapoor. Reha shared an endearing photograph of her nephew resting peacefully in her arms. Wrapped snugly in a soft towel, the baby's face remained delicately shielded from the camera, preserving a sense of intimacy and privacy. Yet what could not be hidden was his thick head of hair, clearly visible and already sparking affectionate comments.In her caption, Reha poured out her affection, describing the newborn as the driving force behind his mother's kind heart and generous spirit. The sentiment resonated deeply with followers, who flooded the comments section with heart emojis and blessings. Industry peers joined in the celebration, offering warm wishes and expressing delight at the expanding Kapoor-Ahuja family.

What stands out in this moment is Sonam's decision to share the news and an early glimpse so soon after childbirth. In recent years, many celebrities have chosen to maintain strict privacy regarding their children, often keeping their faces hidden from public view for extended periods. From Anushka Sharma and Alia Bhatt to Kareena Kapoor Khan, several prominent actresses have opted to shield their newborns from immediate media exposure. Sonam's approach appears refreshingly open, though she has balanced transparency with discretion by not revealing her son's face.Motherhood has been a transformative journey for Sonam. Ever since welcoming Vayu, she has spoken candidly about the profound shift in priorities and emotions that comes with raising a child. The birth of her second son seems to have deepened that sense of fulfillment. Her message radiated gratitude and serenity, reflecting a woman embracing both her personal and professional identities with grace.

For Anand Ahuja, too, this marks another milestone in a life that seamlessly blends business acumen with a grounded family ethos. The couple, who tied the knot in a lavish yet heartfelt ceremony, have consistently demonstrated a partnership rooted in mutual respect and shared values. Their expanding family now symbolizes not just personal joy but also the continuity of a legacy steeped in creativity and entrepreneurship. The Kapoor household, long synonymous with cinematic heritage, has once again become the center of affectionate attention. Yet beyond the glitz lies a universal story of love and renewal. A newborn's arrival carries hope, promise, and the quiet wonder of new beginnings. For Sonam and Anand, it signifies a fuller home, laughter echoing in corridors, and the delicate responsibility of nurturing two young lives.The newest member of the Ahuja family has already captured countless hearts. Though his tiny face remains unseen, the warmth surrounding his birth speaks volumes. In the days to come, as the family settles into its new rhythm, fans will undoubtedly await more glimpses of this joyful chapter. For now, the simple image of a contented infant cradled in his aunt's arms is enough to remind everyone that even in the dazzling world of cinema.

'ICU' Becomes a Poignant Farewell: Actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee's Final Screen Appearance Turns Into a Lasting Legacy



Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 April: The upcoming film ICU carries a far deeper emotional weight. It now stands as the final cinematic appearance of actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee, lending the project an unforeseen poignancy. What was once a contemporary social drama has, in the wake of his untimely passing, transformed into a moving farewell — a final opportunity for audiences to witness his craft on the big screen. ICU revolves around a sharply relevant narrative. The story follows three young men who, in an attempt to escape the pressures and intimidation of their landlord, orchestrate a prank. What begins as a seemingly harmless act soon spirals beyond their control when the incident unexpectedly goes viral on social media. The narrative unfolds through a series of twists and consequences, turning the film into not just a piece of entertainment but also a cautionary tale about digital recklessness and the unpredictable power of online platforms. In an era where a single moment can define reputations and destinies, the film's premise feels particularly timely. Yet beyond its storyline, it is Rahul's presence that now defines the film's significance. Director Souvik Dey spoke with visible emotion about the late actor, describing him as far more than a performer on set. According to Dey, Rahul was the heartbeat of the unit — a source of energy, warmth, and relentless dedication. Every scene he inhabited carried depth and sincerity, elevating not only his own performance but also inspiring those around him. The director emphasized that while Rahul is no longer physically present, his essence will resonate in every frame of ICU. Colleagues remain stunned by the suddenness of his passing. Only days before, they had been sharing conversations, creative discussions, and laughter with him. The disbelief lingers heavily. For many within the industry, Rahul was not just a co-actor but a companion in artistic struggle — a guide, a collaborator, and a dependable friend. His presence on set was synonymous with a distinct vibrancy that uplifted the entire crew. That energy, they say, is impossible to replicate. An especially haunting memory now surrounds the film's dubbing sessions. During one such recording, Rahul had reportedly joked, "This might be my last film…" At the time, those words were brushed aside as lighthearted humor. No one imagined that the remark would one day echo with chilling accuracy. Today, that offhand comment has taken on an almost prophetic tone, deepening the sorrow felt by all who worked alongside him. What was once laughter has become a bittersweet recollection. Scriptwriter Abhishek Bhattacharya's narrative gains an added layer of meaning in this context. Rahul's portrayal in ICU is expected to leave a lasting impression, not only because of the character's arc but because it represents the culmination of his artistic journey. The film inadvertently becomes a document of remembrance, preserving his talent and dedication for audiences to revisit time and again. Rahul Arunoday Banerjee carved a niche for himself through his nuanced performances and understated charisma. He approached his roles with an authenticity that resonated with viewers, often bringing quiet intensity to characters that lingered long after the credits rolled. His final performance in ICU is poised to be viewed not merely as another entry in his filmography but as a tribute to a life devoted to storytelling. Mourning for the artist whose journey ended too soon, and celebration of the legacy he leaves behind. Cinema has the unique power to immortalize those who pass, allowing their expressions, voices, and emotions to endure. In that sense, ICU transcends its narrative framework and becomes a vessel of memory.

Actor Rajkummar Rao Reveals Title Of Sourav Ganguly Biopic



Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 1 April: Rajkummar Rao is all set to play Sourav Ganguly in an upcoming biopic on the former Indian captain. The actor took to Instagram earlier today to announce that filming has officially begun. Sharing an Instagram carousel, the first picture revealed the title of the film, "And it begins... The one and only #DADA." The first picture featured a clapboard with the film's title - Dada The Sourav Ganguly Story.<Vikramaditya Motwane also shared a picture of the "Sourav Ganguly Stand" at Eden Gardens, Kolkata. The actor admitted to being "extremely nervous" about the role, but is equally excited about the challenge. "I am nervous... It's a huge responsibility, but it's going to be a lot of fun," he said. To the fans' delight, Rajkummar Rao even showed off his Bengali speaking skills during the interview. It is a language he has picked up over the years thanks to his wife, actor Patralekhaa, who is Bengali. Rajkummar Rao is also confident about getting the Bengali accent right on screen, he added. Sourav Ganguly, one of India's most successful cricket captains, recently endorsed Rajkummar Rao's casting in his biopic. "I think the right person is doing it... I'll help him with everything," Ganguly said. The former skipper, who played for India between 1992 and 2008, revealed that the film will go on floors in January 2026 and is slated for a theatrical release in December the same year. Sourav Ganguly also stated, "Rajkummar has been locked for the film. I don't think anyone else can play me better than him." The former India captain is closely involved in the creative process of the biopic, which will chronicle his journey from Kolkata's streets to the higher echelon of Indian cricket. Rajkummar Rao has sparked widespread discussion online with a new look featured in a viral video. His hairstyle, tinted glasses, and beard-moustache combination quickly became the focus of attention, with social media users debating whether the transformation was for his rumoured role as former India captain Sourav Ganguly or due to hair loss. Addressing the speculation, the actor issued a clarification, confirming the look is for his upcoming biopic, Nikam. While a large section of the internet assumed the appearance was for the Sourav Ganguly film, Rao said he will begin preparing for that project after completing Nikam. About The Viral Video In the viral video, Rajkummar is seen posing for photographers at an event, later joined by filmmaker Farah Khan and casting director Mukesh Chhabra.

From Screen Romance to Real-Life Rumours: Saurav Chakraborty Opens Up on Love, Marriage and His Bond with Shubhashmita Mukherjee



Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 1 April: Bengali actor Saurav Chakraborty, who has returned to the small screen with renewed energy in the popular serial Lakshmi Jhanpi, now finds himself at the center of such intrigue. Paired opposite Shubhashmita Mukherjee, Saurav's portrayal of Deep has struck a chord with audiences, and their pairing has become one of the most talked-about elements of the show. But beyond the scripted romance, whispers of a possible real-life closeness have added a fresh layer of fascination to their story. Saurav, who began his career as an actor but has long nurtured a passion for storytelling, has also sharpened his skills behind the camera as a director. His creative versatility has earned him admiration within the industry. Yet it is his return to acting in Lakshmi Jhanpi that has reignited public attention. The character of Deep has resonated strongly with viewers, and the emotional arcs shared with Shubhashmita's character have become a highlight of the series. Social media is flooded with fan edits, romantic montages, and speculative posts about the duo's equation. When asked whether the show has brought changes in his personal life, Saurav responded with a smile rather than a direct answer. The laughter, however, has only fueled further curiosity. The buzz surrounding his personal life is not entirely new. Once upon a time, his relationship with actress Madhumita Sarkar was among the most discussed topics in Tollywood. Their marriage and eventual separation had drawn considerable public attention. While both have since moved forward in their own ways, Madhumita recently embarked on a new chapter in her life, prompting renewed interest in Saurav's own future plans. Despite the end of his marriage, Saurav has never expressed cynicism about the institution itself. On the contrary, he maintains that marriage remains "a sweet thing." His faith in companionship appears undiminished, even if he is in no hurry to take that step again. This has inevitably led to questions about whether the actor is preparing for a new beginning alongside his current co-star. Addressing the rumours directly, Saurav clarified that he and Shubhashmita share a strong friendship built on mutual understanding. He acknowledged that social media has been abuzz with speculation but emphasized that their bond is rooted in professional respect and camaraderie. According to him, the enthusiasm surrounding the pairing of Deep and Jhanpi has encouraged viewers to imagine a continuation of that romance beyond the screen. He even joked that fans have gone so far as to fix their wedding date and determine an auspicious time for the ceremony. What perhaps adds to their popularity is the natural ease they share while performing. Saurav admitted that he and Shubhashmita "fight very well," though he was quick to describe those disagreements as constructive. Their ability to challenge each other creatively, he suggested, strengthens their performances. The audience's appreciation for their romantic scenes has further intensified the buzz, transforming an on-screen partnership into a subject of widespread gossip. When pressed about his own marriage plans, Saurav offered a candid response. There are no immediate plans, he said, though he did not entirely rule out the possibility in the future. With characteristic humor, he remarked that if he does decide to marry, he would not do so secretly. "I will marry proudly, with my head held high," he declared, dismissing the idea of a hidden ceremony. The statement reflected both confidence and clarity, suggesting that he is comfortable addressing personal questions without allowing them to overshadow his professional commitments.

From Silver Screen Sovereign to Political Powerhouse: Thalapathy Vijay's 400+ Crore Wealth Revealed Ahead of 2026 Tamil Nadu Polls

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 1 April: Thalapathy Vijay, one of Tamil cinema's most influential and bankable actors, has now entered the fray ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. With his nomination papers officially submitted, the affidavit detailing his financial standing has sparked intense public interest, placing him among the wealthiest actor-politicians in India. According to the disclosures made in his election affidavit, Vijay's financial portfolio reflects not only cinematic success but also astute financial planning. His declared movable assets stand at an impressive ₹404.58 crore. For the financial year 2024–25 alone, he reported earnings of approximately ₹184 crore, a figure that underscores his enduring dominance at the box office and his brand value across endorsements and business ventures. Interestingly, despite commanding such enormous wealth, Vijay reportedly holds only ₹2 lakh in cash. The bulk of his liquidity is secured in various bank accounts, where deposits total nearly ₹320 crore. The numbers provide a glimpse into the financial discipline maintained by the actor, whose career spans decades of consistent commercial triumphs. The affidavit also sheds light on his family's financial details. His two children, Jason Sanjay and Divya Sashaa, collectively hold approximately ₹4 lakh in their bank accounts. His wife, Sangeeta Sornalingam, has deposits amounting to nearly ₹10.43 crore in her accounts. Beyond savings and income, the declaration also highlights Vijay's role as a lender within his personal and professional circles. He has reportedly extended loans totaling around ₹76 crore, with beneficiaries including his father S. A. Chandrasekhar, his mother Shoba Chandrasekhar, his wife, and even his children. The revelation paints a portrait of a closely knit family structure intertwined with significant financial transactions. Vijay's wealth is not confined to liquid assets alone. His immovable property portfolio is equally striking. He owns multiple residential properties across prime locations in Tamil Nadu. Areas such as Neelankarai, Uthandi, Mylapore, Pallipattu, Padur, Koratтur, Saligramam, and Sholinganallur feature prominently in his holdings. Many of these localities are considered highly desirable, reflecting not just affluence but strategic investment in real estate. These properties further cement his position as one of the state's most financially powerful public figures. Adding to the family's asset base are Sangeeta's personal holdings of gold, silver, and diamond jewellery, collectively valued at approximately ₹15.51 crore. Such disclosures, mandated as part of the electoral process, offer voters transparency into the economic standing of candidates vying for public office. In Vijay's case, the figures reinforce the scale of success he has achieved in cinema before transitioning into politics. The timing of these revelations is significant. Tamil Nadu has a storied history of film stars turning into political heavyweights, and comparisons are inevitable. Vijay's entry into politics has already stirred conversations about whether his immense popularity can translate into electoral success. His films have often carried subtle social messages, and his public speeches in recent years hinted at a growing political inclination. Now, with his candidature formalized, speculation has given way to concrete action. Observers note that Vijay's financial transparency may work in his favor, portraying him as a candidate with nothing to conceal. At the same time, critics argue that immense personal wealth raises questions about the dynamics between celebrity influence and grassroots politics. Regardless of perspective, there is little doubt that his presence has electrified the political landscape ahead of 2026. For millions of fans, Vijay remains the charismatic "Thalapathy," a leader on screen who fought injustice and championed the underdog. Whether that cinematic persona can seamlessly evolve into political leadership will become clearer as the campaign unfolds. What is already evident, however, is that his entry has altered the contours of the upcoming election. Vijay's financial disclosures have added a compelling dimension to the narrative. From commanding staggering remuneration in the film industry to declaring assets worth over ₹400 crore, his journey reflects the merging of celebrity power and political ambition. The coming months will reveal whether the superstar's wealth, popularity, and carefully cultivated public image can reshape Tamil Nadu's political future or whether the arena of governance will prove to be his most challenging role yet.

A Love Beyond Time: The Tragic Devotion of Kishore Kumar and Madhubala Still Moves Hearts 57 Years Later

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 1 April: Bollywood has witnessed countless tales of passion, heartbreak, and sacrifice, yet few stories resonate with the quiet intensity of the bond shared between Kishore Kumar and Madhubala. Decades after her untimely death, their relationship continues to stir deep emotion, standing as one of Hindi cinema's most poignant chapters. It was not merely a romance between two celebrated stars; it was a story defined by courage, commitment, and an unwavering presence in the face of inevitable loss. Madhubala, often remembered as one of the most breathtakingly beautiful actresses in Indian film history, captivated audiences with her luminous screen presence and effortless charm. Her portrayal of Anarkali in Mughal-e-Azam remains etched in cinematic memory, a testament to her grace and talent. With more than seventy films to her credit, she rose swiftly to become one of the industry's brightest stars. Yet behind the glittering façade of fame lay a fragile reality. Madhubala was born with a congenital heart condition, a serious ailment that doctors knew would limit her life expectancy. Kishore Kumar, already carving his path as a versatile artist—actor, singer, composer, and producer—entered her life knowing this harsh truth. In an interview years later, he reflected on the painful clarity with which he understood her condition even before their marriage. He was fully aware that she was gravely ill and that her time was limited. Still, he chose to honor his promise and marry her, embracing not just the joy of companionship but the certainty of impending sorrow. Their marriage was not a fairy tale of carefree romance. It was marked by hospital visits, prolonged treatments, and the slow, heartbreaking progression of illness. For nearly nine years, Kishore Kumar stood by Madhubala's side, tending to her needs with unwavering dedication. He once shared how difficult it was to reconcile the image of the vivacious, spirited woman he loved with the reality of her being confined to a bed for years. Madhubala was known for her lively personality, her laughter lighting up sets and homes alike. To see such a vibrant soul gradually weakened by illness was a trial that demanded immense emotional strength. Doctors had advised that she be kept cheerful at all costs, believing that happiness might ease her suffering. Kishore Kumar took that counsel to heart. He tried constantly to make her smile, to create moments of levity amid the shadows of uncertainty. There were days when he laughed with her, sharing lighthearted banter and reminiscing about better times. On other days, he wept quietly alongside her, acknowledging the depth of their shared pain. Through every stage of her illness, he remained present, refusing to allow despair to erode his commitment.

Madhubala's life ended tragically at the age of just thirty-six, cutting short a career that had dazzled millions and a marriage that had endured extraordinary challenges. Her passing left an irreplaceable void in the industry and in the heart of the man who had chosen to love her against all odds. For Kishore Kumar, who would go on to become one of the most iconic voices in Indian music, the chapter with Madhubala remained deeply personal and profoundly transformative. What makes their story endure is not merely the celebrity aura surrounding their names, but the universal themes it embodies. Love, in its truest sense, is often tested not in moments of joy but in times of suffering. Kishore Kumar's decision to marry Madhubala despite knowing the fragility of her health reflects a rare depth of devotion. It was a choice rooted not in illusion but in acceptance—a willingness to embrace both happiness and heartbreak as part of the same journey. In an industry often associated with glamour and fleeting relationships, their bond stands apart as a testament to steadfast loyalty. Even as the world admired Madhubala's radiant beauty and Kishore Kumar's unmatched musical genius, few could fully grasp the quiet battles they fought away from the arc lights. Theirs was a love story lived largely behind closed doors, where applause was replaced by whispered prayers and enduring companionship.

Editorial

Exit Without Accord

President Donald Trump has now signaled that the United States could wind down its military campaign against Iran within two to three weeks. Standing at the White House, he declared that America would be "out of there very soon," suggesting that a rapid disengagement is imminent. More notably, he implied that such a withdrawal would not require any formal agreement with Tehran. In the volatile grammar of geopolitics, such a statement carries immense weight. It hints not merely at de-escalation but at a unilateral pivot—an exit without accord. For weeks, the administration projected resolve, insisting that its objective was to cripple Iran's capacity to rebuild its nuclear program. The President's own language was stark: Iran, he said, must be pushed back to the "Stone Age" to ensure it cannot easily regain the strength to pursue nuclear weapons. That framing suggested an uncompromising campaign, one anchored in deterrence through overwhelming force. Yet the current tone is more ambiguous. A timeline has been introduced, and the insistence on a negotiated settlement appears to have softened. The suggestion that the United States may leave without a formal deal marks a significant recalibration.This shift has naturally triggered debate. If Washington withdraws without extracting binding commitments, critics will interpret it as retreat. They will argue that military leverage was squandered and that Tehran, having endured the onslaught, will emerge emboldened. On the other hand, supporters may contend that the administration achieved its strategic aims—damaging Iran's capabilities sufficiently—while avoiding a protracted entanglement. In modern warfare, victory is seldom defined solely by territory gained or lost; it is increasingly measured by political messaging and domestic optics. Complicating matters further is the President's recent assertion that Iran had agreed to most of a 15-point American proposal. According to his account, negotiations were progressing briskly, even if uncertainty remained. Tehran, however, has categorically denied that any such talks have taken place. Iranian officials insist there has been no direct negotiation with Washington, though they acknowledge that messages have been conveyed through intermediaries, including Pakistan. This stark divergence in narratives underscores the fog of diplomacy that now envelops the conflict. One side speaks of near-consensus; the other dismisses the claim outright. In this atmosphere of contradiction, the President's suggestion of an imminent exit raises profound questions. If talks have not formally occurred, what exactly underpins the proposed withdrawal? Is it confidence that Iran's military infrastructure has been sufficiently degraded? Is it domestic political calculation as electoral considerations loom? Or is it a tacit recognition that extended confrontation risks destabilizing an already fragile region? Each possibility carries its own implications for American credibility and for the balance of power in the Middle East. Wars in this region rarely conclude neatly. They tend to taper off, leaving behind unresolved grievances and simmering tensions. A unilateral withdrawal, even if framed as strategic prudence, may create a vacuum. Regional actors, from Gulf states to Israel, will scrutinize Washington's resolve. Allies accustomed to American security guarantees may wonder whether steadfastness can be relied upon. Conversely, adversaries may interpret the move as evidence that sustained resistance can outlast American patience. At the same time, there is a countervailing argument that endless military engagement serves no one. After decades of interventions, the American public has grown wary of open-ended commitments. The financial and human costs of prolonged conflict have reshaped domestic opinion. In that sense, a swift disengagement could be seen as an acknowledgment of geopolitical fatigue. It reflects an understanding that military force, while potent, cannot alone secure durable political outcomes. If the administration believes its objectives have been met, withdrawing before the conflict ossifies into another long war may be strategically defensible. Yet the rhetoric surrounding the campaign complicates this narrative. To speak of reducing a nation to the "Stone Age" is to invoke maximalist ambition. S uch language sets expectations of decisive transformation. Should the United States depart without a formal settlement or verifiable commitments, critics will inevitably question whether those ambitions were rhetorical flourish rather than achievable policy. The contrast between fiery declarations and pragmatic exit could erode the administration's moral authority on the global stage.

When Democracy's Machinery Fails the Marginalized



The latest exercise in West Bengal has thrown the state into turbulence, revealing the fragile balance between procedural rigor and social justice. Initially, some sixty lakh names were excluded from the voter list, prompting the Election Commission to introduce the concept of "logical discrepancies." This rule, intended to ensure accuracy, has suddenly placed another sixty lakh voters under scrutiny, bringing the total number of potentially affected citizens to a staggering figure. Judicial oversight now governs the fate of these names, as various courts, under Supreme Court guidance, deliberate over each disputed entry. Preliminary indications suggest that nearly half of these challenged names may ultimately be removed, leaving West Bengal with just under seven crore eligible voters and excluding roughly ninety lakh people—approximately 12 to 13 percent of the total electorate.Across the country, a similar pattern emerges. While logical discrepancies have led to the removal of names in many states, the final lists for West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh remain pending. In contrast, nine other states and union territories have completed the process, including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Puducherry, and Lakshadweep. Collectively, these areas have witnessed the removal of roughly 1.7 crore names, representing about eight percent of registered voters. Gujarat alone saw the names of 68 lakh individuals excluded, leaving a voter list of approximately 4.5 crore, meaning around 15 percent of registered voters were dropped from the rolls. In Uttar Pradesh, where the final list has yet to be released, notices have already been sent to nearly three crore individuals. When the nation's final electoral rolls are compiled, the data will likely reveal that between 10 and 15 percent of voters nationwide may have been removed—a figure that raises significant concerns about representation. The question inevitably arises: who are these disenfranchised citizens? The answer is rarely neutral. Perspectives vary sharply along political lines. Critics of the ruling party argue that the excluded names disproportionately belong to its opponents, implying a deliberate attempt to suppress dissenting voices. Conversely, supporters of the party assert that the removed individuals are largely illegal immigrants, suggesting that the exercise safeguards electoral integrity. These interpretations often depend less on evidence than on political affiliation. Yet, if one examines the figures more closely, such sweeping assumptions collapse. States like Gujarat, under BJP governance, have experienced substantial exclusions, implying that no simple narrative of political targeting or mass migration fully accounts for the phenomenon. Definitive data remains elusive, leaving the debate mired in conjecture and partisan rhetoric.

It is here that a third perspective demands attention—one that sidesteps political bias entirely. Suppose neither theory holds true: that there are no vast numbers of immigrants and no targeted political exclusions. Suppose the system is purely procedural, relying solely on the verification of a limited set of official documents. Even under this neutral framework, serious inequities emerge. The most vulnerable populations—those living hand-to-mouth, migrating for work, residing in temporary shelters, or struggling after floods and other disasters—are least able to comply with document-based verification. Long-time citizens, many known personally to their communities, suddenly find themselves excluded because they cannot present the required paperwork. In this mechanical process, the poor bear the brunt.

The implications are profound. While urban, educated, and affluent classes may view this as a mere technicality or even a positive move to "clean up" the voter rolls, the consequences for marginalized communities are far more serious. In everyday conversations within educated circles, a familiar narrative emerges: the votes of the poor and uneducated are often seen as equivalent in value to those of the middle class, but less "disciplined" or "informed." This critique, though rooted in concern for electoral quality, paradoxically underestimates the true significance of universal suffrage. Indian democracy, by design, seeks to empower the socially and economically disadvantaged, granting them a voice that is often neglected elsewhere in the world. Historical comparisons illustrate the stakes vividly. In the United States, for instance, the expansion of suffrage was a slow and contested process. Despite constitutional amendments guaranteeing voting rights to Black Americans in 1870 and women in 1920, systematic barriers, ranging from literacy tests to grandfather clauses, excluded millions in practice. Even in the most democratic regions of North America, political power remained concentrated among property-owning elites for decades. By contrast, India granted universal adult suffrage from its very first election—a bold and historic choice that continues to distinguish its democracy globally.

Even amid poverty, illiteracy, and logistical challenges, India has maintained a system where every citizen, irrespective of wealth or education, is empowered to vote. The nation's commitment to this principle, sustained through multiple crises, remains a remarkable achievement. Yet the ongoing "intensive revision" exposes the fragility of this hard-won inclusivity. Mechanical procedures designed to ensure precision inadvertently marginalize precisely those who rely on democratic processes the most. Early data suggests that women are disproportionately affected, reflecting broader social vulnerabilities. Other marginalized groups, similarly constrained by poverty or displacement, are likely experiencing comparable exclusion. While rigorous verification is an administrative necessity, its current implementation risks undermining the very ethos of democracy: government by the people, for the people, and of the people.

India's democratic framework has always balanced procedural integrity with inclusivity, but the current exercise raises pressing questions. How can the state ensure accurate electoral rolls without disenfranchising the most vulnerable? How can mechanisms of oversight account for social realities rather than treating all citizens as interchangeable data points? The answers are neither simple nor partisan; they require a nuanced understanding of law, society, and the lived experience of India's marginalized.

The machinery of democracy, for all its sophistication, has failed its central purpose. Electoral rolls may be precise, logical, and meticulously maintained, but without inclusivity, they risk becoming instruments of exclusion rather than empowerment.

India's democratic triumph lies in its universality, and preserving that universality demands vigilance, empathy, and a willingness to see beyond mere statistics.

Ballots, Forms and the Battle for Trust

Form 6. The form, used for inclusion of names in the electoral roll, has now become the focal point of a larger confrontation over transparency, legality and institutional trust. For the second consecutive day, supporters of the ruling Trinamool Congress gathered outside the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Kolkata, alleging irregularities in the submission of large numbers of Form 6 applications even after the publication of the final voter list. Simultaneously, the matter reached the Supreme Court, where the state government formally raised concerns during the hearing of the ongoing SIR case.In court, the state's counsel questioned how bundles of fresh Form 6 applications were being submitted when the final electoral roll had already been published and disputed names were still under adjudication. The implication was serious: that procedural sanctity might be compromised by the late influx of applications. The Election Commission, however, reportedly countered the claim with its own legal reasoning, maintaining that due process was being followed. The Chief Justice advised the state to approach the appropriate authority if it had specific grievances, and the hearing was adjourned, with the next date set for April 6.

At first glance, this episode may appear to be a procedural tussle between a state government and the Election Commission. Yet its resonance is far deeper. Electoral rolls are not mere lists of names; they are the living register of democracy. Each inclusion or exclusion shapes the legitimacy of the ballot. When questions arise about the timing, volume, or scrutiny of applications, the issue transcends party rivalry. It touches upon the very foundation of electoral credibility.

Form 6 is, in principle, an instrument of enfranchisement. It allows eligible citizens to assert their right to vote. In a country as vast and mobile as India, with internal migration, urban expansion and shifting demographics, the process of updating voter rolls is continuous and complex. Administrative flexibility is often necessary to ensure that genuine voters are not left out. At the same time, such flexibility must be balanced by clear deadlines and transparent oversight, particularly once a final roll has been declared. The perception that procedures are being bent or hurried risks undermining public confidence, even if the actions themselves are technically lawful.

The optics of bundles of applications being submitted after final publication feed into a broader climate of suspicion that has characterized recent electoral debates. Across political divides, allegations of voter suppression, duplicate entries, or selective inclusion have become routine. In such an atmosphere, institutions must not only act impartially but also be seen to act impartially. The Election Commission, long regarded as one of India's most robust constitutional bodies, now operates under intense scrutiny. Every procedural choice is parsed for political intent.



Equally significant is the role of the judiciary. By hearing the SIR-related arguments and directing the state to approach the proper authority, the Supreme Court has signaled both vigilance and restraint. Courts cannot administer elections, but they serve as arbiters when constitutional principles are questioned. The upcoming hearing on April 6 will therefore carry symbolic weight, even if the immediate issue concerns technical compliance. Judicial oversight, when invoked, reinforces the notion that electoral integrity is not negotiable.

Yet beyond legal exchanges and street mobilization lies a more profound challenge: restoring trust. In modern democracies, mistrust can spread faster than facts. The closing note urging readers to verify information before believing online claims reflects a reality of our digital age. Misinformation thrives in moments of uncertainty, amplifying doubts and polarizing discourse. When electoral processes become contested terrain, rumor and rhetoric often outpace verification. Responsible journalism and institutional transparency are thus indispensable allies of democracy.Political parties, too, bear responsibility. While vigilance against irregularities is legitimate, turning every procedural dispute into a spectacle risks eroding faith in the very system that sustains representative government. Democratic competition must not devolve into a narrative that delegitimizes outcomes before ballots are cast. At the same time, complacency is not an option. Robust scrutiny is essential to prevent manipulation. The line between necessary vigilance and destructive suspicion is thin, but it must be carefully maintained.

The deeper lesson of the Form 6 controversy is that electoral administration is as much about perception as procedure. Deadlines, verification standards, and appeals processes must be communicated clearly to all stakeholders. If new applications are legally permissible at a certain stage, the rationale must be explained openly. If they are not, enforcement must be swift and visible. Transparency is the antidote to distrust.

West Bengal's political history is marked by intense competition and passionate participation. Such vibrancy is a strength, but it also demands mature institutional conduct. The gathering outside the CEO's office, the courtroom arguments, and the ongoing hearings illustrate a democracy in motion. Yet democracy's vitality depends not merely on activity but on fairness and clarity.

As the next hearing approaches, the focus should remain on safeguarding the credibility of the electoral roll. The right to vote is both individual and collective; it embodies citizenship itself. When disputes arise, they must be resolved through reasoned dialogue and lawful adjudication, not through insinuation or haste. The integrity of the ballot cannot be compromised by administrative ambiguity or political brinkmanship.

The Silent Reversal of Trans Rights in India



The Indian Parliament passed the Transgender Rights Protection (Amendment) Act with remarkable speed. From its introduction on March 13 to its passage in the Lok Sabha on March 24 and the Rajya Sabha on March 25, the bill moved through the legislative process in just under two weeks. For a piece of legislation that directly shapes the lives and identities of thousands, this pace left almost no room for debate, consultation, or reflection. There was no opportunity for standing committees to examine the bill, as is customary for socially transformative laws. Even when opposition parties demanded scrutiny, the government declined. Crucially, no transgender parliamentarians were present to offer their perspective, and the National Transgender Council and community representatives repeatedly emphasized that their voices had not been sought. The government argued that the bill was necessary to define "transgender" precisely, identify the "right beneficiaries" of state support, and prevent the feared possibility of coercive gender transformation. Yet the underlying logic of the law reveals more about control than protection. The very phrasing of the bill repeatedly invokes the specter of "fake trans people" or coerced conversion, as if transgender identity could be manufactured by someone other than the person experiencing it. This approach fundamentally misunderstands what being transgender means. Gender identity is a deeply personal consciousness; it emerges often in adolescence, independent of surgical interventions or medical procedures. Forcing a cisgender person—someone comfortable in their assigned sex—into a transgender category would constitute violence, not recognition. Indian law already provides robust protections against such abuse. Nevertheless, the bill implicitly conflates fear of misuse with regulation of legitimacy, making state certification the gatekeeper of identity.

The 2014 Supreme Court landmark NALSA judgment had made clear that transgender individuals have the right to self-identify, affirming that gender identity is not contingent upon medical validation or surgery.

The court recognized that constitutional rights to dignity and privacy under Article 21 demand respect for a person's self-perceived gender. Yet the 2026 amendment walks a very different path. It mandates approval from medical boards and district authorities, effectively transferring autonomy over identity from the individual to bureaucratic and medical hierarchies. In practice, this means the state determines whose body is "trans," converting a matter of personal consciousness into a bureaucratic procedure. Historical parallels highlight the regressive nature of this approach. England's 1967 Corbett v. Corbett decision denied the self-recognition of transgender women, and only in the twenty-first century has this been widely seen as a historical injustice. Birth-assigned sex, determined by doctors, does not capture the complex interplay of biology, identity, and social reality. Across the globe, the distinction between "sex" and "gender" is now well-established, with decades of feminist and queer scholarship emphasizing that identity cannot be reduced to chromosomes or genitalia. India, with its rich history of diverse gender expressions, has long recognized forms beyond binary male-female categories, from hijras to kinnars, yet contemporary legislation has chosen to anchor recognition in narrow, state-approved categories.

Centre Caps Jet Fuel Price Surge for Domestic Airlines; IndiGo and SpiceJet Welcome Relief Amid Cost Pressures



The Centre has stepped in to limit the steep rise in jet fuel prices for domestic airlines, offering much-needed breathing space to carriers grappling with mounting operational costs. The move, which comes amid global volatility in energy markets, has been welcomed by leading airlines including IndiGo and SpiceJet, both of which described the decision as timely and crucial for maintaining fare stability. Aviation Turbine Fuel, commonly known as ATF, constitutes one of the largest components of an airline's operating expenses, often accounting for nearly 40 to 50 per cent of total costs. Over the past several months, global crude oil fluctuations and supply chain disruptions have triggered repeated hikes in fuel prices, placing airlines under severe financial strain. Industry observers had warned that unchecked increases could translate into higher ticket prices, reduced route frequency, and potential capacity cuts. Against this backdrop, the Centre's decision to impose a ceiling on the recent spike in jet fuel prices is being viewed as a strategic measure to shield both airlines and passengers from the cascading impact of global energy instability. Officials indicated that the calibrated approach seeks to balance the interests of oil marketing companies with the need to ensure the financial sustainability of domestic carriers. India's largest airline, IndiGo, operated by InterGlobe Aviation, expressed appreciation for the government's intervention. In a statement, the airline noted that fuel price stability is essential for long-term route planning and fare management. IndiGo, which commands a substantial share of the domestic market, has been aggressively expanding its network and fleet, and sustained fuel volatility could have complicated its growth trajectory. SpiceJet, another prominent player in India's aviation landscape, also welcomed the move. The airline emphasised that rationalising ATF prices would help maintain affordable fares for passengers while supporting the recovery of the aviation sector, which has been navigating a challenging financial environment in recent years. Industry insiders suggest that smaller carriers and regional operators stand to benefit significantly from the cap, as they often operate on thinner margins compared to larger airlines. The decision comes at a time when passenger traffic in India is witnessing steady growth, driven by rising demand for both business and leisure travel. Airports across major metros and tier-two cities have reported increased footfall, signalling a robust rebound in air travel. However, industry experts caution that sustained profitability remains fragile, particularly when fuel costs remain unpredictable.

Jet fuel pricing in India has historically been influenced by international crude oil benchmarks as well as state-level taxes. While airlines have repeatedly sought inclusion of ATF under the Goods and Services Tax regime to rationalise pricing, the matter remains under consideration. In the absence of structural tax reforms, periodic price adjustments have often left carriers vulnerable to abrupt cost escalations. The Centre's latest move is seen as an attempt to prevent a domino effect on ticket pricing. Aviation analysts argue that had the fuel hike been passed on entirely to consumers, airfare could have surged sharply during peak travel seasons. Such increases might have dampened demand and slowed the sector's recovery momentum. By moderating the hike, policymakers appear keen to preserve demand elasticity while ensuring airlines can manage their balance sheets more effectively.
Passengers, too, stand to benefit indirectly from the decision. With airlines spared from an immediate and steep fuel burden, the likelihood of sudden fare spikes diminishes. Travel industry stakeholders believe that fare stability is crucial to sustaining tourism growth, especially with the upcoming festive and holiday travel cycles expected to generate strong booking volumes.
As one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world, India's airlines operate in a competitive environment where cost discipline and pricing agility are vital. Fuel remains the single most volatile expense, and even marginal fluctuations can significantly impact quarterly earnings.

GST Collections Surge 8.8% to Cross ₹2 Lakh Crore in March, Signalling Strong Economic Momentum



India's Goods and Services Tax collections recorded a robust surge in March, rising 8.8 per cent year-on-year to cross the significant milestone of ₹2 lakh crore, reinforcing optimism about the country's economic resilience and fiscal strength. The latest figures underline sustained momentum in consumption, improved compliance measures, and steady growth across sectors as the financial year draws to a close. March is traditionally one of the strongest months for GST revenues due to year-end reconciliations and settlement of pending tax liabilities by businesses. However, the scale of this increase has drawn particular attention from policymakers and analysts alike. Crossing the ₹2 lakh crore mark once again not only reflects buoyant domestic demand but also highlights structural improvements in tax administration and digital monitoring systems.

Officials attribute the growth to multiple factors, including enhanced compliance through stricter enforcement, widespread adoption of e-invoicing, and advanced data analytics that have reduced tax evasion. Over the past few years, the government has strengthened its monitoring mechanisms, enabling authorities to track discrepancies more efficiently and plug revenue leakages. The integration of technology into the GST ecosystem has played a crucial role in broadening the tax base and improving transparency.

Economists note that the steady rise in GST collections indicates healthy economic activity across manufacturing, services, and trade. Increased consumption in urban centres, combined with resilient rural demand, has contributed to higher indirect tax inflows. The services sector, particularly hospitality, aviation, telecommunications, and financial services, has shown sustained growth, adding to the overall tax kitty.

The strong revenue performance also reflects the impact of ongoing infrastructure investments and government spending, which have stimulated supply chains and business transactions. As capital expenditure projects progress, ancillary industries benefit, resulting in greater taxable turnover. This multiplier effect has bolstered indirect tax collections, even amid global economic uncertainties.

Fiscal experts observe that maintaining GST revenues above the ₹2 lakh crore threshold enhances the Centre's fiscal flexibility. Strong collections reduce pressure on borrowing requirements and provide greater room for developmental spending. With the government focusing on infrastructure expansion, social welfare schemes, and manufacturing incentives, consistent tax inflows serve as a stabilising force for public finances.

Another significant contributor to the rise has been improved compliance among small and medium enterprises. The simplification of return filing procedures and awareness campaigns have encouraged voluntary compliance. Additionally, coordinated efforts between central and state tax authorities have streamlined audits and enforcement actions, reducing instances of tax fraud. The buoyant collections come at a time when global economic headwinds continue to challenge several major economies. Sluggish growth in advanced markets, geopolitical tensions, and supply chain disruptions have created uncertainty worldwide. Against this backdrop, India's steady GST performance signals relative economic stability and domestic demand strength.

Market analysts believe that sustained GST growth strengthens investor confidence. A consistent rise in indirect tax revenues is often interpreted as an indicator of expanding business activity and consumer spending. It reassures stakeholders that economic fundamentals remain intact, even as external factors fluctuate.

State governments, too, stand to benefit from the revenue upswing, as GST collections are shared between the Centre and states. Higher revenues can support state-level development initiatives, infrastructure upgrades, and welfare schemes. The cooperative federal framework of GST ensures that both tiers of government gain from improved compliance and economic expansion.

Industry leaders have responded positively to the latest figures, emphasising the importance of policy continuity and stable taxation frameworks. Businesses argue that predictable tax policies, coupled with digital efficiency, create an environment conducive to long-term investment and expansion. The success of GST, introduced as a unified indirect tax regime, continues to be evaluated through such revenue milestones.

While the growth rate of 8.8 per cent indicates healthy expansion, experts caution that sustaining this trajectory will require ongoing reforms and vigilance against evasion. Continuous technological upgrades, data integration across departments, and simplification of compliance processes are seen as essential to maintaining momentum.

As the financial year concludes, the crossing of the ₹2 lakh crore mark in March stands as a testament to the maturing GST framework. It reflects not only improved enforcement but also a broad-based recovery in economic activity. With consumption patterns stabilising and production cycles gaining pace, the latest GST figures offer a reassuring signal about India's economic direction.

Strong Mind, Strong Game: Why Mental Fitness Matters for Athletes

In the world of sports, physical strength, speed, and endurance have long been considered the ultimate markers of an athlete's success. Hours in the gym, strict diets, and intense training schedules dominate their daily routines. However, an equally powerful yet often overlooked component is mental fitness.

Today, it is becoming increasingly clear that mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness for athletes striving for excellence.Mental fitness refers to an athlete's ability to stay focused, confident, emotionally balanced, and resilient under pressure. In high-level competitions, the difference between winning and losing is often not physical ability but mental strength. Two athletes may be equally skilled physically, but the one who can control nerves, maintain concentration, and handle stress effectively usually emerges victorious.One of the most common challenges athletes face is performance anxiety. Before major competitions, many experience fear, self-doubt, and pressure to perform. Without proper mental conditioning, these emotions can negatively impact performance. Mental fitness training—such as relaxation techniques, visualization, and positive self-talk—helps athletes manage these pressures and perform at their best.Consistency is another area where mental fitness plays a vital role. Physical training builds the body, but it is the mind that ensures discipline and commitment. Athletes often face setbacks such as injuries, losses, or dips in performance. A mentally strong athlete views these challenges as opportunities to improve rather than reasons to quit. This resilience keeps them motivated during tough times.Focus and concentration are crucial in sports, especially in high-speed or precision-based activities. A momentary lapse in concentration can cost a match. Mental training helps athletes stay present, block distractions, and maintain clarity in critical moments. Techniques like mindfulness and centering allow athletes to remain calm and composed under pressure.

Moreover, mental fitness contributes significantly to overall well-being. Athletes are not immune to stress, burnout, or emotional struggles. The pressure to perform consistently, meet expectations, and maintain peak physical condition can take a toll on their mental health. Incorporating mental fitness practices ensures a healthier balance, reducing the risk of burnout and improving long-term performance.

Coaches and sports institutions are now recognizing the importance of mental conditioning. Many teams include sports psychologists as part of their support staff. Training programs are evolving to include mental exercises alongside physical workouts, emphasizing a more holistic approach to athlete development.In conclusion, physical fitness may prepare the body for competition, but mental fitness prepares the athlete for victory. Strength, stamina, and skill are essential, but without confidence, focus, and resilience, they may not reach their full potential. For athletes aiming to excel, training the mind is no longer optional—it is a necessity. A strong body can take you far, but a strong mind can take you all the way

Mahindra's SUV Sales Roar Ahead with 25% YoY Surge in March, Record FY26 Volumes Signal Market Dominance

Mahindra & Mahindra, has capped off the financial year with a commanding performance, registering a 25 per cent year-on-year surge in SUV sales in March 2026 and achieving its highest-ever volumes for the full fiscal year. The robust growth underscores the company's strengthening grip on the country's fast-expanding utility vehicle segment and reflects sustained consumer appetite for feature-rich, rugged, and technologically advanced SUVs.

The March numbers provided a powerful finish to FY26, with Mahindra's SUV portfolio continuing to outperform broader industry trends. The automaker's consistent double-digit growth trajectory over the past several quarters has translated into record-breaking annual dispatches, cementing its position as one of India's most dynamic automotive players. Industry observers describe the achievement as a reflection of strategic product positioning, strong brand equity, and disciplined execution across production and distribution channels. Mahindra's success has been driven by an aggressive focus on SUVs, a segment that now accounts for a dominant share of India's passenger vehicle market. As consumer preferences shift away from traditional sedans and hatchbacks toward larger, high-ground-clearance vehicles, Mahindra's diverse lineup has struck the right chord. Its portfolio spans compact, mid-size, and premium SUVs, offering advanced safety features, connected technology, and robust performance options that cater to both urban and rural buyers.
The company's ability to manage supply chains efficiently has also played a critical role. Over the past few years, the automotive sector has grappled with semiconductor shortages and logistics disruptions. Mahindra's proactive planning and vendor partnerships enabled it to reduce waiting periods for popular models and ramp up deliveries during peak demand cycles. The March sales surge reflects not only healthy bookings but also improved fulfillment capacity.

FY26 marks a milestone year for Mahindra, with record annual SUV volumes highlighting sustained momentum across quarters. Analysts note that this performance comes amid intense competition in the SUV space, with both domestic and international manufacturers vying for market share. Mahindra's consistent growth suggests that its product differentiation and brand loyalty have translated into measurable gains. Consumer demand has remained resilient despite fluctuating fuel prices and global economic uncertainties. Urban buyers continue to show strong interest in premium features such as panoramic sunroofs, advanced driver assistance systems, and infotainment upgrades, while rural markets value durability and performance on varied terrain.

HDFC Bank Shares Rebound After 18% March Slump: Is It Time to Buy, Sell, or Hold?

Shares of HDFC Bank staged a notable recovery this week after enduring a sharp 18 per cent correction in March, prompting investors to reassess whether the worst is over for India's largest private sector lender. The rebound has reignited debate in market circles over the stock's near-term trajectory, with brokerages divided between cautious optimism and selective accumulation. The March decline had rattled investor confidence, wiping out significant market capitalization in a matter of weeks. Analysts attributed the slide to a combination of sectoral pressure, concerns over net interest margins, and broader market volatility triggered by global cues. The sell-off intensified as institutional investors trimmed exposure to banking stocks amid fears of tighter liquidity conditions and slowing credit growth.However, the recent upward movement in HDFC Bank's share price suggests that bargain hunters and long-term investors are stepping back in. Traders point to technical support levels holding firm and improving sentiment across financial stocks as key drivers behind the recovery. While the rebound does not fully offset March's losses, it indicates renewed buying interest at lower valuations.

Name Change
I,ALIMUDDIN SEKH (old name) S/O - CHADU SEKH residing at VILL & PO - BARA KULBERIA PS - KALIGANJ DIST - NADIA PIN -741150. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from ALIMUDDIN SEKH (old name) to ALIMUDDIN SK (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as ALIMUDDIN SK (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Krishnagar court on 27/03/202. ALIMUDDIN SK (new name)& ALIMUDDIN SEKH (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

LOST DOCUMENT
> I, Sayan Bhattacharjee son of Kanchan Bhattacharjee residing at 36/5,Pasupati Bhattacharjee Road,Kolkata-700041 have lost my original Certificate of Competency (CoC).
> Grade: Marine Engineer Officer Class IV
> CoC Number: 95Z-35623
> Issued By: Directorate General of Shipping, Government of India
> Date of Issue: 22/09/2022
> The document was lost on or around 18th March 2026 near Behala,Kolkata.A Police Report/FIR has been filed at Behala Police Station, Kolkata, vide GD/FIR No. 1833 dated 18/03/2026.
> Anyone finding the same is requested to kindly return it to the address mentioned above or contact +91 9073499355 .If found, it is of no use to anyone else and misuse is a punishable offense.

Name Change
I, SOLEMAN SEKH (old name) S/O - ALIMUDDIN SEKH residing at VILL & PO - BARA KULBERIA PS - KALIGANJ DIST-NADIA PIN -741150. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from SOLEMAN SEKH (old name) to SOLEMAN SK (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as SOLEMAN SK (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Krishnagar court on 27/03/2026. SOLEMAN SK (new name)& SOLEMAN SEKH (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, ANARUL MONDAL (old name) S/O - JAMALUDDIN MONDAL residing at VILL- KAYA PO - MAMJOAN PS - HANSKHALI DIST - NADIA PIN - 741121. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from ANARUL MONDAL (old name) το ANARUL MANDAL (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as ANARUL MANDAL (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Domkal court on 01/04/2026. ANARUL MANDAL (new name)& ANARUL MONDAL (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Sreedevi Nambiar, Sridevi Nambiar (old name) Wife of K Mohanan Nambiar, residing at 4G, Anubhav Apt, 49/5, Biren Roy road (East) Rajaram Mohan Roy Road, po-Barisha, Ps-Behala, Kolkata-700008, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as P K Sridevi Nambiar (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 30/03/2026. Sreedevi Nambiar, Sridevi Nambiar (old name), and P K Sridevi Nambiar (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I AJIJUL HAQUE MONDAL S/0 ABDUL MONDAL R/O VILL GOKHURA POTA P/O CHARATOLA P.S CHAPRA NADIA. MY SON RABIUL MONDAL'S PASS PORT AND W.B.B.S.E EDUCATION'S ADMIT CARD MY NEME HAS BEEN RECORDED AS AJIJUL MONDAL. AFFIDAVIT BY NOTARY PUBLIC AT KRISHNAGAR ON 30-3-26 I AJIJUL HAQUE MONDAL AND AJIJUL MONDAL BOTH ARE SAME PERSON. MY ACTUAL NAME IS AJIJUL HAQUE MONDAL.

Name Change
I, Kalloorveetil Mohanan Nambiar(old name) Son of M Narayanan Nambiar, residing at 4G, Anubhav Apt, 49/5 Biren Roy road (East) Rajaram Mohan Roy Road, po-Barisha, Ps-Behala, Kolkata-700008, West Bengal, India, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as K Mohanan Nambiar (new name), as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit dated 30/03/2026. Kalloorveetil Mohanan Nambiar (old name) and K Mohanan Nambiar (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Mahadev Mondal (Old Name) son of Late Nidhiram Mondal Resident of ,Usha Para,Mousal,Champahati,Dist-South 24 Parganas,Pin-743330. W.B., have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Mahadeb Mondal (New Name) vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Kolkata on 01.04.2026.That Mahadev Mondal (Old Name) and Mahadeb Mondal (New Name) is the same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, MEHTAB HOSSEN MIDDYA son of MANNAN MIDDYA (Old Name) residing at Dakhsin Santoshpur PO- Dakhsin Santoshpur, PS-J.B.Pur Dist-Howrah Pin-711404 West Bengal has changed my father's name will be henceforth be known as ABDUL MANNAN MIDDYA (new name)at Notary Public Howrah court West Bengal affidavit no 05/2026 date 09/01/2026. MANNAN MIDDYA (old name) and ABDUL MANNAN MIDDYA (new name) are same and identical person.

Name Change
I,ARUTI JANA, mother of Service No JC-274560L, Ex Nb Sub, Late Lakshmi Kanta Jana presently residing at Vill & PO- Parshyampur, PS-Pursurah, Dist- Hooghly (W.B), PIN-712401 have changed my Name and Date of Birth from ARUTI JANA & 01-11-1956 to ARATI JANA & 01-01-1958 vide Affidavit No 5214 dated 01-04-2026 before the Court of the Executive Magistrate at Arambagh, Hooghly (W.B).

Name Change
I, Ambiya, wife of Makid Sekh, residing at Vill: Bardhanpara, PO: Panchahar, PS: Paikar, District: Birbhum, declare that my actual name is Ambiya, as recorded in my Aadhaar card and Voter ID card. However, in the passport of my son, Asraful Shaikh, my name is recorded as Ambia Bibi in the section designated for the mother's name. Declare vide affidavit dated 03.02.2026 before the Ld Executive Magistrate Court, Rampurhat, that Ambiya and Ambia Bibi are one and the same person.

Name Change
I, Md Mjansur Rahaman (old name) S/o-Md Hamzat Ali Biswas residing at Housenagar, Bhabanipur, Farakka, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742202 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from MD MJANSUR RAHAMAN to MD MANSUR RAHAMAN and henceforth I shall be known as MD MANSUR RAHAMAN (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 01/04/2026. MD MJANSUR RAHAMAN (old name) and MD MANSUR RAHAMAN (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, GOBINDA MONDAL S/o Lt. KRISHNAPARA MONDAL residing at Vill-Kalupur Uttarpara, P.O.-Kalupur, P.S.-Bongaon, Dist. North 24 Parganas West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my actual name GOBINDA MONDAL instead of GOBINDA MANDAL and my son's actual name SAMIR MONDAL instead of SAMIR MANDAL, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. Executive Magistrate at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated on 30/03/2026. That Gobinda Mondal S/o Krishnapada Mondal and Gobinda Mandal S/o Krishnapada Mandal and Mondal Gobinda S/o Krishnapada is one and same identical person having no difference.

Name Change
I, Mamani Khatun (Old Name) W/O–Abdul Sk resident of Vill-Imam nagar , Po-Megha Sihara , Ps-Sagardighi , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742206 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Mamani Khatun to Ayesha Bibi and henceforth I shall be known as Ayesha Bibi (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 30/03/2026. My name Ayesha Bibi & Mamani Khatun both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, SAMIR MONDAL S/o GOBINDA MONDAL residing at Vill-Kalupur Uttarpara, P.O.-Kalupur, P.S.-Bongaon, Dist. North 24 Parganas West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my actual name SAMIR MONDAL instead of SAMIR MANDAL and my father's actual name GOBINDA MONDAL instead of GOBINDA MANDAL, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. Executive Magistrate at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated on 30/03/2026. SAMIR MONDAL S/o GOBINDA MONDAL and SAMIR MANDAL S/o GOBINDA MANDAL both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Md Manarul Islam (Old Name) S/O–Allarakha Mollick resident of Vill & Po-Majhyampur, Ps-Beldanga , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742189 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Md Manarul Islam to Manarul Islam and henceforth I shall be known as Manarul Islam (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Berhampore court on 18/03/2026. My name Manarul Islam & Md Manarul Islam both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Mustul Shaikh (Old Name) S/O–Asrafuddin Sekh resident of Vill-Barafkhana , Po-Roshanbagh , Ps-Murshidabad , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742164 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Mustul Shaikh to Mustul Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Mustul Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Mustul Sekh & Mustul Shaikh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Alinur Seikh (Old Name) S/O–Seikh Kajem Ali resident of Vill-Sawtapara , Po-Hazarpur Nabagram , Ps-Kandi , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742136 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Alinur Seikh to Abdul Alim and henceforth I shall be known as Abdul Alim (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Abdul Alim & Alinur Seikh both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Kazi Humayan Kebir (Old Name) S/O–Kazi Fazle Ahammad resident of Dakshin Hazam Para , Salar , Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742401 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Kazi Humayan Kebir to Md Kabir and henceforth I shall be known as Md Kabir (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Md Kabir & Kazi Humayan Kebir both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Kajem Ali (Old Name) S/O–Ekramuhaque resident of Vill-Sawtapara , Po-Hazarpur Nabagram , Ps-Kandi , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742136 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Kajem Ali to Seikh Kajem Ali and henceforth I shall be known as Seikh Kajem Ali (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Seikh Kajem Ali & Kajem Ali both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Mustul Sk (Old Name) S/O–Asrafuddin Sekh resident of Vill-Barafkhana , Po-Roshanbagh , Ps-Murshidabad , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742164 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Mustul Sk to Mustul Sekh and henceforth I shall be known as Mustul Sekh (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Mustul Sekh & Mustul Sk both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Saiful Islam (Old Name) S/O–Niyakar Mandal resident of Vill-Nischintapur , Po-Baharan , Ps-Berhampore , Dist-Murshidabad , West Bengal, Pin-742165 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Saiful Islam to Saiful Islam Mandal and henceforth I shall be known as Saiful Islam Mandal (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Saiful Islam Mandal & Saiful Islam both are same and one identical person.

Name Change
I, Dhani Bala Das (Old Name) W/O–Haripada Majumder resident of 180 Basak Para , West Kanchanbari , Masauli , Unakoti , Tripura, 799288 do hereby declared that I have changed my name from Dhani Bala Das to Dhanibala Majumder and henceforth I shall be known as Dhanibala Majumder (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the notary public Domkal court on 01/04/2026. My name Dhanibala Majumder & Dhani Bala Das both are same and one identical person.



BJP supporters cheer during the arrival of the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly and BJP candidate Suvendu Adhikari and state BJP President Samik Bhattacharya for a meeting with the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal, ahead of the state Assembly elections, at CEO office, in Kolkata.

Commemoration of Dhirendranath Datta's Death Anniversary andBHASHA RATNA Antarrashtriya Prashasti Puraskar 2026

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Kolkata, 1 April : Antarrashtriya Prashasti Puraskar 2026.

To mark the death anniversary of Late Dhirendranath Datta, the principal Architect behind the recognition of Bengali as the national language of Bangladesh, a special event is being organized jointly by Anandabahar and the United Journalists' Forum and held with the support of distinguished Bangladeshi Patron (and current US resident) Nurul Islam. The event titled "Dhirendranath Dutta Memorial Lecture took place on Sunday, March 29, 2026, at the Krishnapada Ghosh Memorial Hall in Sealdah.

On this occasion, UJF proudly presents BHASHA RATNA Antarrashtriya Prashasti Puraskar 2026 ("Gem of Language" International Award).

This Award is instituted in the revered memory of the eminent luminaries Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Dhirendranath Datta, whose profound scholarship, humanitarian ideals, and courageous advocacy for justice enriched the intellectual and cultural heritage of India.

This distinguished honour celebrates individuals whose contributions to language, literature, culture, and enlightened social thought inspire society and strengthen the spirit of human values.

Upon the considered recommendation of the Award Selection Committee and in recognition of distinguished and enduring contributions to literature, culture, and public thought, the

"Bhasha Ratna Antarrashtriya Prashasti Puraskar 2026"was conferred upon two Recipients.

Sri Nagathihalli Ramesh

(Internationally acclaimed Kannada poet, thinker, agriculturist, filmmaker, and social & political activist from Bengaluru, Karnataka, India)

and Smt. Manisha Purkayastha (daughter of the Bengali language movement leader Dhirendranath Datta.)

The overall programme was presided by Sri Pradip Kumar Chaudhury, a former Bureaucrat, eminent Poet, Editor, and the Founder of Poets Foundation, a UNESCO accredited organisation .

The event was graced by eminent personalities and speakers including Professor Liton Rakib, K.N. Adhikari, an internationally renowned poet, Thinker, Film-maker, Socio- Political Activist and Agriculturist Nagathihalli Ramesh, Gournitai Saha and others. The program also featured a musical performance by Baul Artist Ganesh Chandra Roy, an inaugural song by team Padarpon, and an audio drama by Kavyadeep Abritti Charcha Kendra. The speech of patron Nurul Islam was addressed by essayist Makhanlal Pradhan followed by the speech of Dhirendranath Datta's daughter Manisha Purkayastha which was addressed by eminent recitation artist Sumana Bhattacharya respectively.

Fresh Roar on the Horizon: Bengal Safari to Welcome New Tigress in Genetic Revamp Plan

Staff reporter, Darjeeling, 1 April : Forest department sources have confirmed that a female Royal Bengal tiger will soon be brought to the safari from the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in Darjeeling. In exchange, Bengal Safari will send one of its tigresses to the hill zoo. The proposal has already received formal approval from the Central Zoo Authority, clearing the way for the transfer.

The move is being seen as a crucial step in strengthening genetic diversity among captive tiger populations in North Bengal. Zoo officials have explained that the decision was taken primarily to address concerns over inbreeding. With most of the tigers currently housed at Bengal Safari descending from the same bloodline, experts had flagged the growing risk of "inbreeding depression," a phenomenon that can weaken offspring over generations.

Specialists warn that prolonged breeding within the same genetic line can significantly reduce disease resistance among cubs, increase the likelihood of congenital abnormalities and, in some cases, raise mortality rates. By introducing a new bloodline into the population, authorities hope to create healthier breeding conditions and ensure the long-term sustainability of the species within the safari's care.

Bengal Safari began its journey in 2016 with two Royal Bengal tigers named Sheela and Snehasish. From that modest beginning, the tiger population at the park has grown steadily over the years. At present, the safari is home to 14 Royal Bengal tigers. Several of them have already been relocated to other zoos within West Bengal, including Alipore Zoo in Kolkata, as well as to facilities outside the state as part of coordinated conservation efforts.

The Royal Bengal Tiger Safari remains the park's principal attraction, drawing thousands of visitors from across India and abroad. Tourists flock to Siliguri to experience the thrill of spotting the majestic big cats in expansive enclosures designed to mimic natural habitats. The introduction of a new tigress is expected to add further interest and strengthen the safari's conservation narrative.

In recent years, authorities have also expanded infrastructure to accommodate the growing tiger population. Last year, a new enclosure spanning nearly 100 bighas of land was constructed at a cost of approximately Rs 54 lakh. However, while physical infrastructure has improved, the genetic challenge remained unresolved, prompting the present exchange initiative. Meanwhile, the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in Darjeeling, one of India's most renowned high-altitude zoos, currently houses two Siberian tigers and three Royal Bengal tigers.

Malati Rabha Roy Files Nomination in Grand Show of Strength at Tufanganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cooch Behar, 1 April : In a vibrant display of political enthusiasm, BJP candidate Malati Rabha Roy on Wednesday filed her nomination papers for the Tufanganj Assembly constituency, arriving at the Sub-Divisional Officer's office in an open-top jeep amid drumbeats, balloons and a large procession of party workers and supporters. The event marked a formal beginning to her electoral battle in what is shaping up to be a closely watched contest in Cooch Behar district.

Since early morning, BJP supporters had gathered in front of the party office in Tufanganj, creating a festive atmosphere well before the candidate's departure. Clad in party colours and waving flags, nearly a thousand workers and sympathisers accompanied Roy as she made her way through the town. The open-top jeep procession, set to the rhythmic beats of traditional drums, drew the attention of onlookers along the route. Police personnel were deployed to maintain order as the convoy proceeded toward the office of the Tufanganj Sub-Divisional Officer.

After submitting her nomination papers, Roy briefly addressed the media. In a succinct remark, she said, "To contest an election, one must submit a nomination; that is precisely why I have submitted mine." However, she quickly shifted to a more pointed political tone, targeting the ruling Trinamool Congress and challenging the party to account for its record in the constituency.

"We have prepared a detailed report of what we have accomplished over the past five years," Roy asserted. "Now, let the Trinamool Congress present a report of what they have done in Tufanganj over the last fifteen years." She alleged that during its tenure in power, the ruling party had failed to ensure law and order and had presided over widespread corruption. "There is no rule of law, and there is no safety for women. Corruption is rampant everywhere, and job seekers remain unemployed—will they be able to produce a report on that?" she asked. Roy further claimed that those demanding accountability from her would soon be "on their way out of Bengal."

The BJP candidate identified the long-pending Jaldhowa Bridge as the central issue of the election in Tufanganj. According to her, neither the Left Front during its 34-year rule nor the Trinamool Congress in its 15 years of governance managed to construct the bridge, which she described as vital for the region's connectivity and development. Recounting her efforts, Roy said she had raised the matter in the State Legislative Assembly but was told that funds were unavailable and that she should seek assistance from the Centre.

She stated that she subsequently met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to pursue the matter. Following the meeting, a team of engineers was reportedly sent to inspect the site. Roy claimed that the Centre informed her that the State Government would need to prepare a comprehensive project plan, pass it in the State Assembly, and then submit it for the release of central funds. "I conveyed this information in the Assembly, and I was assured that everything was ready. Yet, to this day, no such project plan has materialized," she said. Giving what she described as a firm commitment, Roy declared that if a BJP government is formed in the state, the bridge would be constructed.

Turning her attention to the Trinamool Congress's candidate, former Ranji cricketer Shiv Shankar Paul, Roy extended what she termed her "best wishes" to him, while also making a pointed remark about his political alignment. She claimed that during the 2021 elections, Paul had contacted her by phone and expressed support for the BJP. "I appeal to him as well to cast his vote in my favor," she added.

Roy further alleged that Trinamool had "corrupted even a good boy," suggesting that Paul's association with the ruling party was misplaced. She also commented on his recent visit to the area, claiming he appeared unfamiliar with certain local issues. Notably, she pointed out that Tufanganj has been widely regarded as a BJP stronghold, with the party securing a lead in the constituency during both the previous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

Observers note that while Paul's sporting credentials may appeal to a section of voters, his professional commitments often take him outside the district. In contrast, Roy has maintained a consistent presence in Tufanganj over the past five years, engaging in public outreach and local initiatives. As campaigning gains momentum, political analysts suggest that this sustained grassroots engagement may offer her a slight but significant edge in the 2026 Assembly polls.

Slogans and Black Flags Greet Sukanta Majumdar Ahead of Dinhata Campaign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cooch Behar, 1 April : The political atmosphere in Dinhata intensified on Wednesday as Union Minister of State for Education, Sukanta Majumdar, faced a tense reception from Trinamool supporters while campaigning alongside BJP candidate Ajay Roy.

Early Wednesday morning, Sukanta Majumdar departed from Cooch Behar to Dinhata to support the BJP's outreach efforts in the constituency. As the convoy approached Prantik Bazar, a crowd of local Trinamool workers and supporters gathered along the roadside, waving black flags and chanting slogans of "Go Back" aimed at the Union Minister. Police personnel were deployed in front of the protesters to maintain order, preventing any direct confrontation.

Despite the hostile reception, Sukanta Majumdar and Ajay Roy proceeded to Dinhata, where the Union Minister offered prayers at the Madan Mohan Temple. Following the temple visit, the pair conducted an extensive door-to-door campaign along the town's main thoroughfares. A large contingent of BJP workers and supporters accompanied them, creating a visible show of strength and party presence.

Speaking to the media during the campaign, Sukanta Majumdar strongly criticized the Trinamool candidate and the local political climate. He asserted that the BJP, represented by the "Lotus" symbol, is the only force capable of ending what he described as an atmosphere of terror and corruption in Dinhata. He claimed that the opposition had created fear and instability, and only a BJP-led administration could restore safety and accountability in the area.

Addressing the incident of black flags, Sukanta Majumdar remarked pointedly, "The Trinamool does not need to wave black flags; their faces are already black the moment they stand before you. Some have trafficked cattle, others have stolen coal, and still others have stolen sand. If not that, then they are involved in at least a murder or two, or a rape or two. That is why their faces are black, rendering black flags unnecessary."

He further directed criticism at Trinamool leader Udayan Guha, recalling previous threats made against him. "Udayan Guha had boasted, 'Let him enter here, and I'll do this to him, I'll do that to him.' Well, I have entered, and here I stand. Now we've seen who really has the guts. If the police were to step aside, even a mouse wouldn't dare urinate on them—that is how pathetic their condition is," Sukanta Majumdar said, underscoring his defiance in the face of prior intimidation.

In response, Udayan Guha dismissed the Union Minister's comments as provocative and unbecoming of his position. "For a professor, the language he has used is unbecoming; a gentleman does not use such language in public. Furthermore, on the day I challenged him to come to Dinhata, he lacked the courage to do so. Now, he has arrived backed by Central Forces, the Election Commission, and all the rest. He simply makes such provocative statements to incite the public," Guha said.

Guha also addressed the black flag incident, asserting that those involved were not Trinamool members but individuals whose names had been removed from the voter list. He warned that if Sukanta Majumdar had ventured deeper into Dinhata, he would have faced more serious opposition.

The developments in Dinhata on Wednesday reflect the rising tensions in Cooch Behar politics as elections approach. With both sides issuing strong statements and rallying supporters, the constituency has emerged as a key battleground. While the BJP seeks to portray itself as a party capable of eliminating corruption and restoring order, the Trinamool has emphasized opposition to what it calls provocative campaigning and intimidation tactics.

As campaigning continues, observers note that such confrontations could set the tone for an intense electoral contest in the coming weeks. The interplay of rallies, door-to-door outreach, and public statements is shaping a narrative that blends political strategy with direct voter engagement, making Dinhata one of the most closely watched constituencies in the region.

"I Am Not Dead": 90-Year-Old Woman's Tearful Plea Over Deleted Voter Name Shakes Barabani Campaign Trail

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 1 April : The Bengal Election 2026 came to a sudden halt in Barabani when a frail 90-year-old woman clutched the feet of Trinamool Congress candidate and sitting MLA Bidhan Upadhyay with a heartbreaking appeal. Amid slogans, party flags and door-to-door outreach, the emotional cry of Durga Roy cut through the political noise with a simple but devastating question: if her name has been struck off the voter list as "dead," how will she prove she is still alive?

The incident unfolded in Simantapalli of Rupnarayanpur, where Upadhyay had arrived as part of his grassroots campaign. Known for reaching out to residents directly at their doorsteps, the candidate was interacting with locals when Durga Roy slowly made her way through the crowd. Weak in body but firm in resolve, she held on to him and broke down in tears. "Put my name back on the voter list, son," she pleaded, her voice trembling with desperation.

For Durga Roy, elections are not about party manifestos or ideological debates. She does not fully grasp the workings of the Election Commission or the intricacies of the Special Intensive Revision process that led to her name being marked as deleted. All she knows is that she has voted all her life and now, suddenly, she has been declared dead in official records.

Roy lives alone in a modest home. Her only son passed away years ago, and her two daughters are married and settled elsewhere. Despite her advancing age and fragile health, she has always taken pride in exercising her democratic right. Voting day, for her, was a reminder that she mattered. But when the updated voter rolls were published following the SIR process, her name appeared under the deleted category, reportedly because government records listed her as deceased.The news shattered her. Neighbours say she wept inconsolably upon learning that, on paper, she no longer existed. "I have not died," she told the candidate through tears. "Why has my name been cut? If my name is not there, how will I vote? How will I even stay in my own home?" Her words, simple and raw, brought campaign workers and onlookers to stunned silence.

Upadhyay immediately paused his campaign and reassured the elderly woman. He directed local party leaders to initiate the necessary administrative procedures at once to restore her name to the electoral roll.

Black Flags, Fiery Exchanges Mark Sukanta Majumdar's Campaign Visit to Dinhata

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cooch Behar, 1 April : With the election atmosphere intensifying in Cooch Behar district, political temperatures rose sharply on Wednesday as Union Minister of State for Education **Sukanta Majumdar** faced black flag protests and "Go Back" slogans during his campaign visit to Dinhata. The dramatic scenes unfolded even before he formally began canvassing in support of BJP candidate Ajay Roy.

According to local sources, Majumdar had set out from Cooch Behar town in the morning to campaign for Roy, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate contesting from Dinhata. However, just before entering the town, near Prantik Bazar, a group of Trinamool Congress workers and supporters assembled along the roadside and began waving black flags at the minister's convoy. Protesters simultaneously raised "Go Back" slogans, creating a tense situation in the area. Police personnel were deployed in advance and positioned directly in front of the demonstrators, preventing any direct confrontation between the two sides. The convoy slowed briefly but continued its journey under security cover.

Despite the initial disruption, Majumdar proceeded with his scheduled programme upon reaching Dinhata. His visit began with prayers at the historic Madan Mohan Temple, where he sought blessings before launching into a public outreach campaign along the town's main thoroughfares. Accompanied by Ajay Roy and a large contingent of BJP workers and supporters, the Union Minister undertook a door-to-door campaign, greeting residents and appealing for votes. The rally drew a significant crowd, with party flags and slogans echoing through the streets as the entourage moved through different neighbourhoods.

Speaking to reporters during the campaign, Majumdar addressed both the protest and the broader political climate in the constituency. He asserted that the BJP's symbol, the Lotus, represents the only hope for building a Dinhata free from terror and corruption. Alleging that the Trinamool Congress candidate, whom he described as a defector from the Forward Bloc, had fostered an atmosphere of fear in the region, Majumdar claimed that only the BJP could "liberate" the people from such conditions.

Responding directly to the black flag demonstration, the minister launched a sharp verbal attack on his political opponents. "The Trinamool does not need to wave black flags; their faces are already black the moment they stand before you," he said. He went on to accuse members of the ruling party of involvement in cattle trafficking, coal theft, sand mining irregularities, and other serious crimes. "That is why their faces are black, rendering black flags unnecessary," he remarked, drawing loud cheers from party supporters.

Majumdar also referred to earlier comments allegedly made by Trinamool leader Udayan Guha, who had challenged him to enter Dinhata. "Udayan Guha had boasted, 'Let him enter here, and I'll do this to him, I'll do that to him.' Well, I have entered, and here I stand. Now we've seen who really has the guts," Majumdar declared. In a provocative aside, he added that without police protection, his opponents would not be able to assert themselves, using a metaphor to underscore his claim about their weakness.

The remarks triggered an immediate counter-response from Udayan Guha. Speaking later, Guha criticised the tone and language used by the Union Minister, calling it inappropriate and unbecoming of someone from an academic background. "For a professor, the language he has used is unbecoming; a gentleman does not use such language in public," Guha said. He further alleged that on a previous occasion when he had challenged Majumdar to visit Dinhata, the latter had not done so.

Guha also dismissed the black flag protest as a spontaneous expression of public dissatisfaction rather than an organised party demonstration. According to him, those who waved flags were individuals whose names had been removed from the SI list and were aggrieved. "That was merely at Prantik Bazar; had he ventured deeper into the area, they would have wrapped him up in black cloth," Guha claimed, accusing the minister of relying on central security forces and institutional backing to stage his visit.

As polling day approaches, the exchange of barbs between leaders of the BJP and Trinamool Congress has added to the charged political atmosphere in Cooch Behar. With rallies, counter-rallies and increasingly sharp rhetoric dominating the campaign trail, Dinhata has emerged as a key battleground where both sides are striving to consolidate support amid mounting tensions.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a public meeting, in Biswanath, Assam. State BJP president Dilip Saikia also seen.

Night of Fire in Ganderbal: One Militant Killed as Security Forces Intensify 'Arahama' Operation

Staff Reporter, Jammu, 1 April: Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district as security forces launched a major counter-terror operation in the Arahama area, leading to a fierce gun battle that left one militant dead and triggered an extensive search operation that continues into Wednesday. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and the Central Reserve Police Force jointly moved in late Tuesday night to neutralize the suspected threat.

According to police sources, credible information indicated the presence of several militants hiding in a residential structure in Arahama. Swift coordination followed, with security personnel cordoning off the entire locality before initiating a search operation under the cover of darkness. The area was sealed strategically to prevent escape routes, and residents were advised to remain indoors as the operation gathered momentum.

The situation escalated when militants, believed to be holed up inside a house, opened fire on the advancing forces. The exchange of gunfire soon intensified, echoing through the quiet valley night. Security forces retaliated with controlled precision, ensuring that civilian casualties were avoided while maintaining pressure on the armed suspects. The exact number of militants involved remains unclear, though officials suspect that more than one was present during the encounter.

The Indian Army's Chinar Corps, headquartered in Srinagar, later confirmed that the operation was launched after establishing a tight cordon around the suspected hideout. After hours of intermittent firing, one militant was neutralized. His body was recovered on Wednesday morning once firing subsided and the area was declared temporarily secure. Identification procedures are currently underway.

Security officials believe that other militants may have managed to escape under the cover of darkness. The dense terrain and limited visibility during the night likely aided their movement. However, forces have not relaxed their vigilance. Reinforcements have been deployed to strengthen the cordon and expand the search grid. Surveillance drones and additional personnel have been brought in to comb adjoining areas thoroughly.

The operation remains active, with search teams meticulously scanning nearby orchards, houses, and forested patches. Authorities have placed surrounding regions on high alert to prevent any regrouping or further attempts at infiltration.

Trinamool Expands Assam Footprint: 17 Candidates Announced, Star Campaigners to Lead Manifesto Push

Staff Reporter, Guwahati, 1 April: The Trinamool Congress has intensified its political foray into Assam, unveiling its first list of 17 candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections and setting the stage for the release of its manifesto on Thursday. The move signals the party's determined bid to establish itself as a formidable force in the neighbouring state, where it has been steadily building its organisational network over the past few years.

The manifesto will be formally launched in Assam in the presence of Sagarika Ghose, who is scheduled to attend the programme as part of the party's outreach efforts. Party leaders confirmed that Ghose will remain in the state for a day to take part in the event. The announcement also comes with the inclusion of additional star campaigners, reflecting the party's strategy to combine regional presence with nationally recognisable faces.

Among those set to campaign are Lok Sabha MP Kirti Azad, Baharampur MP Yusuf Pathan, and Rajya Sabha MP and former Union Minister Babul Supriyo. Kirti Azad will be in Assam on April 5 and 6, while Yusuf Pathan is slated to campaign on April 6 and 7. Babul Supriyo will address election meetings in the state on April 7. The coordinated campaign schedule underscores the importance the Trinamool leadership is placing on Assam as one of the key battlegrounds outside West Bengal.

Assam, governed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has emerged as a significant focus area for the Trinamool Congress among states heading toward Assembly elections. Party insiders maintain that the organisation has developed a credible grassroots presence in several constituencies, particularly in regions with sizeable Bengali-speaking and minority populations. The first phase of candidate announcements appears to reflect that electoral calculus.

The initial list includes a mix of minority and regional faces. Udangshri Narzary has been nominated from Baokhungri in Kokrajhar, while Mominur Islam will contest from Bilasipara in Dhubri district. Arif Akbar Ahmed has been fielded from Jaleswar in Goalpara. Other candidates in the first phase include Kalyani Kalita, Bikash Nath Yogi, Amirul Islam, and Dulu Ahmed, among others. The selection pattern suggests a deliberate attempt to consolidate support among communities that the party believes may be receptive to its platform.

Sushmita Dev, the state president of the Assam Trinamool Congress, stated that the party has taken a preliminary decision to contest in 51 constituencies across the state. However, she added that the final number of seats may be adjusted based on evolving political considerations. The party leadership has indicated that it does not intend to field candidates in constituencies where doing so might indirectly benefit the Bharatiya Janata Party. If necessary, it is prepared to reduce the number of seats it contests to avoid splitting anti-BJP votes.

This calibrated approach reflects a broader strategy aimed at positioning the Trinamool as a responsible opposition force rather than merely an expansionist player. By signalling flexibility in seat selection, the party appears keen to counter criticism that its presence could fragment the opposition space. At the same time, the decision to release candidates early demonstrates organisational confidence and a desire to seize momentum.

Political observers note that the Trinamool's growing interest in Assam is part of its larger national ambitions. Having consolidated its dominance in West Bengal, the party has sought to expand its footprint in other states, particularly in the Northeast. Assam, with its complex social fabric and history of shifting political alliances, presents both challenges and opportunities. The upcoming manifesto is expected to articulate the party's vision for governance in Assam, addressing issues ranging from economic development and employment to social harmony and minority rights.

Stalin accuses BJP of "plotting" to create violence in TN

Staff Reporter, Tiruchirappalli, 1 April: Chief Minister MK Stalin on Wednesday accused the BJP of conspiring to carry out violence in Tamil Nadu, allegedly on the lines of Uttar Pradesh and Manipur and asserted that it was outmanoeuvred.

Addressing a DMK rally here for the upcoming Assembly polls, Stalin, the president of the ruling DMK, listed schemes implemented in Tiruchirappalli region by his government. He referred to initiatives including Panchapur bus terminus, mini-stadium, jallikattu arena, model schools and combined drinking water schemes. Soon after his party forms government again, a mega library named after Kamarajar, a TIDEL park and an Olympic Academy will be inaugurated in the region, and Tiruchirappalli's development is a challenge to the capital city of Chennai, he said. During the past five years, for Tiruchirappalli, Rs 26,066 crore worth of projects have been completed and "that is why I have come seeking your votes," Stalin said. Asserting that his regime successfully implemented assurances made ahead of the 2021 Assembly polls, including fare-free travel for women in buses, Stalin underscored that 9 lakh students received an assistance of Rs 1,000 per month for higher education.

In January this year, a Rs 3,000 cash gift was provided to all rice ration card-holders for the harvest festival Pongal. He referred to the disbursal of Rs 5,000 to 1.31 crore women beneficiaries in February -- Rs 1,000 assistance per month; provided for 3 months in advance in addition to Rs 2,000 summer grant --- and the assured pension plan announced for state government employees (TAPS). Further, he said: "Above all, there is no caste riot in Tamil Nadu, no religious riots like those seen in the BJP-ruled states. No events of mob violence like the ones seen in Uttar Pradesh. No continuous violence like in Manipur."

The Chief Minister claimed: "We have also thwarted the conspiracies made by the BJP to create all these things. It is because of the peaceful environment and skilled human resources under our governance that investments are coming to Tamil Nadu today. This growth must be taken to the next level. I have released the DMK election manifesto as a clear action plan for that."

Quoting from the manifesto, he assured that the Rs 1,000 provided monthly as "rights grant" for women will be doubled to Rs 2,000. Under the Pudhumai Penn and Tamil Puthalvan schemes, college students currently receiving Rs 1,000 per month will get Rs 1,500.

Fuel Shock in the Capital: Premium Petrol, Diesel and ATF Prices Surge Amid Global Tensions



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: Indian Oil Corporation raising the rates of its high-end petrol and diesel variants in Delhi. The increase comes alongside a sharp spike in aviation turbine fuel prices, sparking concerns that airfares may soon climb as airlines struggle to absorb mounting operational costs.

According to reports from news agencies, Indian Oil's XP100 premium petrol has witnessed a steep increase of ₹11 per litre in the national capital. The price, which previously stood at ₹149 per litre, has now risen to ₹160. The company has also revised the price of its premium diesel variant, Extra Green. The cost of this diesel has moved up from ₹91.49 per litre to ₹92.99 per litre. While the hike in premium diesel appears modest compared to the jump in XP100 petrol, it nonetheless signals upward pressure in the high-performance fuel segment.

Indian Oil has not officially clarified the precise reasons behind the revision. However, market analysts point toward volatility in global crude oil prices, driven largely by escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia. The region remains a crucial hub for global energy supplies, and recent conflicts have contributed to fluctuations in crude benchmarks and rising transportation costs. The increased burden on supply chains is believed to have influenced the decision to raise prices of premium fuels, which are often more sensitive to global market shifts.

For now, the reported price hikes have surfaced in Delhi, and it remains unclear whether similar revisions will be implemented in other cities across the country. Fuel prices in India often vary depending on local taxes and distribution costs, and any broader adjustment could have cascading effects on consumers and businesses alike.

The aviation sector, meanwhile, faces an even sharper challenge. Aviation turbine fuel prices have surged dramatically, more than doubling in recent months amid global oil instability. The cost of ATF in Delhi has now climbed to approximately ₹2.07 lakh per kilolitre. This marks a striking rise from early March, when ATF prices were increased by 5.7 percent and stood at around ₹96,000 per kilolitre in the capital. The scale of the latest escalation underscores the strain placed on airlines, for whom fuel expenses constitute a significant share of operational expenditure.

Industry observers caution that such a steep hike in ATF could soon translate into higher ticket prices. Airlines, already navigating competitive pricing pressures and fluctuating passenger demand, may find it increasingly difficult to shield consumers from the impact. Even a marginal increase in base fares or fuel surcharges could alter travel costs substantially, particularly during peak travel seasons.

The ongoing turbulence in West Asia continues to cast a long shadow over global energy trade. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime corridor through which a large portion of the world's oil and gas shipments pass, has reportedly faced disruptions. Allegations that Iran has restricted movement through the strait have heightened uncertainty, although certain vessels have been permitted to transit. Some Indian ships are understood to have encountered delays, adding to logistical complexities.

Despite these developments, the Petroleum Ministry has maintained that India's overall oil supply remains stable. Officials have emphasized that the country imports crude not only through the Strait of Hormuz but also via alternative routes and diversified sources. As a result, authorities assert that there has been no immediate disruption to fuel availability within the country.

Importantly, the prices of regular petrol and diesel have not been revised upward. The government had earlier reduced excise duties on these essential fuels, a move intended to shield the general public from the brunt of international price volatility. This buffer appears to have helped keep standard fuel rates steady for now, even as premium segments reflect market pressures. The ripple effects of rising energy costs extend beyond automotive and aviation fuels. Commercial LPG cylinder prices have also witnessed a sharp jump. The cost of a 19-kilogram commercial cooking gas cylinder has risen by ₹218, bringing the price to ₹2,208.

Form 6 Row Heats Up Bengal Politics as State Moves Supreme Court Amid Protests Outside CEO Office

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: West Bengal's political temperature has risen sharply ahead of the elections, with Form 6 emerging as the latest flashpoint between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the Election Commission. For the second consecutive day, Trinamool workers and supporters gathered outside the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Kolkata, alleging large-scale irregularities in the submission of voter enrolment applications. The controversy has now reached the Supreme Court, where the matter was raised during the hearing of the SIR case before the Bench of the Chief Justice on Wednesday.

Appearing for the state, senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee questioned the timing and scale of Form 6 submissions, arguing that the final electoral roll had already been published and that the process of resolving disputed names was underway. In that context, he asked how "bundles and bundles" of Form 6 applications were still being submitted to the Commission. The submission sought to underline what the state described as an unusual surge in applications at a sensitive stage of the electoral process.

The Election Commission, however, offered a categorical rebuttal. Its counsel maintained that under existing electoral law, Form 6 applications can be submitted until the last date of nomination. The process, the Commission argued, is entirely lawful and forms part of a continuous mechanism that allows eligible citizens to apply for inclusion in the voter list. The Commission further contended that any individual is legally permitted to submit Form 6 applications, and that it is the Commission's responsibility to scrutinise and verify each application before taking a decision.

The hearing saw pointed exchanges over the scale of submissions. Banerjee raised concerns that nearly 30,000 Form 6 applications had allegedly been submitted by a single individual, questioning how such a volume could be procedurally feasible. In response, the Commission's counsel referred to specific provisions in electoral rules to argue that the law does not bar bulk submissions per se, as long as due verification follows. The counsel also pointed out that there exists a statutory mechanism for objections, namely through the filing of Form 7, which allows citizens to challenge wrongful inclusions in the electoral roll.

After hearing both sides, Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed that once a formal notification for elections is issued, voting is conducted on the basis of the electoral roll as it stands at that time. He clarified that the mere submission of Form 6 and the subsequent inclusion of a name would not automatically entitle a person to vote in the ongoing election if procedural timelines do not permit it. The Bench also observed that if any individual is unable to vote in the current election due to timing issues, it does not amount to a permanent deprivation of voting rights.The Supreme Court adjourned the hearing for the day, scheduling the next round of arguments for April 6. Meanwhile, political rhetoric in Bengal shows no signs of cooling.

The controversy gained further momentum after Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee visited the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Kolkata earlier this week. He alleged that there were attempts to manipulate the voter list by inserting names of individuals from other states, specifically Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, into West Bengal's electoral rolls. According to him, such actions amounted to a deliberate effort to tamper with the integrity of the democratic process.The Election Commission has not publicly conceded any irregularity and continues to assert that all applications undergo verification before inclusion. Officials have reiterated that the electoral roll revision process is governed by established rules and is subject to checks and balances, including opportunities for objections and appeals.

Digital Census 2027: Most Data to Be Released in 2027, Caste Survey Modalities Under Review

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 1 April: India's next Census will mark a historic shift in methodology, with the bulk of its data and statistics set to be released in 2027, Registrar General and Census Commissioner Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan has announced. Moving away from the traditional paper-based system, the nationwide enumeration will be conducted through a fully digital process, a transformation officials believe will significantly speed up data compilation and publication.

The first phase of the Census exercise is scheduled to begin on April 1. The second phase, which will include the caste survey, will follow in early 2027. However, the modalities and methodology of the caste enumeration are yet to be finalized. Narayan stated that several recommendations have been received and are currently under examination before a conclusive framework is adopted.

For the initial phase, the government has prepared a detailed questionnaire comprising 33 questions. Enumerators will collect information related to housing conditions and household characteristics. Details such as municipal or local authority house numbers, Census house numbers, materials used for flooring, walls and roofing, and the overall condition of the structure will be recorded. Officials will also document the usage of the house, whether it is residential, commercial or mixed.

In addition, demographic details will form a crucial part of the survey. Enumerators will gather information on the total number of members in each household, the name and gender of the head of the family, and whether the head belongs to a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or other community. The number of rooms in a dwelling, ownership status of the property and the number of married members in the household will also be noted.



Authorities emphasize that this granular data will help shape policy planning and welfare distribution for years to come.

According to data shared by Census officials, India's administrative landscape has undergone notable changes since the 2011 Census. The number of villages has declined by over a thousand, from 640,932 in 2011 to 639,902 at present, reflecting the steady expansion of urban settlements. The number of states and Union Territories has increased by one, bringing the total to 36. Districts have grown significantly in number, rising from 640 in 2011 to 784 now, an addition of 144 districts. Sub-districts too have seen a sharp increase, expanding from 5,990 to 7,092.

Narayan pointed out that West Bengal remains the only state yet to issue the required notification related to the Census process. Discussions are ongoing with the state government, and officials have indicated that West Bengal will have time until September 30 to complete its enumeration work.

One of the most transformative aspects of this Census will be the push for self-enumeration. With digital literacy on the rise across the country, citizens will be encouraged to submit their details through mobile phones or laptops. Authorities believe that widespread adoption of self-enumeration will reduce the burden on field enumerators and improve efficiency. The digital interface is expected to make the process more accessible while ensuring quicker data consolidation.

In previous Censuses, data collection was conducted entirely on paper, followed by scanning and digitization of documents—a process that often delayed data release. This time, the entire operation will run on a digital platform from the outset, eliminating the need for manual data entry after collection. As a result, most statistical outputs are expected to be made public in 2027, considerably streamlining the timeline.

The second phase of the Census, scheduled for February 2027, will involve detailed collection of information related to religion and caste across the country, except in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. In these four regions, both phases of the Census must be completed by September 30 this year due to logistical considerations and climatic conditions.

Meanwhile, no decision has yet been taken regarding the update of the National Population Register, which aims to create a comprehensive database of residents in the country. Officials clarified that discussions on this matter are still ongoing.

SSRM/KOL/ RMS/RNP-492,2026-2028 RNI. No. WBENG/2023/88230 Kolkata | Thursday, 2 April, 2026 INDIAN INFO EXCHANGE

Jadeja's Emotional Return and Vaibhav's Fearless Fireworks Light Up a Memorable Night

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: As Ravindra Jadeja found himself at the heart of a viral moment while also applauding the rise of a fearless new star. A video that swept across social media captured Jadeja visibly emotional before the match, even seen kissing the Chennai Super Kings logo while speaking to Khaleel Ahmed. For a player who spent more than a decade with Chennai, led the side and built an enduring bond with the franchise, facing them as an opponent was always going to stir deep feelings. Jadeja's affection for Chennai is no secret. His years in yellow defined a significant chapter of his IPL journey. Yet professional sport demands adaptability, and on Monday he delivered exactly that. Turning out against his former side, and representing another team he once called home in the early years of the IPL, Jadeja rolled back the clock. He claimed two crucial wickets and played his part in securing victory,



proving that sentiment does not dull competitive edge.What made the evening even more special was his candid admiration for 15-year-old sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi. Jadeja, who once represented Rajasthan Royals during the league's formative seasons, joked that when he first played for the franchise, Vaibhav had not even been born. That light-hearted remark underscored the generational shift unfolding before fans' eyes.<Vaibhav's breathtaking assault left even seasoned professionals spellbound. From the dressing room, Jadeja watched the youngster dismantle bowling attacks with audacious strokeplay. He later spoke warmly about how a fearless batter can transform a team's atmosphere. According to Jadeja, when a player like Vaibhav fires, the dressing room energy soars and the opposition is instantly pushed under pressure. Watching boundaries and towering sixes from the safety of the dugout is a joy. Facing such a player, however, is another matter altogether. In modern T20 cricket, Jadeja observed, there is no margin for error. Bowlers must think one step ahead because even the slightest miscalculation can be punished. Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar echoed those sentiments, praising Vaibhav's remarkable composure and boldness against some of the finest bowlers in the world. The teenager's blistering half-century off just 15 balls against Chennai Super Kings was not merely an innings; it was a statement of intent.

Abhishek in the Spotlight as Eden Awaits a Run-Fest: KKR Plot to Silence Sunrisers' Powerhouse

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: The moment the Sunrisers Hyderabad team bus rolled up outside Eden Gardens, the air shifted. A small but spirited crowd erupted into cheers, craning their necks for a glimpse of one man in particular. Muttiah Muralitharan stepped off first, followed by Heinrich Klaasen and Pat Cummins. Yet the loudest roar was reserved for the last to descend — Abhishek Sharma. The young Indian opener paused, glanced around at the sea of anticipation, and raised his hand in acknowledgment. The message was clear: Eden knows who the danger man is.



As Kolkata Knight Riders prepare to host Sunrisers Hyderabad, they understand that Thursday's contest could hinge on whether they can contain Abhishek and the formidable batting unit around him. Travis Head, Ishan Kishan and Klaasen form a lineup capable of dismantling any bowling attack. Despite piling up 220 runs in their previous outing against Mumbai Indians, Hyderabad still ended up on the losing side — proof of both their firepower and their vulnerabilities.

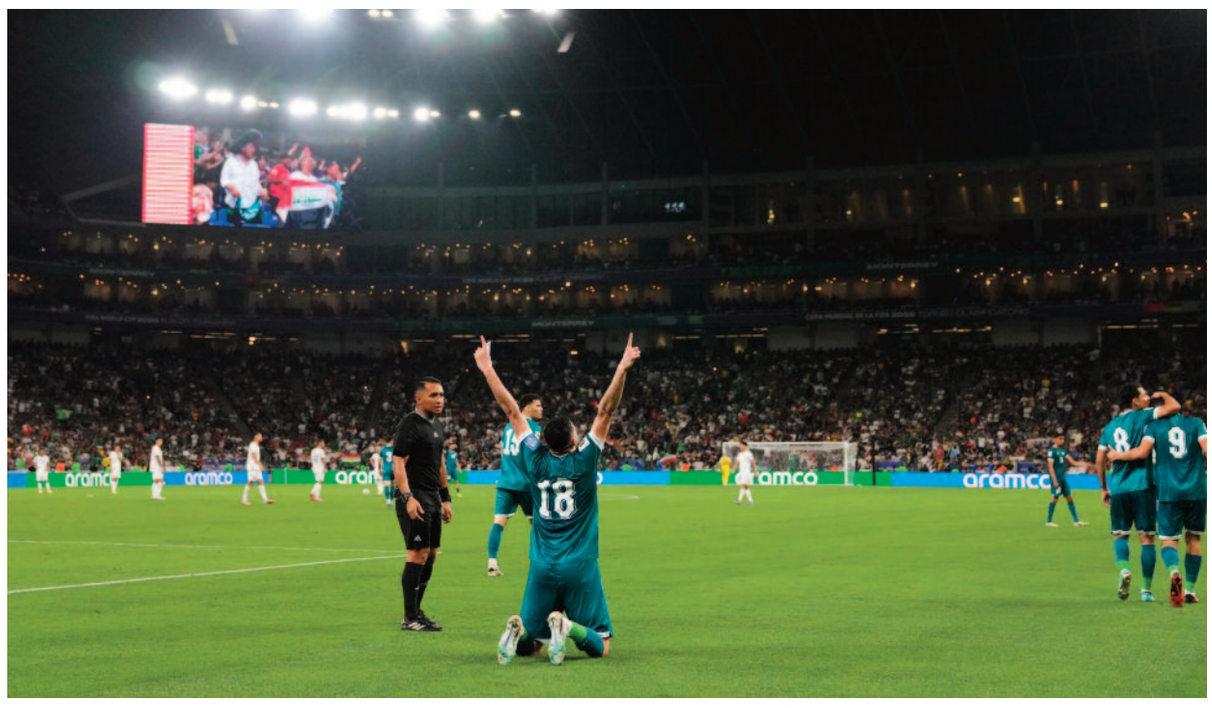
Yet KKR do not appear rattled. Historically, Sunrisers have been one of their most favourable opponents. In 30 IPL meetings so far, Kolkata have emerged victorious 20 times. Just two seasons ago, they defeated Hyderabad in all three encounters, including a playoff clash. Within the Knight Riders' camp, there is a quiet confidence, even a suggestion that the team raises its intensity a notch when facing this particular rival.

Neutralising Abhishek could be central to that plan. The left-hander has shown susceptibility against off-spin in high-pressure T20 tournaments, and teams have frequently countered him by introducing off-spinners early. It would not be surprising if Sunil Narine takes the new ball at Eden. Though KKR's spinners were not especially effective in their opening match at Wankhede, the management has refrained from blaming the bowlers, pointing instead to a surface that offered little assistance. Even Mumbai's elite attack, including Jasprit Bumrah, conceded heavily there.

Eden Gardens is expected to produce another high-scoring spectacle. Early signs suggest a pitch with a healthy covering of grass, unlikely to turn sharply but offering some encouragement to pacers. At the same time, stroke-makers should find value for their shots, setting the stage for a potential run-fest.

New Zealand Shatter India's World Record with Stunning 347-Run Chase in Wellington

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: New Zealand rewrote the record books on Wednesday, chasing down 347 against South Africa in Wellington to register the highest successful run chase in women's One-Day International history. The landmark victory came just five months after India had set the previous world record, underlining the rapidly rising standards of the women's game. South Africa, batting first in the second ODI, compiled a formidable 346 for 6 in their allotted 50 overs. Remarkably, the innings was built without a century, but it thrived on collective brilliance. Captain Laura Wolvaardt led from the front with a fluent 69, while Anneke Bosch played a scintillating knock of 91. Chloe Tryon added further impetus with a vital 52, pushing the total well beyond the 340-mark and seemingly placing the contest firmly in South Africa's control. However, what followed was a chase for the ages. New Zealand approached the daunting target with fearless intent and remarkable composure. Amelia Kerr produced one of the finest innings in ODI history, remaining unbeaten on a majestic 179 off 139 balls. Her knock was a masterclass in timing and temperament, blending calculated aggression with technical brilliance. Kerr found steady support in Isabella Gaze, who contributed a crucial 68, ensuring the chase never lost momentum. With two balls to spare and just four runs needed to reach 350, Kerr fittingly sealed the victory with a boundary, taking New Zealand to a memorable eight-wicket win. The achievement eclipsed India's 339-run chase against Australia in last year's World Cup semifinal, a record that had stood as a symbol of modern batting dominance.Before India's historic effort in October, Australia had held the record with a successful chase of 331.



Iraq's Aymen Hussein celebrates scoring his side's 2nd goal during the World Cup playoff final soccer match between Iraq and Bolivia in Monterrey, Mexico.

FIFA Stands Firm as Iran's World Cup Participation Confirmed Amid War Tensions, Iraq Clinch Historic Return

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: As geopolitical tensions cast a long shadow over global sport, football finds itself at the crossroads of conflict and competition. With war raging in the region and political rhetoric intensifying, uncertainty loomed over Iran's participation in the upcoming FIFA World Cup in the United States. That uncertainty, however, was firmly addressed by FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who made it unequivocally clear that Iran will travel to America and compete as scheduled.



Infantino, who was present in Turkey to watch Iran's commanding 5-0 victory over Costa Rica in a preparatory friendly, dismissed any speculation about alternative arrangements. His message was direct and uncompromising: there is no Plan B. Iran will play its matches at the designated venues in accordance with the official schedule. Speaking after the match, the FIFA chief emphasized that everything remains on track and that discussions with players and coaching staff confirmed their readiness to participate.

The backdrop to this firm stance is a climate of heightened tension. Iran had earlier hinted at the possibility of not traveling to the United States due to security concerns amid ongoing hostilities involving America and Israel. The situation was further inflamed when former U.S. President Donald Trump issued a public warning suggesting that, for safety reasons, it might not be advisable for Iranian players to attend the tournament.

Despite assurances from football's governing body, Iranian players continued to voice their protest on the field. Before kickoff, stars such as Mehdi Taremi carried photographs of civilians reportedly killed in joint military operations, turning the pre-match ceremony into a moment of silent resistance. In previous fixtures, players had staged symbolic gestures, including walking onto the pitch carrying school bags, underscoring their solidarity with victims of conflict.

Iraq sealed their own historic qualification by defeating Bolivia, earning their ticket as the 48th team in the expanded World Cup format. Goals from Ali Al-Hamadi and Aymen Hussein secured victory, with Bolivia's Moises Paniagua netting a consolation. The triumph marks Iraq's return to the World Cup stage after a 40-year absence, a remarkable achievement given the challenges the nation has faced in the lead-up to the qualifiers.

Calm, Confident and Champion-Minded: Krunal Pandya Reveals the New RCB Spirit Fueled by Virat Kohli's Fire

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the ongoing IPL season, and according to star all-rounder Krunal Pandya, that serenity could be the team's greatest strength. After lifting their maiden IPL title last year, RCB appear more settled, more assured and far more united in purpose. The transformation, Krunal suggests, lies not just in skill but in clarity and belief.



Reflecting on the dressing room atmosphere, Krunal observed that this year's environment feels noticeably more composed compared to the previous season. Last year, despite their historic triumph, the squad was relatively new, and players were still building understanding and chemistry. Now, familiarity has replaced uncertainty. The players know one another well, understand individual strengths and weaknesses, and most importantly, are fully aware of their respective roles within the team structure. That clarity has fostered trust, and trust has brought calmness.

Krunal himself was instrumental in RCB's championship-winning campaign, earning the Player of the Match award in the final. Yet the seasoned all-rounder remains grounded. He credited faith and composure for his success on the grand stage, stating that performing under pressure is about maintaining focus amid chaos. While he admits feeling the weight of big occasions, he believes his ability to remain steady in those moments sets him apart. For Krunal, major stages seem to bring out his finest performances, as though destiny has reserved them for him.

Central to RCB's renewed aura is the ever-inspiring presence of Virat Kohli. Krunal was unequivocal in his admiration, describing Kohli as one of the greatest cricketers of any era. He spoke of Kohli's relentless hunger for victory and unmatched passion for the game, insisting that no matter the generation, the former India captain would have risen to the top.

RCB skipper Rajat Patidar echoed similar sentiments. After Kohli's breathtaking unbeaten 69 off just 38 balls against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Patidar was left in awe. Chasing a daunting target of 202, RCB cruised to victory with 26 balls to spare, largely due to Kohli's masterclass. Patidar remarked that with Kohli at the crease, no target appears unreachable.

Italy's World Cup Dream Shattered Again as Bosnia & Herzegovina Script History in Zenica

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 1 April: Italy's long and painful exile from the FIFA World Cup will continue for another four years after the four-time champions suffered a dramatic playoff defeat to Bosnia and Herzegovina on Tuesday night. In a tense encounter at Bilino Polje Stadium in Zenica, the Azzurri were beaten 4-1 in a penalty shootout, marking their third consecutive failure to qualify for football's grandest tournament. Their last appearance on the World Cup stage remains 2010, a statistic that now feels increasingly astonishing for a nation of such rich footballing heritage. The evening began with promise for Italy. Showing urgency and control, they



seized the initiative early in the first half. Within fifteen minutes, Nicolo Barella threaded a precise pass to Moise Kean, who finished clinically to give the visitors the lead. Italy appeared composed and dominant, dictating the tempo and silencing the home crowd. However, the match shifted dramatically in the 42nd minute when defender Alessandro Bastoni received a straight red card for a foul on a Bosnian attacker. Reduced to ten men, Italy's balance was disrupted, and Bosnia and Herzegovina sensed opportunity. The hosts intensified their pressure after the break, testing Italy's resilience.

The breakthrough came in the 79th minute. Edin Džeko delivered a dangerous cross from the right flank into the box, where Haris Tabaković rose to head home the equalizer. The stadium erupted as belief surged through the Bosnian side. Only two outstanding saves from Gianluigi Donnarumma prevented Italy's elimination in regulation time, pushing the match into extra time. Neither team found a winner during the additional thirty minutes, leaving the contest to be decided by penalties. Italy's hopes faltered immediately when Pio Esposito fired the opening kick over the crossbar. Although Sandro Tonali converted his attempt, Bryan Cristante struck the bar soon after. Bosnia and Herzegovina were flawless from the spot, and when Bajraktarević converted the decisive penalty, history was sealed. For Italy, it is another chapter of disappointment and introspection. Once kings of the global game, the Azzurri now face mounting questions about their future as a footballing powerhouse, left once more to watch the World Cup from afar.



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