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Business & Entertainment

Udaipur Runs Beyond the Finish Line

With 30 days remaining for the third edition of the Vedanta Zinc City Half Marathon, Udaipur has already crossed an important milestone: more than 5,500 registrations across the 21.097 km, 10 km and 5 km categories. The numbers are significant, but the larger story is what they represent for the city.

The marathon is no longer merely a sporting event. It has evolved into a symbol of Udaipur's growing identity as a sports tourism destination. Set against the lakes of Fateh Sagar, the Aravalli hills and the city's heritage landscape, the event offers participants an experience that few races in India can match. The presence of runners from across the country and abroad shows that endurance sport is increasingly moving beyond metropolitan centers.

Editorial

Equally important is the inclusive character of the event. Professional athletes, first-time runners, students, families and corporate teams will share the same course under the banner of "One Run, One Community." Such participation strengthens social connection and promotes a culture of health and active living.

The economic impact should not be overlooked. Hotels, restaurants, transport operators and local businesses are likely to benefit from the increased visitor footfall, creating a positive ripple effect across the city's tourism ecosystem.

The association of the marathon with the #RunForZeroHunger cause adds a meaningful social dimension, reminding us that sport can inspire both personal fitness and collective responsibility.

As Udaipur prepares for 6 September, the challenge is not only to organize a successful race but to build a lasting sporting culture. If sustained with good planning, safety and community participation, the Vedanta Zinc City Half Marathon can become one of India's most respected destination races—and a proud annual celebration of Udaipur's beauty, energy and spirit.

Udaipur Unites for 300-Foot Tricolour Campaign

Udaipur: To celebrate India's Independence Day with community participation and patriotism, Urban Square Mall will launch the "Rang De Udaipur" campaign on August 3, inviting citizens to collectively paint a 300-foot-long and 18-foot-high national flag. The completed tricolour will be unveiled during a grand ceremony on August 15.

The campaign will bring together students, resident welfare associations (RWAs), educational institutions, business groups, doctors, healthcare workers, artists, families, and citizens from across the city. Every participant will contribute a brushstroke, symbolising unity, pride, and love for the nation. The final artwork will be completed between August 11 and 14.Nandini Taneja, CEO of Bhumika Enterprise, said the initiative aims to transform a simple painting activity into a city-wide celebration of patriotism and togetherness. Conceived and coordinated by Urban Sketchers Udaipur, the campaign will be guided by artists and volunteers, making the giant tricolour a lasting symbol of Udaipur's collective spirit and national pride.

Kesulalji M. Sa.'s 113th birth anniversary celebrated in Udaipur

Udaipur : The 113th birth anniversary of revered ascetic Kesulalji M. Sa. was marked with a devotional and commemorative gathering at Keshavdham Mahavir Bhavan in Bhupalpura, where speakers reflected on his life of penance, renunciation, equanimity and service to Jain teachings.

Keshavdham Seva Sansthan president Mahesh Bamb said the program was held in the presence of Dr. Rajendra Muni M. Sa., Chaitanya Muni M. Sa., Kevalya Muni M. Sa., Sadhvi Vasudhaji M. Sa., Vijaytaji M. Sa., Sheetalji M. Sa. and Shrutiji M. Sa.

Addressing the gathering, Sadhvi Shrutiji M. Sa. said Kesulalji M. Sa. left such a deep imprint of penance and equanimity on society that he continues to be remembered as a "Tap Samrat" (Emperor of Austerity). She noted that many ongoing initiatives related to penance, charity and compassion for living beings are inspired by his teachings.

Sadhvi Vasudhaji M. Sa. said the spiritual energy created by his life of austerity has transformed Keshavdham into a place of pilgrimage.Kevalya Muni M. Sa. described Kesulalji M. Sa.'s personality as so vast that it could not be fully explained in a few hours. He said a person is remembered either through writings left behind or through a life so exemplary that future generations write about it.Media coordinator Sampat Bapna highlighted that Dr. Rajendra Muni M. Sa., while addressing the assembly, said that Indian tradition regards the guru as a sacred pilgrimage in himself. He emphasized that Kesulalji M. Sa. lived a simple life with lofty ideals and was revered by people across communities, irrespective of wealth or religious background. Bapna further noted that the saint is remembered for approximately 58 years of continuous severe austerities, including 17 month-long fasts and other penances considered equivalent to nearly 40 years of rigorous spiritual discipline.

The function was presided over by Dr. B. S. Bamb, with R. K. Jain, astrologer Kantilal Jain, Dr. Revant Singhvi and Ashok Singhvi attending as special guests. Donors and contributors were honored with traditional shawls during the ceremony.The event was conducted by Himmat Ranka, while devotional bhajans were presented by Jitendra Gandharv and his team.Keshavdham Seva Sansthan director Vivek Chhajed said that on the occasion of the birth anniversary, devotees visited Ashadham and served Gautam Prasad with respect to nearly 300 residents. A large number of devotees and community members participated in the celebrations and offered their services.

Coconut Coir: A Simple Way to Save Water

With the rapid and uncontrolled extraction of groundwater, the earth is gradually sinking in several parts of the country. In some areas, land is subsiding at a rate of nearly 25 centimetres per year. As a result, the capacity and space available for groundwater recharge are also decreasing. In certain places, the land has even lost its natural ability to facilitate effective groundwater recharge.

This was highlighted by Water Conservationist Dr. P. C. Jain, who has been actively involved in the water conservation movement for the past 26 years. He was addressing students of PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, who were selected as Water Ambassadors and Water Knowledge Leaders.

Dr. Jain urged the young Water Ambassadors to understand that it is still not too late to take corrective action. He emphasized the importance of following the principle of "Catch rain where it falls and when it falls." He encouraged students to promote groundwater recharge and ensure that the water extracted through the various groundwater extraction systems installed in homes is properly recharged, thereby helping protect the earth and conserve precious groundwater resources.

The Jal Prayas programme also provided students with valuable information about water conservation, groundwater management, rainwater harvesting, and the importance of responsible water use.

The following students were selected as Water Knowledge Leaders:

Manan Pawar, Tirth Dave, Kavya Jain, Mandeep Kharade, Niharka Adha, Ayush Kanaujiya, Manasvi Kumari, Lakshita Sen, Aaradhya Sharma, Nakulnath Chauhan, Bhavya Raj, Ojasvi Sharma, Chitrangada Saxena, Purvi Vasita, Arun, and Bhumika Kumari.

Dr. P. C. Jain was welcomed by Vice Principal A. H. Khan. The programme was conducted by Tarachand Saini, while Acharya Rajeshwar Singh proposed the vote of thanks and expressed his gratitude to Dr. Jain for his valuable guidance and contribution to water conservation awareness.

Water Awareness Programme at Government Sindhi Medium School

On the same day, a second Water Awareness Programme was organized at Government Sindhi Medium School, Pratap Nagar. During the programme, eight students were appointed as Water Ambassadors. They were educated about the importance of water conservation and encouraged to take a pledge to save water every day and increase water availability through rainwater harvesting and conservation during the monsoon season.

The programme was conducted by Shambhu Singh Asoliya.

Through these initiatives, students were encouraged to become responsible custodians of water and to spread the message of conservation within their families and communities. The programmes reinforced the importance of taking immediate and collective action to protect groundwater and secure a sustainable water future. (Dr Munesh Arora)

ZFA duo Dangi Mardi and Sonam Ghosh earn India U-17 trials call-up

Udaipur: Hindustan Zinc on Monday announced that Zinc Football Academy (ZFA) players Dangi Mardi and Sonam Ghosh have been selected for the India Under-17 Women's National Team Trials Camp, which will be held in Bengaluru this week as part of preparations for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers scheduled for October 2026.

The four-day camp will be used to shortlist players for the final national squad.

Both players have been standout performers for ZFA during a landmark season for the academy's girls programme. Their performances helped the team win the

Rajasthan State Senior Women's League title along with the Doon Cup, Under-15 Asmita Football League and DAV U-19 Nationals, while also guiding the side to the semi-finals of the inaugural AIFF U-17 Women's Youth League.

Goalkeeper Sonam Ghosh, 15, has received her second national camp call-up after attending the trials last year, while forward Dangi Mardi, 15, has earned her first national team trials selection following a series of impressive attacking performances.

The duo belongs to ZFA's first girls' batch launched in 2025, and within a year the young squad has emerged as one of the strongest youth teams in the country.

The selection is being seen as another milestone for Hindustan Zinc's women's football initiative. Since its inception in 2018, the AIFF 3-star rated Zinc Football Academy has produced several India age-group players, including Rajrup Sarkar, Sahil Poonia, Prem Hansdak and Mohammed Kaif.

Hindustan Zinc said the achievement reflects its continued commitment to grassroots sports development, women's empowerment and community development through its social impact initiatives.

With the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers approaching, attention will now turn to the Bengaluru camp, where Dangi Mardi and Sonam Ghosh will aim to secure places in the final Indian squad and take the next step toward international football.

Udaipur to host state U-17 badminton meet

Udaipur : The Rajasthan State Under-17 Badminton Championship will be held in Udaipur from Aug. 22 to 27 at Lavkush Stadium and Chawat Sports Academy.

State Badminton Association Secretary K.K. Sharma said players from around 30 districts are expected to participate. Qualifying matches will be held on Aug. 22 and 23, while main draw matches will begin on Aug. 24.

The tournament will feature singles, doubles and mixed doubles events, and performances will be used to select the Rajasthan Under-17 team for the National Under-17 Badminton Championship to be held in Karnataka from Nov. 30 to Dec. 5.

Kamal Bhandari has been named organizing chairman, while Sudhir Bakshi, secretary of the Udaipur District Badminton Association, will serve as organizing secretary. Vinu Hiran will be joint organizing secretary.

Sharma said Rajasthan's young shuttlers have strengthened their presence at the international level through consistent performances. He highlighted notable results in the under-15, under-17 and under-19 categories.

In the Under-15 and Under-17 categories, Anshuman Choudhary (U-17 boys singles), Anvi Rathore (U-15 and U-17 girls singles) and Manan Sharma (U-15 mixed doubles) have been selected for the Indian team for the Badminton Asia Junior Championships to be held in Chengdu, China, from Sept. 8 to 13. A special training camp is being conducted in Guwahati.

In the Under-19 category, Parul Choudhary has been selected for the BWF World Junior Individual Championships in Cairo, Egypt, from Oct. 11 to 17. Officials described it as the first time a female player from Rajasthan has been selected for the international junior championship.

Bakshi said the selections show that Rajasthan has a strong pool of badminton talent and several more young players are emerging who can represent the state and the country at the international level.

The district association also announced its new executive committee. Kamal Bhandari was elected president, Sudhir Bakshi secretary and Vinu Hiran treasurer. Rajendra Galundia, Surendra Nahar, Yogesh Pokharna, Himmatsingh Porwal, Vinay Joshi and Bhagwan Swaroop Vaishnav were elected vice presidents, while Chand Chawat became joint secretary.

Bhandari thanked all office-bearers for their collective efforts in successfully conducting the association's activities during the past year and expressed hope for continued teamwork in the future.

In the Spotlight: Actress Zara Patel

Newcomer actress Zara Patel is making headlines ahead of her Bollywood debut with two Hindi films being produced by Tirupati Production. Directed by Ajit Verma, the films feature Zara in challenging and contrasting roles — an Indian intelligence officer, a tough police officer, and a lively village girl in a double role. One film has completed shooting, while the other is in its final phase. Zara credits director Ajit Verma and her family for supporting her journey from social media, modelling and music videos to feature films. One film is expected around Diwali and the second around New Year.

Selection Committee Selects 110 Films from 527 Films Received from 47 Countries

Jaipur: A total of 110 films have been nominated for competition at the 9th Aryan International Children's Film Festival of Jaipur–AICFF 2026 and the 11th Sixteen (16) International Film Festivals–16IFF 2026, organised by the Jaipur International Film Festival Trust. Both film festivals will be held from August 26 to 27, 2026, in Jaipur, India. 49 Films Nominated for AICFF 2026 For the 9th Aryan International Children's Film Festival of Jaipur–AICFF 2026, the Selection Committee has nominated 49 films from 27 countries, selected from a total of 250 films received from 35 countries.The 49 films nominated for AICFF 2026 comprise 19 Short Fiction films, 11 Feature Fiction films, 6 Short Animation films, 3 Animation Features, 4 Short Documentaries, 3 Documentary Features, 1 Documentary Short, 1 Animation Short and 1 Web Series. 61 Films Nominated for 16IFF 2026 For the 11th Sixteen (16) International Film Festivals–16IFF 2026, the Selection Committee has nominated 61 films from 21 countries, selected from a total of 277 films received from 38 countries. The 61 films nominated for 16IFF 2026 comprise 29 Short Fiction films, 13 Feature Fiction films, 13 Documentary Features, 3 Short Documentaries, 2 Short Animation films and 1 Documentary. Special Screenings for Children and School Students Selected films from AICFF 2026 and 16IFF 2026 will be screened specially at various schools in Jaipur. The initiative aims to connect students with quality and thought-provoking films from India and around the world, while promoting education, creativity, social awareness and human values through cinema.

Learn Patience and the Spirit of Public Service from Bhagirath's Penance: Prashant Agrawal

Udaipur: During the ongoing Shiv Bhakti Katha organized by Narayan Seva Sansthan on the auspicious occasion of the holy month of Shravan, the institution's President Prashant Agrawal narrated the inspiring story of King Sagar, Bhagirath's penance, and the divine descent of River Ganga to Earth. He said that Bhagirath's life stands as a timeless example of patience, unwavering determination, and selfless dedication to the welfare of humanity.

He emphasized that if people rise above personal interests and commit themselves to serving society, many seemingly impossible goals can be achieved. Prashant Agrawal explained that Bhagirath undertook intense penance to secure salvation for the descendants of King Sagar. His devotion and steadfast resolve ultimately led to the descent of the holy River Ganga to Earth. To contain the mighty force of the river, Lord Shiva received Ganga in His matted locks before allowing her to flow across the land. Agrawal said this episode teaches that achieving great objectives requires perseverance, sacrifice, and proper guidance. Drawing parallels between the ancient narrative and present-day life, he spoke about seeking Lord Shiva's blessings for wisdom and the welfare of humanity.

He remarked that society today needs the kind of wisdom that enables individuals to distinguish right from wrong while fostering compassion and empathy for others. According to him, true service becomes meaningful only when it is guided by sensitivity, dedication, and a genuine spirit of selflessness. During the discourse, Prashant Agrawal also interacted with specially abled beneficiaries receiving treatment and rehabilitation at Narayan Seva Sansthan through the "Apno Se Apni Baat" (Heart-to-Heart with Our Own) initiative.

He listened to their experiences, sought feedback from both beneficiaries and their family members, and invited suggestions to further enhance the institution's services. The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for the care and support extended by the organization. The event concluded with devotees participating in prayers to Lord Shiva and reaffirming their commitment to public service and the welfare of humanity.

Dr. Mrinal Deshraj honoured with Ashoka Award, honorary doctorate

Mumbai: Television actress Dr. Mrinal Deshraj has been honoured with the Ashoka Award for Performing Arts and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Maryland, USA, recognising her contribution to acting and the performing arts.

The actress, known for her role in "Ishqbaaaz," said the honours reflected years of dedication and the love of audiences. As the show completed 10 years, she recalled the strong bond shared by the cast and crew, describing it as a family that remained connected beyond the serial.

Dr. Deshraj, who played a negative character in the show, said the off-screen atmosphere was supportive and filled with shared experiences. She also spoke about the changing television industry, noting that strong stories and honest performances remain the key to connecting with viewers.

Saying she now chooses projects that offer creative satisfaction, Dr. Deshraj called both honours among the most meaningful achievements of her career and said they inspire her to take on new challenges and deliver even better performances in the future.