

**Weather Forecast**

HYDERABAD	VIJAYAWADA	TIRUPATHI
H 33° C L 25° C	H 35° C L 26° C	H 36° C L 26° C

# President's Rule imposed in MANIPUR



**Biren Singh resigned on February 9.**  
**BJP failed to find a consensus on a new CM.**  
**Ethnic violence since May 2023 left over 200 dead.**  
**NPP withdrew support in November, deepening the crisis.**  
**Opposition and civil society pushed for central intervention.**  
**Parliament will now oversee the state's governance**

In the official proclamation, President Droupadi Murmu cited a constitutional breakdown as the reason for assuming direct control over the state's administration. The order, issued under Article 356 of the Constitution, grants Parliament the authority to exercise legislative powers for the state. "I, Droupadi Murmu, President of India, have received a report from the Governor of the State of Manipur and after considering the report and other information received by me, I am satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of that State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution," the notification stated.

## Political Developments Preceding the Move

The BJP-led government in Manipur faced instability after the Conrad Sangma-led National People's Party (NPP) withdrew support in November 2024. With no consensus on Biren Singh's successor, the leadership crisis intensified, leading to mounting demands from the opposition and civil society for the imposition of President's Rule. Singh resigned on February 9 following discussions with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda.

TPN Correspondent | Manipur

The central government has imposed President's Rule in Manipur, days after BJP leader and former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned amid ongoing ethnic violence. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an official notification on Thursday confirming the decision. Manipur has been grappling with ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities since May 2023, leading to over 200 deaths and widespread unrest.

## Official Notification Cites Constitutional Breakdown



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The BJP is set to mark its return to power in Delhi after 26 years with a massive oath ceremony for its new Chief Minister. Sources indicate that the party is considering Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium as the venue for the grand event.

More than 200 BJP MPs and former MPs, along with all campaign participants, will be invited. Chief Ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers of all NDA-ruled states are also expected to attend.

The BJP swept the Delhi Assembly polls, winning 48 of 70 seats—a massive gain of 41 seats compared to 2020. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which held 62 seats last time, was reduced to 22.

The party is yet to pick its Chief Minister, with the selection process set to begin once Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from his foreign visit. An observer will be appointed to



oversee the decision.

Several names are in contention for the top post, including Parvesh Verma, son of former BJP CM Saheb Singh Verma, former Delhi BJP chief Satish Upadhyay, senior leader Vijender Gupta, Ashish Sood, and Pawan Sharma. Sources suggest the BJP might opt for a woman CM, with Neelam Pahalwan, Rekha Gup-

ta, Poonam Sharma, and Shikha Roy among the four women MLAs. The cabinet is expected to have seven ministers, with discussions underway about appointing a Deputy CM to balance caste and social equations. Additionally, two MLAs will be assigned roles in Delhi Jal Board, Women's Commission, DDA, and other key posts.

## Indian Diaspora's Expectations from Modi-Trump Meet



- PM Modi begins a two-day U.S. visit, greeted by the Indian diaspora.
- Community seeks clarity on work visa renewals and immigration policies.
- Trade and defense cooperation expected to be key discussion points.
- The visit aims to strengthen India-U.S. relations and economic ties.
- Modi to meet U.S. leaders amid concerns over tariffs and migrant issues.

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## Centre Grants Z-Category Security Cover to Dalai Lama

- CRPF VIP security wing assigned to protect the Tibetan spiritual leader.
- About 30 CRPF commandos will guard him in shifts.
- Security review by intelligence agencies led to the decision.
- BJP leader Sambit Patra also provided Z-category cover in Manipur.



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi  
 The Union government has granted Z-category security cover to Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama, citing potential threats, official sources confirmed on Thursday. The VIP security wing of the Central Reserve Police Force

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## Pak Army suffers heavy casualties after ceasefire violation

TPN Correspondent | Jammu

Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district, prompting a strong response from the Indian Army. Security officials reported that enemy forces suffered "heavy casualties" in the exchange of fire in the Krishna Ghati sector.

- Pak troops violate ceasefire in Poonch
- Indian retaliation causes heavy casualties
- Security tightened along LoC after hostilities



However, the Indian Army has not officially confirmed or denied the extent of damage. This ceasefire violation, which occurred on Wednesday, is rare since India and Pakistan renewed the ceasefire agreement on February 25, 2021. It came just a day after two Indian Army personnel, including a captain, were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion triggered by suspected terrorists near the LoC in the Akhnour

sector of Jammu district. Pakistani troops initiated unprovoked firing on a forward post in the Tarkundi area, leading to a strong retaliation by Indian forces. An undated video of a Pakistani army officer paying last respects to killed soldiers has surfaced on social media. Meanwhile, a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Indian Army sustained minor injuries after accidentally stepping on a landmine while patrolling in the same sector. He was immediately evacuated to a military hospital. The situation along the LoC remains tense following a surge in cross-border hostilities in the past week. This marks the first ceasefire violation of the year and the fourth

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## Meitei body accuses Kuki groups of sustaining unrest in Manipur

COCOMI alleges Kuki groups fueling unrest

Calls for action against those justifying instability

Kuki groups continue demand for separate administration



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## Nirmala Sitharaman Introduces New Income Tax Bill

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman introduces the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Lok Sabha.
- Bill simplifies tax laws, cutting sections from 819 to 536.
- Opposition MPs walk out in protest.
- Sitharaman defends the bill, citing removal of outdated provisions.
- Sent to a Select House Committee; report due next session.



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## Timeless Lifeline, Powerful Medium - PM Modi on World Radio Day

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his wishes on World Radio Day, emphasizing the enduring relevance of radio as a powerful medium that connects and informs people globally. Taking to X, he wrote, "Happy World Radio Day! Radio has been a timeless lifeline for several people—informing, inspiring, and connecting. From news and culture to music and storytelling, it is a powerful medium that celebrates creativity." He also lauded those working in the radio industry for their contributions.

PM Modi invited citizens to share their ideas for his monthly radio program Mann Ki Baat, scheduled for February 23. Launched in 2014, the program remains a widely followed platform for public engagement. World Radio Day was first observed on February 13 after being proclaimed by UNESCO



in 2011 and later adopted by the UN General Assembly. Despite advancements in technology, radio remains a crucial tool for information, education, and emergency communication, with community radio playing a vital role in amplifying diverse voices and raising awareness on key social issues.

## Atishi Alleges Power Cuts in Delhi After BJP's Poll Victory

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi Outgoing Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Thursday alleged that multiple power cuts have been reported across the city since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the assembly elections. She claimed that over 40 outages have been recorded in just three days, raising concerns about the state's electricity management.

Atishi accused the BJP of failing to govern effectively, stating that Delhi could soon face prolonged power outages similar to those in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. "Under Arvind Kejriwal's government, the AAP administration was closely monitoring and supervising the electricity infrastructure. Now, within three days of AAP's exit, the power sector seems to have collapsed," she said at a press conference.



Her remarks come in the backdrop of BJP's landslide victory in the Delhi elections, securing 48 out of 70 seats and ending AAP's 10-year rule. The BJP has yet to announce its chief ministerial candidate, with names such as Parvesh Verma, Rekha Gupta, and Vijender Gupta reportedly under consideration.

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## Centre Grants Z-Category Security Cover to Dalai Lama

(CRPF) has been directed to take charge of his protection. The 89-year-old leader was previously guarded by the Himachal Pradesh Police, with additional security provided by local police during his visits to Delhi or other cities. Following a security review by central intelligence agencies, the government has now ensured a

uniform security arrangement across the country. A team of about 30 CRPF commandos will be deployed in shifts to secure the Dalai Lama. In a similar move, the Centre has also extended Z-category security to BJP leader Sambit Patra in Manipur, given the state's ongoing ethnic violence.

## Pak Army suffers heavy casualties after ceasefire violation

cross-border incident in five days. On Monday, a soldier was hit by a bullet from across the border while manning a forward post in the Kalal area of Rajouri district. On February 8, an Army patrol came under terrorist fire in Rajouri's Keri sector, with terrorists suspected to be attempting infiltration. Additionally, a landmine explosion on February 4-5 reportedly caused casualties among in-

filtrators in the Krishna Ghati sector. On February 10, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the White Knight Corps, reviewed the security situation along the LoC in Rajouri. The Army's White Knight Corps shared on social media that he urged troops to remain vigilant and prepared for all contingencies.

## Indian Diaspora's Expectations from Modi-Trump Meet

TPN Correspondent | Washington Prime Minister Narendra Modi has arrived in Washington, D.C., for a two-day visit, marking his first U.S. trip since Donald Trump's inauguration. Upon arrival, he was welcomed by enthusiastic members of the Indian diaspora outside Blair House. The Indian community in the U.S. sees this visit as crucial, particularly regarding immigration concerns. Many are anxious about work visa renewals, as potential policy changes could impact skilled Indian professionals' legal status and employment.

### Key Issues on the Agenda

Modi's visit comes amid rising trade tariffs and immigration uncertainties. The Indian diaspora hopes he will secure assurances on visa policies and address economic cooperation between the two nations. NDTV spoke to community members who stressed the need for clarity on H-1B visa renewals and stronger bilateral relations. During the visit, Modi is set to hold discussions with U.S. leaders on trade, defense, investment, and technology partnerships. The trip is expected to further India-U.S. cooperation while addressing key global and economic challenges.

## Indian Judiciary Dominated By Elite, Hindu, Male? Ex Chief Justice Replies

- Former CJ Chandrachud refutes claims of judiciary bias.
- Defends Article 370 verdict.
- Says courts protect personal liberties.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi Former Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud addressed key concerns about the judiciary in a candid interview with veteran journalist Stephen Sackur on BBC's HARDtalk. He responded to questions on judicial independence, gender representation, political pressure, and landmark judgments, asserting that the judiciary remains committed to safeguarding personal liberties. Responding to allegations that India's higher judiciary is dominated by elite, Hindu, upper-caste men, Chandrachud disagreed, highlighting that over 50% of new district judiciary recruits are women, with some states reaching 60-70%. He emphasized that gender balance in law schools is now reflected at the district level, and women will gradually rise to higher positions. Addressing the perception of judicial dynasties, he stated that most judges and lawyers are first-generation entrants. On political influence, he dismissed claims that the judiciary was pressured by the Modi government, citing recent election results as proof of India's strong



democratic framework. Referring to a New York Times editorial alleging judicial bias towards the ruling party, he pointed out that regional parties continue to thrive, and the courts have upheld individual liberties. He also noted that the Supreme Court granted bail to multiple political leaders and overturned judgments where necessary. Regarding the Article 370 judgment, Chandrachud defended the ruling, arguing that Article 370 was always meant to be a temporary provision. He asserted that democracy has been restored in Jammu and Kashmir, citing the peaceful transfer of power to a government different from the Union government. On statehood, he reminded that the Supreme Court secured an assurance from the Centre for its restoration "as soon as possible." On the delay in hearing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) case, he defended his tenure,

stating that he balanced old and new cases. He noted that while the UK courts lack the power to invalidate legislation, Indian courts do, and his tenure saw 62 constitutional bench judgments, many pending for decades. Addressing criticism over his faith, he clarified that his personal beliefs never influenced judicial decisions. He reiterated that judges seek calm in conflict-ridden cases and that his meditation and prayers ensure fairness to all communities. When asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to his residence for Ganesh Chaturthi, he dismissed concerns, stating that basic courtesies between constitutional functionaries should not be misinterpreted. He reaffirmed that judgments, both before and after the visit, demonstrated the Supreme Court's independence in ruling against the government when necessary.

## Protest Erupts at Jamia Millia Islamia, 10 Students Detained

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi A protest at Jamia Millia Islamia escalated on Thursday, leading to the detention of over 10 students by Delhi Police. The demonstration was sparked by disciplinary action against two PhD scholars for allegedly organizing last year's protests against university policies.

The students were protesting the show-cause notices issued to the scholars in connection with the December 2024 "Jamia Resistance Day" event, which marked the anniversary of the 2019 anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests. University officials alleged that the students vandalized property, including the central canteen and the security advisor's office, prompting administrative action. "We removed over 10 students at around 4 am after receiving a request from the university administration. Heavy security has been deployed outside the campus to maintain law and order," a police source said. The administration accused the protesters of violating campus rules, defacing university property, and carrying objectionable contraband. Despite offers to discuss grievances through a committee, student



leaders reportedly refused to engage with university officials. Student leader Sonakshi stated that the protesters had four key demands: revoking the show-cause notices, repealing the 2022 Office Memorandum restricting protests, scrapping the ₹50,000 fine for graffiti, and ensuring no future disciplinary action against students for participating in demonstrations. The university's disciplinary committee is scheduled to review the matter on February 25.

## Noida Expressway: Hefty fines for breakdowns, up to ₹20,000 penalty

TPN Correspondent | Noida The Noida Traffic Police has introduced strict new rules for vehicles breaking down on the Noida Expressway, imposing fines of up to ₹20,000 for obstructing traffic. The move aims to reduce congestion on the expressway, which sees 8 to 10 lakh vehicles daily. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Lakhman Singh Yadav stated that the rules currently apply only to commercial vehicles but will soon extend to private vehicles as well. Violations will be penalized under Section 201 of the Motor Vehicles Act, with fines ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹20,000. Since the rule's implementation, authorities have seized 22 vehicles and issued 210 challans in just one week. While some residents welcomed the move, others argued that vehicles with emergency issues, such as flat tyres, should be exempt.



Meanwhile, officials have also reduced speed limits on the Yamuna and Noida-Greater Noida Expressways. Light vehicles are now restricted to 75 km/h, while heavy vehicles must adhere to limits of 50-60 km/h. The new rules will remain in effect until February 15, 2025, to enhance road safety during peak winter months.

# Breakthrough in Centre-Opposition Row Over Waqf Report



- Opposition alleged their dissent notes were removed from the JPC report on the Waqf Bill.
- Government denied it, stating no rules were violated.
- Minister Kiren Rijiju defended the panel's authority to omit certain remarks.
- Heated Rajya Sabha exchanges led to an Opposition walkout and Speaker meeting.
- After talks, dissent notes were restored in their original form.

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
A major standoff between the government and the Opposition over the Waqf Amendment Bill report saw a breakthrough in Parliament today after an agreement was reached to restore the dissent notes of Opposition MPs in their original form. The resolution came after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Union Minister Kiren Rijiju met with Opposi-

tion leaders, following heated exchanges and a walkout in the Rajya Sabha. The controversy erupted when Opposition MPs alleged that parts of their dissent notes had been removed from the Joint Parliamentary Committee's (JPC) report on the bill. They accused the government of suppressing their objections and termed the move undemocratic. However, the government refuted the claims, insisting that no deletions were

made and that JPC chairpersons have the discretion to remove sections that cast aspersions on the committee. Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge strongly condemned the alleged removal of dissent notes, stating, "Many members have submitted their objections. Deleting them and keeping only the majority view is undemocratic." Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju countered the accusations, calling them misleading. "No rule was violated. The JPC followed all procedures, and Opposition parties are making a baseless issue out of it," he asserted. Rijiju later clarified that while dissenting opinions are part of parliamentary processes, any remarks that cast aspersions on the committee can be omitted by the chairman.

As tensions escalated, three MPs—Tirnamool Congress' Samirul Islam and Nadimul Haque, along with DMK's MM Abdulla—stormed into the Well of the Rajya Sabha, prompting warnings from Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. The session saw further drama when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman called an Opposition MP's remarks questioning Rijiju's knowledge of the matter "outrageous." Leader of the House JP Nadda accused the Opposition of trying to score political points rather than engage in meaningful debate. "The Opposition has acted irresponsibly. This is the politics of appeasement," he said. Despite the friction, the eventual agreement to include the dissent notes marked a rare instance of consensus amid an increasingly polarized Parliament.

## New rail bridge beside 'Loha Pul' in Delhi to start operations this year



- New ₹226.7 crore Yamuna rail bridge to be operational this year.
- Built parallel to Loha Pul, it will replace the old bridge for rail traffic.
- Delayed due to ASI objections, floods, and realignment issues since 2003.

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
The construction of the new Yamuna bridge, parallel to the old 'Loha Pul,' has been completed and is set to be operational within the current financial year, Northern Railways officials confirmed. The nearly 1 km-long bridge, built at a cost of ₹226.7 crore, connects Old Delhi's Yamuna Bazaar to East Delhi's Shastri Park. The railway tracks on the bridge are currently being linked to the existing rail network. Work on the project began over two decades ago but faced multiple delays. "Work on the bridge, including foundation, blanketing, and earthwork, is complete. Two railway underbridges (RUBS) have

been built at both ends. Track linking is done towards the Delhi-Shahdara side, while the connection to Old Delhi is ongoing. Once finished, a detailed inspection will be conducted before calling the Commission of Railway Safety (CRS) for approval," said Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, CPRO, Northern Railways. Currently, Loha Pul carries trains on the upper deck and road traffic on the lower deck. Due to wear and tear, the speed limit for trains on the old bridge is 30 km/h. However, the new bridge will not have such restrictions, allowing faster rail movement. Northern Railways plans to shift all train traffic to the new bridge, leaving the old one solely for road vehicles.

## Cocaine Worth ₹25 Crore Seized at Delhi Airport, Two Brazilians Held



- Two Brazilian women caught smuggling 1.72 kg of cocaine at Delhi airport.
- Drugs worth ₹25.91 crore seized; capsules retrieved from their bodies.
- Officials investigating the syndicate behind the smuggling network.

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
Customs officials at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport arrested two Brazilian women for smuggling cocaine worth ₹25.91 crore in separate cases. The accused were found carrying 1.72 kg of the drug through internal body concealment while transporting narcotics from South America to India via Europe. In the first case, a woman arriving from São Paulo via Paris on January 26 was intercepted. She had ingested 93 oval-shaped capsules containing 959 grams of cocaine.

Officials retrieved 38 capsules at the airport, while the remaining 55 were extracted at Safdarjung Hospital. The seized drugs were valued at ₹14.39 crore. In the second case, another Brazilian woman from São Paulo via Paris was detained. She admitted to ingesting 79 capsules containing 786 grams of cocaine, worth ₹11.52 crore. Both were arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Authorities are now investigating the larger syndicate behind the smuggling operation.

## Delhi's AQI Improves to 'Moderate'; Minimum Temperature at 12°C

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
Delhi's air quality improved to the 'moderate' category on Thursday as strong surface winds of up to 30 km/hr persisted in the region. The city's average air quality index (AQI) stood at 129 at 9 AM, a significant drop from 212 recorded at 4 PM on Wednesday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast strong surface winds of 20-30 km/hr till Saturday, with clear skies and bright sunshine expected throughout the day. The Centre's Early Warning System (EWS) predicts the AQI to remain in the 'moderate' category until Friday, with a possibility of fluctuating between 'moderate' and 'poor' in the follow-



ing days. Meanwhile, Delhi's minimum temperature rose to 12°C on Thursday, two degrees above the seasonal normal. IMD forecasts indicate a dip to 9-11°C on Friday and 10-12°C on Saturday. The maximum temperature on Wednesday was recorded at 26.5°C, three degrees below normal, following strong winds that helped cool the city after hitting a yearly high of 29.7°C on Tuesday. The IMD expects maximum temperatures to stay between 26-28°C till Saturday.

## Three Arrested for ₹1.5 Crore Jewellery Store Heist in Delhi

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
A 31-year-old burglar and his two associates have been arrested for allegedly stealing jewellery worth ₹1.5 crore from a showroom in Lajpat Nagar's Central Market, police said on Wednesday. The primary accused, identified as Mohammed Shoab, allegedly broke into Candere, a Kalyan Jewellers property, by scaling a rear wall, entering through a bathroom window, and ransacking display cases. He remained inside for over four hours before escaping with the stolen jewellery. His two associates, Sumit Soni and Manik Kadam, were arrested for helping him sell the stolen goods. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh

said Shoab, a repeat offender with eight past cases, had been out on bail since November 2023. He had attempted a burglary at the same location on January 14 but failed. On January 29, he executed his plan, entering the showroom around midnight and looting jewellery. The theft went unnoticed due to the absence of a security alarm. The next morning, store staff discovered the break-in and alerted the police. CCTV footage played a crucial role in identifying Shoab. He had disguised himself with a cap, but investigators tracked him through a bike-taxi ride linked to his mobile number. A distinct jacket design further confirmed his identity.

## Boy, 2, kidnapped in North East Delhi, rescued; 4 held

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
A two-year-old boy who was allegedly kidnapped from northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas was rescued within 24 hours, and four people, including a couple, were arrested in connection with the case, police said on Wednesday. The accused had sold the child to a couple in Aligarh for ₹3 lakh. The arrested suspects have been identified as Nahid alias Sahiba (32), her husband Mohammed Rizwan (25), Mohammed Shokin (50), all residents of Khajuri Khas, and Chammo (54) from Aligarh, said Additional DCP (North East) Sandeep Lamba. The kidnapping was reported on Monday when the child's mother informed police

that she had lost sight of him while visiting the Sunday market. A case was registered, and an investigation was launched. CCTV footage from the area showed a man carrying the child and later meeting a woman. With the help of local intelli-



gence, the two were identified as Nahid and Rizwan. The couple was arrested from Shahdara Railway Station on Tuesday. During questioning, they allegedly revealed that Shokin had offered them money to procure a baby boy for a couple in Aligarh who wanted to adopt a child without legal formalities. Following their confession, a police team was dispatched to Aligarh, where they found the child in the custody of an elderly woman, Chammo. She informed officers that the child was meant to be adopted by her daughter and son-in-law. The child was safely rescued, and Chammo was also taken into custody.

## Delhi couple faces backlash for holding hands in public, sparks online debate

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
A young couple in Delhi has come under fire from their neighbors for what they claim to be "indecent behavior" in their residential society, despite the duo only sitting close and holding hands in public. The backlash has sparked a debate online, with many netizens calling

the accusations unjustified. According to reports, neighbors have threatened to inform their parents and are even considering involving the police. The 21-year-old man, seeking advice on how to handle the situation, shared his concerns on Reddit's "r/Delhi" community.

"I usually hang out with my girlfriend downstairs in the society, and we just sit on a bench and chill, mostly around 8:30 PM. We never do anything morally indecent except for holding hands and sitting close, which is normal at our age," he wrote. Netizens react to the controversy

A screenshot of a neighborhood group chat showed residents discussing how to handle the couple. Some suggested informing security supervisors to issue a strict warning, while others called the duo "shameless" and demanded action against them. However, the incident drew sharp

criticism online, with users questioning the hostility against the couple. "What will be the case against them? Holding hands on a bench?" one comment read, receiving over 800 upvotes. Another user remarked, "There's no case. At most, the police will try to scare them by informing their parents."

## RSS Moves to ₹150-Crore 'Keshav Kunj' Office in Delhi



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has officially relocated its Delhi office to the newly rebuilt 'Keshav Kunj' complex at Jhandewalan. The sprawling 3.75-acre facility, featuring three 12-storey buildings named Sadhna, Prerna, and Archana, is set to serve as the nerve center for RSS activities in the capital.

### A Modernized Headquarters

The redevelopment of Keshav Kunj, which took over eight years to complete, is estimated to have cost nearly ₹150 crore. The project was funded through contributions from over 75,000 individuals supportive of the Hindutva organization's ideology. Gujarat-based architect Anup Dave designed the high-rise office, which replaces the old RSS headquarters at the same location.

The three towers, each with 12 floors, will house approximately 300 rooms and offices. Besides workspaces, the facility offers residential accommodations for RSS functionaries, a library, a health clinic, and a sewage treatment plant. It also integrates solar power to partially meet its energy needs.

### Auditoriums and Facilities

Keshav Kunj boasts multiple modern facilities, including auditoriums for meetings and conferences. The largest auditorium, named after VHP

leader Ashok Singhal—one of the key figures in the Ram Temple movement—has a seating capacity of 463 people. Another hall in the complex can accommodate up to 650 attendees.

A dedicated hospital with five beds, a pathology lab, and essential diagnostic equipment has been set up within the premises. Additionally, a yoga and fitness center, equipped with modern exercise facilities, has been included to promote physical well-being among RSS members.

### RSS Chief to Inaugurate Operations

Two floors of the complex have been allocated to the RSS Delhi unit, while one floor will be used by Vishva Samvad Kendra, the organization's media wing. To mark the commencement of operations at the new headquarters, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale will attend a karyakarta sammelan (workers' gathering) on February 19. The foundation stone for the redevelopment was laid in November 2016 by Mohan Bhagwat, but the project faced multiple delays before reaching completion. With the new facility now fully operational, RSS functionaries believe the modernized headquarters will enhance the organization's organizational capacity and outreach.

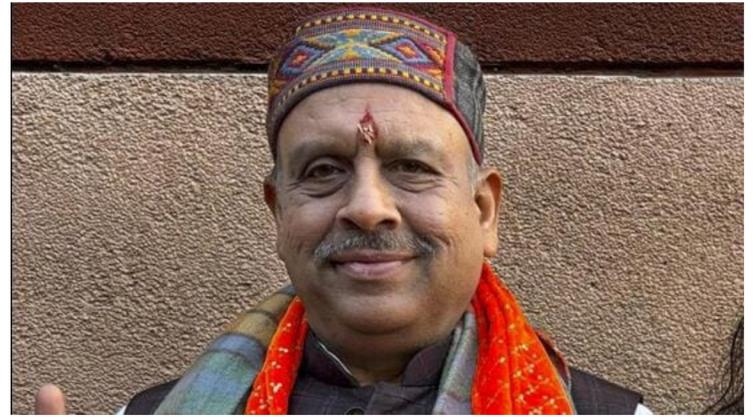
## New Delhi govt to set up 6th Pay Commission on priority, says BJP

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has pledged to constitute the 6th Delhi Finance Commission (DFC) on priority after forming the government in Delhi, aiming to enhance fund allocation for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Newly elected Rohini MLA and former Leader of Opposition Vijender Gupta made the announcement on Wednesday, accusing the outgoing Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government of delaying the commission's formation for four years.

Gupta stated that the formation of the 6th DFC has been pending since April 2021, which he claimed severely impacted Delhi's development and the financial state of urban local bodies. He emphasized that the BJP government would rectify this delay, ensuring proper financial management for municipal projects.

"The BJP is committed to Delhi's development. The 6th DFC will be constituted without delay to ensure systematic financial planning for MCD



and municipal bodies," Gupta said.

The issue of fund allocation to MCD has been a long-standing dispute between BJP and AAP. Gupta alleged that the lack of timely financial planning had affected essential public services, including road maintenance, sanitation, park upkeep, and sewer management.

### AAP's response

AAP, in response, claimed they had consistently advocated for the formation of the 6th DFC, alleging that BJP had previously resisted the move. "It has been a long-standing demand of AAP that the 6th DFC be constituted, which was previously opposed by BJP," the party said in a statement.

## AAP's Saurabh Bharadwaj turns YouTuber after Delhi election loss



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Former Delhi minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Saurabh Bharadwaj has launched a YouTube channel, "Berozgar Neta" (Unemployed Politician), following his defeat in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections. The former three-time MLA from Greater Kailash lost to BJP's Shikha Roy by over 3,000 votes.

Bharadwaj shared a video announcing his new platform, stating that the election results had "flipped his life by 180 degrees" and that he was now an "unemployed leader." He said the channel's purpose is to communicate directly with people, answer their queries, and discuss various topics daily. In his first 58-second-long video, he invited viewers to share their

suggestions and participate in discussions.

"The Delhi results announced on February 8 have changed many lives. Leaders like us have become unemployed. I want to share how things change in the life of a politician after an election loss. I will also try to respond to your questions. So please join my platform," Bharadwaj said in the video.

The 45-year-old leader, who previously handled key portfolios such as home, health, water, and transport in the Delhi government, has also promoted his new initiative on X, promising daily discussions on important issues. His channel has already garnered around 52,000 subscribers.

Bharadwaj was among several senior AAP leaders who faced defeat, including Arvind Kejriwal, Somnath Bharti, and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia. The BJP secured 48 out of 70 seats, ending AAP's decade-long rule and forming the government in Delhi after 27 years.

## Delhi HC issues notice to Amanatullah Khan on ED's plea in money laundering case



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued a notice to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator Amanatullah Khan in response to the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) plea challenging a city court's order granting him bail and refusing to take cognizance of the supplementary chargesheet in the Delhi Waqf Board (DWB) money laundering case. The court also stayed the trial proceedings against co-accused till March 21.

Khan was arrested on September 2, 2024, following ED raids at his residence in Okhla. However, he was granted bail by the trial court on November 14, 2024, citing a lack of sanction to prosecute him. The ED then moved the High Court, arguing that the trial court's order was erroneous and that Khan

was not entitled to protection under Section 197 of CrPC, which requires prior sanction to prosecute a public servant. The agency contended that the alleged offence was not committed in the discharge of his official duties.

A bench of Justice Vikas Mahajan directed Khan to file his response before March 21, the next hearing date. Meanwhile, the court instructed the trial court to defer proceedings against the co-accused until after the High Court hearing.

### ED's allegations against Khan

The ED's investigation into Khan stems from a 2016 CBI case, which accused him of illegally appointing individuals to the Delhi Waqf Board against non-sanctioned and non-existent vacancies, causing financial loss to the Delhi government while benefiting

himself. The agency also alleged that Khan illegally leased out Waqf Board properties.

In its chargesheet, the ED claimed Khan invested proceeds of crime in two properties in Okhla and Zakir Nagar with the assistance of his associates and wife. The agency alleged that Khan's wife actively helped in concealing and utilizing the illicit funds, projecting them as untainted property.

Despite these findings, the trial court refused to take cognizance of the supplementary chargesheet against Khan, citing the absence of sanction to prosecute him. The court ruled that holding him in custody without proper authorization would amount to illegal detention.

## "BJP Wants To Finish Off...": Aaditya Thackeray Rallies INDIA After AAP Loss



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray has issued a strong call to the INDIA opposition bloc, warning that democracy in India is under threat due to the ruling BJP. His remarks come in the wake of the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) recent defeat in Delhi and growing turmoil within the opposition alliance. Thackeray, who is currently in Delhi, met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and is set to meet AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal. Speaking to reporters, he expressed deep concerns over alleged election fraud and the hacking of electronic voting machines (EVMs), an accusation the opposition frequently levels against the BJP after every

electoral setback.

"The future of our country is in doubt. We don't know where our vote is going due to voter fraud and EVM hacking," Thackeray said. "Are elections even being held in a free and fair manner? We think we are living in a democracy, but that is no longer the case. What happened with us, Kejriwal ji, and the Congress can happen to Nitish Kumar ji and Chandrababu Naidu ji in the future." His reference to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was significant, given that Kumar was instrumental in forming the INDIA bloc in 2023 but later switched back to the BJP camp. With the Bihar state election approaching, speculation is

rife that the opposition is attempting to bring him back into their fold.

Meanwhile, Thackeray refused to comment on Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar's recent felicitation of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, a move seen as a betrayal by his former allies. "We will never honour a person like Shinde, who not only split our party but also Maharashtra's spine," he said.

The INDIA bloc, formed to counter the BJP in the 2024 elections, has struggled to make an impact, winning only a handful of state polls. The alliance has faced repeated criticism, particularly regarding the Congress' reluctance to coordinate seat-sharing agreements with smaller parties. Following the AAP's Delhi defeat, Congress leader Supriya Shrinete pushed back against criticism, stating, "It is not Congress' responsibility to ensure other parties win." Similar tensions surfaced after the 2023 Madhya Pradesh elections, prompting speculation about a leadership change within the alliance. However, Thackeray dismissed such concerns, affirming that the INDIA bloc operates under a joint leadership and remains intact.

## Man who saved Rishabh Pant attempts suicide with girlfriend; she dies



TPN Correspondent | Muzaffarnagar

Rajat Kumar, the man who rescued Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant after his car accident in 2022, attempted suicide along with his girlfriend, Manu Kashyap, by consuming poison. The incident took place on February 9 in Buchha Basti, Muzaffarnagar district. While 21-year-old Kashyap succumbed during treatment, 25-year-old Kumar remains critical in the hospital. The couple allegedly took the extreme step after their families opposed their relationship and arranged their marriages elsewhere due to caste differences.

Following Kashyap's death, her mother alleged that Kumar had kidnapped and poisoned her daughter, leading to further controversy in the case. Kumar had gained national recognition in December 2022 when he, along with local resident Nishu Kumar, saved Rishabh Pant after his Mercedes crashed and caught fire near Roorkee. Their quick action was widely praised, and Pant later gifted them scooters in appreciation. Pant eventually made a full recovery and returned to cricket, while Kumar now fights for his life in the aftermath of this tragic turn of events.

## Congress Congratulates Kangana Ranaut On New Cafe, Internet Reacts



TPN Correspondent | Himachal  
Actress-turned-politician Kangana Ranaut has announced the launch of her new cafe, The Mountain Story, in Manali, Himachal Pradesh. The cafe, described as her long-cherished dream, is set to open on Valentine's Day. While fans welcomed the news, an unexpected congratulatory message from the Congress stirred reactions online. The Kerala Congress's official X handle posted, "We are happy to learn about your new 'pure vegetarian' restaurant. Hope you'll serve some amazing Himachali vegetarian dishes for all tourists. Wishing all success for this venture!" Given Ms. Ranaut's BJP MP status and past political clashes with Congress leaders, the post

surprised many, sparking speculation and criticism. Social media users reacted with skepticism, with some questioning if the Congress account was hacked. One user wrote, "I am 100% sure this account is being run by a high school student on a lunch break!" while another asked, "Is this account hacked?" Even Congress supporters disapproved of the post. One critic wrote, "You keep tweeting such unnecessary posts and then wonder why you're losing elections." Ms. Ranaut had recently shared a video showcasing The Mountain Story's Himachali-style interiors, wooden furniture, and chandeliers, describing it as a "childhood dream come alive."

## Leopard crashes wedding in Lucknow, sparks panic



TPN Correspondent | Lucknow  
A wedding in Lucknow turned into a night of chaos when an uninvited guest—a leopard—entered the venue, sending guests running in fear. The incident took place at MM Lawn on Budheshwar Ring Road in Para during the wedding of Akshay Srivastava and Jyoti Kumari on Wednesday night. The leopard was spotted at around 11 PM, creating panic among the

attendees. Guests fled onto the road, with one person jumping off the first floor and sustaining injuries. The bride and groom locked themselves in a car for safety, according to eyewitnesses. Forest department officials and police arrived at the scene and launched a nearly five-hour-long rescue operation. The leopard was eventually found hiding in a room on the first floor. As forest officer Muqaddar Ali approached, the animal attacked him, leaving his left hand covered in blood. The rescue mission, which continued until 3:30 AM, successfully captured the leopard. Two camerapersons were also injured in the chaos as they were knocked down by fleeing guests.

## Comedian Samay Raina Summoned Again by Maharashtra Cyber Cell, Says He's in US

TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

YouTuber and comedian Samay Raina has been summoned for the second time this week by the Maharashtra Cyber Cell in connection with podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia's controversial remarks on his YouTube show "India's Got Latent." However, Raina has informed authorities that he is currently in the United States and will return on March 17, seeking more time to respond to the summons.

The controversy erupted after a viral video clip from the show featured Allahbadia posing an inappropriate question about intimacy between parents, which triggered widespread backlash. The comment sparked a debate over freedom of speech and decency, leading to a public outcry.

Legal Action Intensifies

Following the backlash, Allahbadia issued a video apology, calling it a "lapse in judgment." Meanwhile, Raina deleted all episodes of "India's Got Latent" from YouTube and stated that he would fully cooperate with the investigation. Authorities have already recorded the statements of seven individuals, including influencer Apoorva Makhija. Allahbadia is expected to appear before the Mumbai Police within the next two



days. The Maharashtra Cyber Department has summoned over 40 individuals linked to the show, including judges and participants from previous episodes. Additionally, the Guwahati Police have also registered a case against Allahbadia and four others, with a team currently in Mumbai to investigate the matter. Political and National Repercussions  
The issue has now reached Parliament, with Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske calling for regulations on social media content. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, while stating that

he hasn't seen the clip, emphasized the need for limits on freedom of speech to prevent societal violations. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has also stepped in, summoning Allahbadia, Raina, Makhija, Jaspreet Singh, Ashish Chanchlani, and the show's producers Tushar Poojari and Saurabh Bothra to appear before it on February 17 in New Delhi. As the investigation widens, Raina's return to India and his response to the summons will be crucial in determining the next course of action in this unfolding controversy.

## "Mummy, Papa, Forgive Me": Class 11 Student Fails JEE, Dies By Suicide

TPN Correspondent | Gorakhpur

Aditi Mishra, an 18-year-old student preparing for the JEE, died by suicide on Wednesday after failing the exam. She left a sorrowful note apologizing to her parents, saying, "Sorry mummy papa, forgive me... I could not do it..."

A student of Momentum Coaching Center in Betiahata, Aditi had been preparing for JEE for the past two years. She was staying at Satyadeep Girls Hostel in Gorakhpur. A day after the JEE results were announced, she spoke to her parents in the morning and even asked her father to recharge her mobile. Later, when her roommate returned, she found Aditi hanging from a noose made of a stole and alerted the hos-

tel warden and the police. A suicide note recovered from her room read: "Sorry mummy papa, forgive me... I could not do it... this was the end of our relationship... you guys don't cry... you guys gave me a lot of love. I could not fulfill your dreams... you guys please take care of Choti... she will definitely fulfill your dreams. Your beloved daughter- Aditi." Aditi's parents, residents of Mishraulia village in Sant Kabir Nagar district, were informed of the tragedy. Superintendent of Police (City) Abhinav Tyagi stated that the real cause of death will be confirmed after the post-mortem. The incident has once again raised concerns over the immense pressure students face during competitive exams.



## New FASTag Rules From Feb 17: Key Changes



The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is set to implement new FASTag rules from February 17, 2025, bringing significant changes to toll transactions. Vehicle owners must stay informed to avoid penalties and ensure smooth travel through toll plazas.

Key FASTag Rule Changes

The updated guidelines introduce stricter validation for FASTag balances. Vehicles with blacklisted or low-balance FASTags for over 60 minutes before reaching a toll booth will be denied passage. Blacklisting can occur due to:

- Insufficient balance
- Pending KYC updates
- Mismatch in chassis number and vehicle registration

Additionally, FASTags marked inactive for over 10 minutes after scanning at a toll plaza will also face rejection. Penalty Charges & Error Code

176 If a vehicle's FASTag meets any of the above conditions, the system will deny the transaction with error code 176. As per government regulations, the driver will then be charged double the toll fee.

These updates aim to ensure seamless toll collection by promoting active and valid FASTags, preventing congestion at toll booths, and enhancing digital transactions. Lifetime Highway Pass Under Consideration  
To simplify toll payments, the government is considering a lifetime highway pass. This would allow access to highways for 15 years with a one-time payment of ₹30,000 or an annual pass for ₹3,000 for short-term users. The initiative aims to eliminate the need for frequent FASTag recharges, ensuring hassle-free travel across the country.

## Madhya Pradesh Cops Struggle With Pen Drive Costs Under New Criminal Code

TPN Correspondent | Bhopal

A new mandate under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) requires all case-related evidence to be submitted via pen drives instead of CDs or paper records, creating an unexpected financial burden on police personnel in Madhya Pradesh. Despite the digitization effort aimed at streamlining investigations, police officers are forced to purchase pen drives out of their own pockets. With an 8GB pen drive costing around ₹300, and each case requiring multiple devices, the costs are adding up significantly. Police officials say that since July 2024, they have had to buy pen drives for ev-

ery registered case, storing video statements and forensic data as mandated by Section 105 of the BNS. Bhopal Police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra acknowledged the issue, stating that resources are being arranged but some police stations are facing initial difficulties. Retired DGP SC Tripathi criticized the lack of preparedness, questioning how the government spends crores on welfare schemes but has not allocated funds for essential law enforcement tools. A recent Union Home Ministry report revealed that between July 1 and September 3, 2024, over 5.56 lakh FIRs were registered under the new criminal

code. At this rate, police stations across Madhya Pradesh alone would be spending ₹25 lakh every month on pen drives, raising concerns about the long-term feasibility of the system without proper funding.

Legal experts argue that the government should allocate funds to cover these costs, noting that the financial burden on officers is unfair. Retired DGP SC Tripathi criticized the lack of preparation, pointing out that while the government spends crores on welfare schemes, police stations lack funds for basic investigative tools.

# Who Is Tulsi Gabbard?

From Democrat to Trump's Director of National Intelligence



TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democrat and Iraq War veteran, has been confirmed as the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) under US President Donald Trump. Her appointment, approved by a 52-48 Senate vote, has sparked widespread debate due to her past political affiliations, controversial foreign policy stances, and lack of intelligence experience.

## From Democrat to Trump Loyalist

Gabbard, 43, initially gained national recognition as a four-term Congresswoman from Hawaii and a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate. Once considered a rising star in the Democratic Party, she broke ties with the party in October 2022, criticizing it as "elitist" and detached from the concerns of ordinary Americans. She soon became an independent and later aligned herself with Trump, endorsing his re-election bid in August 2024.

Her role in Trump's campaign intensified when she was named a co-chair of his transition team. In October 2024, Gabbard officially joined the Republican Party, citing Trump's leadership as a transformative force that restored the GOP's focus on "the people and peace." This dramatic political shift set the stage for her subsequent rise in the Trump administration.

## A Military Background and Foreign Policy Controversies

Gabbard's credentials include her service in the Hawaii Army National Guard, where she completed three deployments in Africa and the Middle East. Her military experience, coupled with her time in Congress, shaped her foreign policy positions, which have often drawn scrutiny.

She has been criticized for her views on key national security issues. In 2017, she traveled to Syria and met with then-President Bashar al-Assad, who was accused of war crimes, including the use of chemical weapons against civilians. While Gabbard defended the visit by saying she "asked tough questions," critics accused her of legitimizing Assad's rule.

Gabbard has also expressed skepticism toward US intelligence assessments, a stance that has raised concerns about her new role as DNI. She has previously echoed Russian narratives about the Ukraine war, leading to allegations that her positions align with Kremlin propaganda. Her opposition to Section 702, a crucial US surveillance program that monitors suspected terrorists overseas, has further fueled doubts about her approach to national security.

## Edward Snowden and Surveillance Policy

Another contentious issue in Gabbard's record is her past support for Edward Snowden, the former Na-

tional Security Agency (NSA) contractor who leaked classified information about US surveillance programs and sought refuge in Russia. Gabbard acknowledged that Snowden's disclosures revealed important information about government overreach but maintained that his actions were illegal. Her stance on surveillance aligns with her broader skepticism of US intelligence operations, making her appointment to oversee the intelligence community a contentious decision. Critics argue that her past positions could influence her approach to classified information and surveillance policies, potentially weakening intelligence-gathering capabilities.

## Meeting PM Modi on Confirmation Day

On the very day of her confirmation, Gabbard met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington, D.C. Modi became the first foreign leader to meet the newly appointed US intelligence chief, underscoring India's importance in Washington's strategic calculations.

According to sources, the meeting also touched upon the growing presence of Khalistani elements in the United States, which had expanded significantly under the previous Biden administration. India has repeatedly raised concerns about extremist activities linked to Khalistani groups, particularly those targeting Indian diplomatic missions. With Trump back in office, there are expectations that his administration, with Gabbard as DNI, may take stricter measures against these groups.

Gabbard, who has previously expressed admiration for Modi and India's governance model, is expected to play a crucial role in shaping intelligence cooperation between the two nations.

## Challenges Ahead as Director of National Intelligence

As DNI, Gabbard will be responsible for coordinating intelligence efforts across 18 agencies, including the CIA, NSA, and FBI. Her lack of prior experience in intelligence operations has led to concerns about her ability to navigate complex security threats, especially at a time when the US faces increasing challenges from global adversaries.

While Trump and his allies view Gabbard as a principled leader who challenges establishment politics, her confirmation has deepened partisan divisions in Washington. Democrats see her appointment as a political move rather than a strategic decision for national security, while some Republicans remain skeptical about her past affiliations.

As she takes charge of US intelligence, all eyes will be on how Gabbard balances her unconventional views with the responsibilities of safeguarding national security.

# 1914, A War Story: How Indian Soldiers Left Their Mark On World War I

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron paid tributes to Indian soldiers who fought in World Wars I and II during their visit to the Mazargues War Cemetery in Marseille. Their tribute highlighted the immense sacrifices made by Indian troops, particularly in the trenches of France during World War I.

"At Mazargues War Cemetery, President @EmmanuelMacron and I paid homage to the soldiers who fought in the World Wars. This includes several Indian soldiers who valiantly fought and displayed utmost grit. All the brave soldiers answered the call of duty and fought with unwavering courage," PM Modi posted on X.

President Macron, in his tribute, acknowledged India's contributions, particularly in 1914 when over 100,000 Indian soldiers fought for France. "Ten thousand never returned. They set foot on the soil of Marseille before fighting in the mud of the trenches, unaware that they were marching to their deaths. Their sacrifice binds France and India forever," he wrote.

## India's Role in World War I

During World War I, India, then under British rule, supported the war effort in hopes of gaining greater political autonomy. The British Expeditionary Force, facing severe losses, called for reinforcements, leading to the deployment of Indian divisions. On August 6, 1914, the Lahore Division (3rd Indian War Division) and the Meerut Division (7th Indian War Division) were mobilized. Initially meant to defend the Suez Canal in Egypt, the Lahore Division was redirected to France due to the worsening war situation.

Indian soldiers arrived in Marseille on September 26, 1914, and were deployed in the trenches by October 24. They played a crucial role in several key battles, including Neuve-Chapelle, Givenchy-les-la-Bassée, Festubert, Aubers Ridge, and Loos.

## Harsh Conditions in the Trenches

Accustomed to fighting in dry, hilly regions and wearing summer cotton uniforms, Indian troops struggled with the freezing, muddy trenches of France. Many suffered from pneumonia and trench foot, a painful condition caused by prolonged exposure to wet conditions. A French journal, *Le Bochofage*, wrote in 1916: "Hell is not fire. Hell is mud." Despite the brutal conditions, Indian soldiers demonstrated exceptional bravery. The 129th Baluchis and the 57th Wilde's Rifles from the Lahore Division were later sent as reinforcements for the Alleby's Cavalry Corps at Ypres in Belgium.

During the First Battle of Ypres (October-November 1914), Sepoy Khudadad Khan of the 129th Baluchis manned a machine gun until his position was overrun by German forces. He became the first Indian to be awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest gallantry honor.

In November 1914, Naik Darwan Singh of the 39th Garhwal Rifles led an assault to recapture German-occupied trenches. Despite severe injuries, he continued leading until the trenches were cleared. He was the second Indian soldier to receive the Victoria Cross.

## Letters from the Frontlines

Many letters from Indian soldiers revealed the harsh realities of war. A soldier from Ludhiana wrote: "Don't be grieved at my death because I shall die with arms in hand, wearing the warrior's clothes. This is the happiest death that anyone can die." Another soldier, writing in Garhwali, described the horrors of battle: "It is very hard to endure the bombs, father. It will be difficult for anyone to survive and come back safe and sound. The bullets and cannonballs come down like snow. The mud is up to a man's middle."

## A Lasting Legacy

The sacrifices of Indian soldiers in World War I played a significant role in shaping India's fight for independence. Their bravery in foreign lands is now being acknowledged globally, as seen in the tributes paid by Modi and Macron. The recognition serves as a reminder of their extraordinary contribution to world history, ensuring that their heroism is never forgotten.



# India Slips to 96th Rank in Global Corruption Index 2024

India has slipped three positions in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2024, ranking 96th among 180 countries. Compiled by Transparency International, the index measures perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide on a scale from 0 to 100, where "0" signifies high corruption and "100" indicates a very clean system. India's score declined from 39 in 2023 to 38 in 2024, continuing a downward trend from 40 in 2022.

## India and Its Neighbours

Among India's neighboring countries, Pakistan ranked 135th, Sri Lanka stood at 121st, and Bangladesh dropped further down to 149th place. China, meanwhile, secured a relatively better position at 76th. The re-

port highlights that these countries continue to struggle with deep-rooted corruption, which affects governance, economic growth, and public trust in institutions.

## Denmark Leads, South Sudan at the Bottom

Denmark retained its position as the least corrupt country in the world, followed by Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand. At the opposite end of the index, South Sudan ranked as the most corrupt nation, scoring just 8 points. It displaced Somalia, which also recorded a low score of 9. Other countries with poor rankings included Venezuela (10) and Syria (12).

## Major Global Declines

Many influential countries recorded their worst rankings in over a decade. The United States dropped from 24th place to 28th, with its score declining from 69 to 65. France slipped four points to 67, landing at the 25th spot, while Germany saw a three-point drop to 75, tying with Canada at 15th place. Mexico, grappling with a lack of judicial action in corruption cases, fell five points to 26. Russia, already plagued by governance concerns, dropped another four points to 22, reinforcing Transparency International's observation that Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has "further entrenched authoritarianism."

## Impact of Corruption on

## Climate Change

The report also warned of the dangers corruption poses to global climate efforts. A lack of transparency and accountability in climate financing increases the risk of embezzlement and misuse of funds. "Undue influence," often from the private sector, obstructs policies aimed at reducing emissions and combating climate change. The misuse of climate funds has direct consequences on the world's ability to adapt to global warming, as resources meant for vulnerable populations are diverted.

## Call for Global Action

Transparency International emphasized that corruption remains a serious threat to democracy, stability,

and human rights. "The international community and every country must make tackling corruption a top and long-term priority. This is crucial to pushing back against authoritarianism and securing a peaceful, free, and sustainable world," the report stated.

While 32 countries have significantly improved their corruption standings since 2012, 148 countries have either stagnated or worsened. The findings reinforce the urgent need for stronger anti-corruption measures worldwide. India's drop in the rankings underscores the necessity for more robust institutional reforms and stricter enforcement of anti-corruption laws to restore public trust and improve governance.

# PM Modi Meets US Intelligence Chief Tulsi Gabbard in Washington

**TPN Correspondent | Washington**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the newly appointed US Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, in Washington, focusing on strengthening intelligence cooperation between India and the United States. During the meeting, Modi congratulated Gabbard on her confirmation as the nation's top intelligence official and acknowledged her longstanding support for India-US relations. Discussions revolved around enhancing intelligence-sharing in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, and emerging threats. "Met USA's Director of National Intelligence, @TulsiGabbard in Washington DC. Congratulated her on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary,"

Modi posted on X. The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, also confirmed the discussions in a post on X, highlighting the focus on security collaboration. Modi arrived in Washington on Wednesday evening after co-chairing the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in France with French President Emmanuel Macron. He is set to meet former US President Donald Trump at the White House on Thursday for bilateral discussions. Gabbard, 43, was sworn in as Director of National Intelligence in the Oval Office on Wednesday, just hours after the Senate confirmed her appointment with a narrow 52-48 vote. Attorney General Pam Bondi administered the oath of office. Trump, praising Gabbard's appoint-

ment, described her as "an American of extraordinary courage and patriotism," noting her three deployments in the Army National Guard and her tenure as a Democratic Congresswoman. In her remarks after being sworn in, Gabbard acknowledged the challenges facing the intelligence community and emphasized the need for restoring public trust. "Unfortunately, the American people have very little trust in the intelligence community, largely because they've seen the weaponisation and politicisation of an entity that is supposed to be purely focused on ensuring our national security," she stated. Gabbard's confirmation followed two months of deliberations over her qualifications to lead US intelligence agencies and oversee the President's daily intelligence briefings.



## Sachin Pilot's Subtle Dig at Ashok Gehlot Over Rajasthan Phone Tapping Row



**TPN Correspondent | Rajasthan**  
Congress leader Sachin Pilot has demanded a white paper from the Rajasthan government after state minister Kirori Lal Meena alleged that his phone was tapped. Pilot called for immediate action, stating that such serious allegations should not be ignored. "A responsible minister from the gov-

ernment is saying his phone was tapped. The government needs to take action," Pilot said, expressing surprise that instead of investigating the claim, the BJP government had issued a showcause notice to Meena. Pilot's remarks also appeared to be a veiled attack on former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, as the Congress government under Gehlot had been accused of tapping the phones of MLAs loyal to Pilot during the 2020 political crisis. "Phone tapping is a serious offence, now or earlier, it should be investigated," he asserted. The issue of phone tapping has once again rocked the Rajasthan Assembly, with Congress using it to target the BJP

government. Earlier, BJP leader and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat had filed a case alleging that the Gehlot government tapped phone calls. Lokesh Sharma, a former Officer on Special Duty to Gehlot, reportedly admitted in court that the Congress leader had provided recordings of rebel MLAs to be leaked to the media. The case is currently being heard in Delhi's Patiala House court. Pilot also raised concerns over the farmers' agitation in Gharsana, Anupgarh district, where farmers are demanding more water from the canal system. He urged the state government to intervene, warning that similar protests in the past had turned volatile.

## Private sector must lead defence manufacturing: Rajnath Singh

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**  
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized the critical role of the private sector in India's defence manufacturing, stating that the country is undergoing a revolutionary transformation. Speaking at the indigenisation event and valedictory ceremony of Aero India 2025, he highlighted how India's fighter jets, missile systems, and naval vessels are not just protecting borders but also gaining global attention. Singh underscored the shift from India's historical dependence on defence imports to self-reliance, noting that nearly 70% of defence equipment is now being manufactured domestically. He credited this progress to the trust and commitment of stakeholders, leading to increased defence exports, including systems like BrahMos and Akash missiles.

The Defence Minister pointed out that India's defence industrial complex now includes 16 Defence Public Sector Undertakings, 430 licensed companies, and approximately 16,000 MSMEs. He stressed the need for a strong private sector contribution, which currently stands at 21% of total defence production. The government, he said, is committed to removing uncertainties and ensuring a level playing field for private companies in defence manufacturing. Praising the Indian armed forces for their confidence in indigenous defence products, Singh said their acceptance is crucial for achieving complete self-reliance. He also expressed confidence that India is evolving from a participant to a global leader in defence innovation and aerospace technology. Aero India 2025 saw record participation, with over 500 delegates from 84 countries, including 931 exhibitors—782 from India—alongside 58 Original Equipment Manufacturers and 115 global CEOs. With the three business days concluding on February 12, the final two days of the event will be open to the public for the air show.



## Meitei body accuses Kuki groups of sustaining unrest in Manipur



- COCOMI alleges Kuki groups fueling unrest
- Calls for action against those justifying instability
- Kuki groups continue demand for separate administration

their discontent for political gains." The statement comes amid speculation of President's Rule in the violence-hit state following the Chief Minister's resignation on Sunday, a day before the Congress was set to introduce a no-confidence motion in the Assembly. The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) and the Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU), along with 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs and militant groups under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement, remain firm on their demand for a separate administration. Kuki leaders argue that the ethnic violence since May 2023 has intensified their call for a Union Territory or autonomous region. The World Kuki-Zo Intellectual Council (WKZIC) recently submitted a memorandum to the Manipur Governor, highlighting that Kuki tribes have been seeking statehood since 1946-47. The document cited petitions to India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and reiterated their demand for constitutional recognition under Article 3. With over 250 people killed and 50,000 displaced since the conflict erupted nearly two years ago, tensions remain high in the state. COCOMI has urged the central government to take strict measures against any group using violence and unrest for political leverage.

**TPN Correspondent | Imphal**  
The Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an umbrella body of Meitei civil society groups, has accused Kuki organisations of deliberately sustaining unrest in Manipur to push their demand for a separate administration. COCOMI alleged that even after Chief Minister N Biren Singh stepped down, Kuki groups have found new reasons to continue their agitation. COCOMI claimed that Kuki organisations are "making their own people suffer while capitalising on

## Maharashtra Minister Dhananjay Munde Summoned Over Poll Affidavit

**TPN Correspondent | Mumbai**  
A court in Maharashtra's Beed has issued a summons to state minister Dhananjay Munde following a complaint by his first wife, alleging that he failed to disclose information in his election affidavit. The Joint Civil Judge Junior Division and Judicial Magistrate First Class (CJJD and JMFC) at Parli issued the summons on February 10, with the next hearing scheduled for February 24. The complaint, filed by Karuna Munde, claims that while Munde mentioned his wife Rajshri Munde and their children in his affidavit, he did not declare any assets owned by Karuna Munde. The case

was filed under sections 33(A)(i) and 125A of the Representation of the People Act, which mandates full disclosure of information in election affidavits, with violations carrying a potential six-month jail term. Dhananjay Munde is also under scrutiny over the arrest of his aide Walmik Karad in an extortion case linked to the murder of a sarpanch in Beed district. Additionally, a Mumbai court recently ordered him to pay Rs 2 lakh per month in interim maintenance to Karuna Munde and their daughter after finding "prima facie" evidence of domestic violence.



## Assam Rifles Crack Down on Meitei Militants in Manipur



**TPN Correspondent | Imphal**  
In a major operation against insurgency, Assam Rifles and the Indian Army apprehended two cadres of the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Progressive) [PREPAK (PRO)] and four active members of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group) [KCP (PWG)] in separate operations across Manipur. Acting on intelligence inputs, Assam Rifles and Manipur Police conducted a raid in Imphal East's Dingku Road area, detaining two PREPAK (PRO) cadres. In another operation in Kameng Sabal

village, Imphal West, the Indian Army and police arrested four KCP (PWG) militants and seized five pistols, ammunition, and war-like stores. Meanwhile, a joint operation by Assam Rifles, CRPF, and Manipur Police targeted illicit poppy cultivation in Sehjang village, Kangpokpi district. Around six acres of poppy fields, capable of yielding 30 kg of opium, were destroyed. Nearby huts and makeshift shelters used for processing the drugs were also burned down. Authorities remain committed to maintaining peace and curbing illegal activities. An earlier operation on February 10 saw the arrest of eight militants and the recovery of 25 weapons across multiple districts, including Kaching, Thoubal, Tengnoupal, and Bishnupur. All seized weapons have been handed over to the Manipur Police.

## Harshwardhan Sapkal Appointed as Maharashtra Congress Chief

**TPN Correspondent | Mumbai**  
Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Harshwardhan Sapkal as the new Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) chief, replacing Nana Patole. The decision was announced on Thursday, along with the appointment of Vijay Namdevrao Wadetiwar as the leader of the Congress Legislative Party in Maharashtra. Sapkal, who represented the Buldhana Assembly Constituency from 2014 to 2019, takes charge at a crucial time for the party in



the state. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) acknowledged the contributions of outgoing president Nana Patole in an official statement. Patole resigned following the Congress' poor performance in the Maharashtra Assembly elections, where the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance suffered a significant defeat against the ruling Mahayuti alliance of the NDA.

# “Peace” On Agenda, Trump’s Phone Calls with Putin, Zelensky



TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone call on Wednesday, agreeing to initiate immediate negotiations to end the Ukraine war. Trump described the conversation as “lengthy and highly productive,” adding that both leaders also agreed to visit each other’s countries in a move signaling a major diplomatic shift. The Kremlin confirmed the call lasted nearly ninety minutes, with Putin and Trump agreeing that “the time has come to work together.” Trump stated on Truth Social that the discussions covered Ukraine, the Middle East, and artificial intelligence. He emphasized that both leaders were committed to stopping the “millions of deaths” resulting from the war, though he did not provide verification for the casualty figures. Following the call, Trump announced that he would immediately

contact Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to inform him about the conversation. Zelensky later confirmed the discussion, stating that he and Trump explored “opportunities to achieve peace.” Trump suggested that, like Putin, Zelensky was also interested in ending the conflict.

The timing of this diplomatic breakthrough comes amid other signs of easing tensions between Washington and Moscow. A prisoner exchange earlier in the week saw Russia release detained US teacher Marc Fogel, while the US freed Russian cryptocurrency figure Alexander Vinnik. Additionally, the Trump administration secured the release of an American citizen detained in Belarus, a key Russian ally.

Trump’s remarks on Putin were notably positive, with the US leader highlighting that Putin even referenced his campaign motto, “COMMON SENSE.” The Kremlin, while

more restrained in its statement, confirmed that Putin agreed a long-term settlement could only be reached through negotiations.

The developments come as Ukraine remains under continued Russian attacks, with fresh missile and drone strikes targeting Kyiv. Meanwhile, Zelensky is set to meet US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Munich Security Conference, where he hopes to finalize an economic agreement with Washington.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth recently stated that efforts to restore Ukraine’s pre-2014 borders were “an illusionary goal” and described NATO membership for Ukraine as “not realistic.” The European response to Trump’s engagement with Putin has been cautious, with foreign ministers from France, Germany, and Spain asserting that a lasting peace must include Ukraine and its European allies.

## PM Modi Gifts Eco-Friendly Alphabet Set to US VP JD Vance’s Kids

TPN Correspondent | Washington

During his visit to France for the AI Action Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a unique eco-friendly wooden alphabet set to Mirabel Rose Vance, daughter of US Vice President JD Vance. The sustainable wooden alphabet set is designed as a safe and engaging learning tool, aiding in motor skills and cognitive development. Unlike plastic alternatives, it is free from harmful chemicals and promotes environmental conservation. In addition, PM Modi gifted Dokra artwork—musicians with studded stonework—to French President Emmanuel Macron, showcasing India’s rich artistic heritage.

PM Modi visited France from February 10-12, participating in discussions on Artificial Intelligence (AI), commerce, energy, and cultural ties. He co-chaired the AI Action Summit alongside French President Macron, where global leaders and tech CEOs gathered to discuss advancements in AI.

Following his France visit, PM Modi arrived in the United States on Wednesday

evening (local time) at the invitation of US President Donald Trump. He was received at the Joint Base Andrews in Washington DC by India’s Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, along with other senior officials.

This marks PM Modi’s first visit to the US since Donald Trump assumed office for his second term. Upon arrival, he proceeded to Blair House, where members of the Indian diaspora gathered to welcome him with chants of “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” and “Modi Modi.” Expressing gratitude, PM Modi thanked the community for their warm reception.

As a symbolic gesture, the US flag at Blair House was replaced with the Indian flag ahead of his arrival. PM Modi will stay at Blair House during his US visit from February 12-13.

Since November 2024, PM Modi and Trump have spoken twice over the phone. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attended Trump’s inauguration and later met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, also participating in the QUAD Foreign Ministers’ meeting in January 2025.



## Ukraine should Abandon its Plans to Reclaim Lost Territory

TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

In a major shift in U.S. policy, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has stated that Ukraine should reconsider its ambitions of reclaiming Russian-occupied territories and instead pursue a negotiated peace backed by international forces. He also declared that Ukraine’s NATO membership is an unrealistic goal in future diplomatic agreements.

Hegseth made these remarks during a NATO meeting focused on securing additional military aid for Ukraine, signaling a stark departure from previous U.S. policy. His comments closely align with Russian demands that Ukraine withdraw from annexed regions and abandon its bid to join NATO.

**Trump and Putin Agree to Begin Peace Talks**

Shortly after Hegseth’s statement, former U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that he had spoken with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that both had agreed to initiate peace negotiations.

“We talked about the strengths of our respective nations and the great benefit of working together. But first, as we both agreed, we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the war,” Trump stated.

He added that U.S. and Russian teams would begin negotiations immediately, and he would soon contact Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy regarding the developments.



**No U.S. Troops in Future Security Agreement**

Hegseth made it clear that any security guarantees for Ukraine should be implemented by European and international forces—not the U.S. military.

“To be clear, as part of any security guarantee, there will not be U.S. troops deployed to Ukraine,” he emphasized. He also ruled out NATO’s involvement in a future peacekeeping mission, arguing that such an engagement could trigger Article 5 obligations, which would require allied nations to defend those forces in case of conflict.

The defense secretary urged European nations to take on the majority of Ukraine’s military and fi-

nanial support, signaling a shift in Washington’s approach to burden-sharing.

“Europe must provide the overwhelming share of future lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine,” Hegseth asserted. Currently, both the U.S. and Europe contribute about 30% each to Ukraine’s defense, while the remaining portion comes from Ukraine’s own production.

**Zelenskyy’s Response and Implications for Munich Conference**

Following Trump’s disclosure of his talks with Putin, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed that he had also spoken with Trump about the war and prospects for peace.

“I had a meaningful conversation with President Trump about opportunities to achieve peace,” Zelenskyy wrote on X. “Together with the U.S., we are charting our next steps to stop Russian aggression and ensure a lasting, reliable peace. As President Trump said, ‘Let’s get it done.’”

The shifting stance of the U.S. is expected to create tensions at the upcoming Munich Security Conference, where U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are set to meet with Zelenskyy and other officials.

## “Gaza Belongs To Palestinians”, Says China, Opposes “Forced Displacement”



TPN Correspondent | Beijing

China has reiterated its opposition to the forced displacement of Palestinians, emphasizing that Gaza is an integral part of Palestinian territory. The statement came in

response to US President Donald Trump’s reported plan to relocate Gaza’s inhabitants elsewhere.

“Gaza belongs to the Palestinians and is an integral part of the Palestinian territory... We oppose the forced displacement of the people of Gaza,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said during a press briefing on Wednesday.

China has consistently called for a two-state solution and a peaceful resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The latest remarks reaffirm Beijing’s stance against

any measures that alter the demographics of Gaza or displace its residents.

Trump’s proposal, which has drawn criticism from several international bodies, comes amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, with concerns growing over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. China’s response aligns with its broader support for Palestinian statehood and opposition to unilateral actions affecting the region’s stability.

## Elon Musk’s DOGE Team Raises Major Cyber Security Concerns

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

An internal report has raised alarm over the security risks posed by Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) team, warning that their access to critical systems represents “the single greatest insider threat risk” the Bureau of Fiscal Services has ever faced. The DOGE initiative, launched as a cost-cutting measure, began at the Treasury Department, where its engineers took control of the federal payment system under the pretext of monitoring public spending. It has since expanded across multiple agencies, disrupting and, in some cases, shutting down operations at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Education,

and the General Services Administration (GSA).

Security experts are deeply concerned that a group of largely unvetted, young engineers—many affiliated with Musk’s companies—now hold control over critical government infrastructure. Senior officials with decades of experience have reportedly been sidelined, with some even locked out of buildings. At the Office of Personnel Management, DOGE-associated individuals allegedly linked an unauthorized server to the network and deployed AI software on citizens’ personal data, potentially breaching federal privacy laws.

The Treasury’s Bureau of Fiscal Services, which manages all federal payments, is a particularly vulnerable chokepoint.

Security experts Bruce Schneier and Davi Ottenheimer noted that Treasury systems were designed with nuclear-level security protocols, preventing any single person from having unlimited power. However, DOGE’s intervention has bypassed these safeguards.

Concerns over Musk’s personal conflicts of interest have also surfaced, given that his companies hold significant government contracts. Critics fear his access to sensitive data could provide an unfair advantage to his business empire. Meanwhile, cybersecurity experts warn that adversaries like China and Russia could exploit vulnerabilities created by the DOGE team’s rapid and unregulated overhaul.



## Stock Markets See Volatile Session, End in Losses After Early Gains



Domestic stock markets witnessed high volatility on Thursday, swinging from strong gains in the morning to minor losses by the close. Benchmark indices surged initially, supported by mixed global cues and buying in heavyweight stocks at attractive prices. However, persistent uncertainty led to profit booking, dragging the indices down. Banking, auto, finance, IT, and FMCG stocks contributed to the decline, while the weekly derivatives expiry also added pressure.

The BSE Sensex, which had closed at 76,171 in the previous session, opened slightly higher at 76,201 and climbed to an intraday high of 76,763. However, it later dropped to 76,013 before ending the day at 76,138, down 32 points. The NSE Nifty opened at 23,055, hit a high of 23,235, and slipped to 22,992 before closing at 23,031, losing 13 points. The Nifty Bank declined 119 points, settling at 49,359.

In the Nifty50 pack, 23 stocks advanced, while 27 declined. The top gainers included Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, and Cipla, while Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports, Hero MotoCorp, Infosys, and L&T recorded the highest losses. Sector-wise, banking, auto, FMCG, IT, PSU banks, consumer durables, and oil & gas sectors saw gains,



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while finance, media, metal, pharma, realty, and healthcare indices ended in the red. Market participation remained balanced, with 1,353 stocks gaining and 1,472 declining out of 2,893 stocks traded on the NSE. 12 stocks hit a 52-week high, while 193 stocks touched a 52-week low.

In corporate news, Manappuram Finance posted a 5.8% rise in Q3 net profit to ₹453 crore from ₹428 crore. Lumax Auto's profit surged 23% to ₹44.8 crore from ₹36.4 crore, while Ipca Labs saw a 7% rise in shares following a 38% jump in net profit to ₹248 crore. Meanwhile, PN Gadgil's net profit soared 49%, hitting the 10% upper circuit.

On the currency front, the rupee remained flat at 86.89 against the US dollar. In regulatory developments, SEBI has gained social media access to remove unauthorized financial advisors. CLSA gave an outperform rating to Kotak Mahindra Bank with a target price of ₹2,125, while Bernstein assigned a similar rating to Muthoot Finance, setting a target price of ₹2,500.

Additionally, Redington, SBI Cards, Kotak Mahindra, and Shree Cements hit fresh 52-week highs during the session.

## Nirmala Sitharaman Introduces New Income Tax Bill

FM Nirmala Sitharaman introduces the Income Tax Bill 2025 in Lok Sabha.

Bill simplifies tax laws, cutting sections from 819 to 536.

Opposition MPs walk out in protest.

Sitharaman defends the bill, citing removal of outdated provisions.

Sent to a Select House Committee; report due next session.



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the Income Tax Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, aiming to simplify the tax structure and make compliance easier for taxpayers. However, the introduction of the bill triggered protests from Opposition MPs, leading to a walkout from the session. As soon as Sitharaman introduced the bill amid a ruckus, several Opposition MPs were seen leaving the House. While the exact number of MPs who staged the walkout remains unclear, their objections centered around the bill's structure and the changes it proposes.

Opposition Raises Objections

MP NK Premachandran from Kerala's Kollam raised concerns about the bill containing more sections than the previous Income Tax Act of 1961. Responding to this, Sitharaman clarified that the original 1961 Act had only 298 sections, but over the years, amendments had expanded it to 819 sections. She emphasized that

the new bill reduces this number to 536, making the law more concise and efficient. She further pointed out that nearly 4,000 amendments had been made to the existing Act since its enforcement, and the new bill addresses these issues comprehensively. TMC MP Sougata Ray also criticized the bill, calling the changes "mechanical." However, Sitharaman dismissed this claim, arguing that significant changes had been made. She added that the number of words in the law had been halved, and both English and Hindi versions were now written in simpler language for better understanding.

Bill Sent to Select House Committee

Sitharaman suggested that the new Income Tax Bill 2025 be referred to a Select House Committee for detailed scrutiny. The terms of reference for the committee will be decided by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. The committee is expected to submit its report on the first day of the next parliamentary session.

## ED Freezes ₹170 Crore in Fake Forex Trading Scam; Raids Across Multiple States

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frozen bank deposits worth ₹170 crore in a money laundering probe against QFX Trade, a fraudulent forex trading and deposit scheme. Multi-state raids were conducted on February 11 in Delhi, Noida, Shamli, and Rohtak, targeting the company's directors and its alleged mastermind, Lavish Chaudhary alias Nawab Ali.

Fraudulent Forex Scheme Busted

According to an ED statement, QFX Trade and its directors—Rajendra Sood, Santosh Kumar, and Vineet Kumar—were running an unregulated deposit scheme, duping investors with promises of high returns. The agency launched the probe after multiple FIRs were registered by the Himachal

Pradesh Police. As part of the investigation, ED officials raided various locations and found unexplained funds in 30 bank accounts linked to QFX, leading to the freezing of ₹170 crore. Additionally, ₹90 lakh in cash was seized from an agent of the company.

Modus Operandi: MLM and Social Media Ads

The ED revealed that QFX operated through a multi-level marketing (MLM) system, using websites, mobile apps, and social media advertisements to lure investors. Similar tactics were earlier used by YFX, another fraudulent forex trading platform that duped customers with false promises of high returns.

The agency further disclosed that apart

from QFX, Lavish Chaudhary was behind several other fraudulent investment schemes, including BotBro, TLC Coin, and Yorker FX, which were also projected as forex trading platforms. Shell Companies Used for Fund Transfers

Investigators found that funds collected from investors were funneled into bank accounts linked to shell companies such as Capter Money Solutions, NPay Box, and Tiger Digital Services. The ED has identified these entities as dummy firms used to launder money. The probe also revealed that QFX organizers held events in India and Dubai to attract more investors. Authorities are now expanding their investigation into other fraudulent schemes connected to the accused.

## Rajasthan Announces ₹200 Crore Subsidy for Electric Vehicles



The Rajasthan government has launched a ₹200 crore e-vehicle promotion fund under its Electric Vehicle Policy-2022 to boost EV adoption in the

state. The initiative aligns with the FAME-2 scheme and offers State GST reimbursements and one-time grants for eligible EV buyers.

The subsidy applies to vehicles purchased on or after September 1, 2022, and registered in Rajasthan. Only vehicles bought within the state will qualify. Manufacturers registered under FAME-2 must enroll on the state's transport department portal before their EV models become eligible for the scheme.

Buyers can apply for the subsidy through the Vahan portal by entering their vehicle details, verifying their identity via OTP, and uploading bank details and supporting documents. Once approved, the subsidy amount will be directly transferred to their bank accounts.

Authorities have urged manufacturers, dealers, and buyers to apply early, as incentives are available for a limited number of vehicles per category.

## Honda and Nissan Call Off Merger Plans



TPN Correspondent | Tokyo

Japanese auto giants Honda and Nissan have officially terminated their merger discussions, bringing an abrupt end to what could have been a game-changing partnership in the global automobile industry. The companies had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on December 23, 2024, to explore business integration, but announced on Thursday that they had mutually decided to scrap the plan.

Breakdown of Talks

The proposed merger was seen as a strategic move to compete with Tesla and Chinese electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers. However, the discussions reportedly fell apart when Honda proposed making Nissan a subsidiary, rather than proceeding with the initially planned integration under a new joint holding company.

In a joint statement, the automakers clarified:

"Honda proposed changing the structure from establishing a joint holding company... to a structure where Honda would be the parent company and Nissan the subsidiary

through a share exchange."

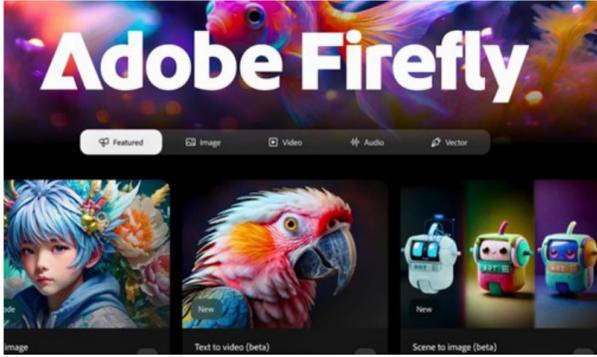
With both firms unable to reach common ground, they ultimately prioritized independent decision-making and operational agility over consolidation.

Industry Impact and Future Collaboration

The failed merger comes amid Nissan's financial struggles, with the company previously announcing massive job cuts and a 93% drop in first-half net profits last year. While the merger would have created the world's third-largest automaker, both companies now aim to navigate the EV transition separately. However, the firms confirmed that despite calling off the merger, they will continue collaborating on electrification and smart vehicle technologies, exploring strategic partnerships to enhance innovation and market competitiveness.

As the automotive industry shifts towards electric and intelligent vehicles, it remains to be seen how Honda and Nissan will individually adapt to growing competition in an increasingly volatile market.

## Adobe Unveils AI-Powered Generate Video in Public Beta, Revamps Firefly Web App



Adobe has officially launched its AI-driven Generate Video tool in public beta, making it accessible to all users via the Firefly web app. The tool, powered by the Firefly Video Model, was initially teased in September 2024. Alongside this, Adobe has redesigned the Firefly web app, streamlining its layout to better showcase its suite of generative AI tools. The tech giant has also introduced two new Firefly subscription plans aimed at enhancing user experience.

### Adobe Introduces Generate Video in Beta

Generate Video is Adobe's first AI-powered end-to-end video generation tool, offering users the ability to create 1080p videos at 24 frames per second using text prompts and images. The tool provides granular control, enabling users to define camera angles, motion, shooting distances, art styles, and other cinematographic elements. Currently, it can generate five-second-long videos, with Adobe promising

future upgrades, including a lower-resolution ideation model and a 4K model for production.

Users can also make detailed technical requests, such as locking in first and last frames for continuity, maintaining consistent colors and character details, and refining elements for professional output. PepsiCo, Stagwell, and Dentsu are already leveraging Generate Video for commercial applications.

### Firefly Web App Redesigned with New Features

Originally launched in 2023 as a hub for Adobe's generative AI tools, the Firefly web app has been overhauled for a more intuitive user experience. The updated platform integrates seamlessly with Adobe's Creative Cloud applications, including Photoshop and Premiere Pro, ensuring smoother workflows. Adobe has also emphasized that Firefly AI models are trained on licensed and public domain datasets, making them "IP-friendly" and safe for com-

mercial use. In addition to Generate Video, Adobe has rolled out two new tools—Scene to Image and Translate Audio/Translate Video—on the Firefly platform. Unlike Generate Video, these tools are not free. Scene to Image transforms 3D sketches and reference shapes into high-quality images while allowing users to manipulate angles and perspectives for precise output. Translate Audio/Translate Video enables users to convert audio files and video channels into over 20 languages while preserving the original speaker's voice.

### New Firefly Subscription Plans Introduced

To support the expansion of its AI offerings, Adobe has introduced two new Firefly subscription plans. The Firefly Standard plan, priced at \$9.99 per month, offers 2,000 video and audio credits and allows up to 20 five-second video generations at 1080p resolution. The Firefly Pro plan, available at \$29.99 per month, provides 7,000 credits and supports up to 70 video generations. Both plans come with unlimited access to Firefly's imaging and vector features, making them attractive options for creative professionals.

With these advancements, Adobe continues to push the boundaries of AI-powered creativity, catering to both casual users and professionals seeking advanced video and image generation capabilities.

## Noise Master Buds Launched in India With Bose-Tuned Audio, 49dB ANC Support



Noise has launched its latest true wireless stereo (TWS) earphones, the Noise Master Buds, in India. Featuring 12.4mm titanium drivers and Bose-tuned audio, the new earbuds promise an enhanced sound experience. They support Adaptive Active Noise Cancellation (ANC) up to 49dB and offer dual connectivity, allowing users to pair them with two devices simultaneously. The Noise Master Buds boast a total battery life of up to 44 hours and come in a vinyl disc-inspired charging case.

### Noise Master Buds Price and Availability

The Noise Master Buds are priced at Rs. 7,999 in India and are available for pre-booking via Amazon and the official Noise India e-store. They come in Onyx, Silver, and Titanium color options.

Customers who pre-book the earbuds by paying Rs. 999 will receive a Rs. 2,000 discount coupon, bringing the effective price down to Rs. 5,999. Additionally, they will get exclusive perks worth Rs. 2,500. The earbuds will officially go on sale from February 26 via gonoise.com, Amazon, Reliance Digital, Croma, and Vijay Sales.

### Noise Master Buds Specifica-

### tions and Features

The Noise Master Buds are equipped with 12.4mm titanium drivers, tuned by Bose, and support LHDC 5.0 audio codec for high-resolution Bluetooth streaming. They offer 49dB ANC, Transparency mode, and an in-ear design with interchangeable ear tips.

For improved voice calls, the earbuds feature a six-mic system with Environmental Noise Cancellation (ENC). Other features include dual connectivity, Google Fast Pair, Find My Device, spatial audio (without head tracking), and in-ear detection. They are also compatible with the NoiseFit app.

In terms of battery life, the Noise Master Buds provide up to 44 hours of playback with

ANC turned off and 34 hours with ANC on, including the charging case. On a single charge, the earbuds last 4.5 hours with ANC on and six hours without ANC. A 10-minute quick charge provides up to six hours of playback.

The charging case, which features a USB Type-C port, is designed to resemble a vinyl disc, complete with a 2PM light bar mimicking a vinyl needle. Each earbud weighs 4.2g, while the case weighs 40g.

With its premium features and Bose-tuned audio, the Noise Master Buds are set to compete in the high-end TWS market, offering a blend of superior sound quality, advanced noise cancellation, and long battery life.

## Vlogger Sells Tea at Maha Kumbh Mela, Earns ₹7,000 in a Day



TPN Correspondent | Prayagraj

A vlogger's social experiment at the Maha Kumbh Mela has taken the internet by storm after he revealed his impressive earnings from selling tea. The content creator, known as @madcap\_alive on Instagram, set up a tea stall at the event to explore the potential profits in such a massive gathering.

Selling tea at ₹10 per cup, he also carried a large container around the Mela grounds, offering tea to attendees. While demand dipped slightly in the afternoon, sales picked up again in the evening, allowing him to earn ₹7,000 by

the end of the day, with a profit of ₹5,000. His video, showcasing the experiment, has garnered over 13.5 million views.

Netizens reacted with amazement, with some humorously suggesting a career switch. One user calculated, "₹5,000 per day means ₹1,55,000 per month!" Another quipped, "Education is a scam." Many welcomed him to Prayagraj, dubbing him "Kumbh Chaiwala." The viral clip has sparked conversations about business opportunities at the grand religious gathering.

## Zuckerberg Reveals He Faced Possible Death Sentence in Pakistan



TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently revealed in an interview with Joe Rogan that he was once at risk of being sentenced to death in Pakistan due to content posted on Facebook. The Pakistani government had accused Meta of allowing content that violated the country's strict blasphemy laws, leading to legal action against Zuckerberg personally.

The controversy stemmed from a user-posted image fea-

turing a drawing of Prophet Mohammed, which sparked outrage and a lawsuit seeking to hold Zuckerberg accountable. While he admitted he was not personally concerned for his safety—stating he had no plans to visit Pakistan—the incident underscored the broader challenges global tech platforms face when navigating free speech and local regulations.

"There are places around the world that just have different values that go against our free

expression values," Zuckerberg said, emphasizing the growing tension between Meta's commitment to free speech and the demands of certain governments.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws carry severe penalties, including imprisonment and even death, and have historically been used to prosecute individuals and organizations accused of violating religious norms. The incident with Meta highlights the ongoing struggle tech giants face when balancing their global reach with restrictive laws in certain countries.

Zuckerberg also stressed that foreign governments exert significant pressure on American tech companies, urging stronger support from the US government. He argued that threats of imprisonment and legal action against executives create an environment where tech companies require protection when facing politically motivated lawsuits abroad.

Meta has faced similar legal challenges in various countries, where governments have sought to regulate or censor content deemed offensive, harmful, or illegal under local laws.

## Chilling Audio of Titanic Submersible Implosion Released

TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released a chilling audio recording capturing the moment the Titan submersible imploded, killing all five passengers instantly. The 20-second clip, published by the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), features a burst of static followed by a thunderous boom before fading into an eerie silence. Officials confirmed that the boom was the sound of the vessel succumbing to immense water pressure before reaching the Titanic wreck site in the North Atlantic Ocean on June 18, 2023. The recording, picked up by a moored passive acoustic device about 900 miles

away from the incident, was analyzed by the US Coast Guard, which described it as "the suspected acoustic signature of the Titan submersible implosion." The tragedy claimed the lives of renowned British adventurer Hamish Harding, Pakistani businessman Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood, French national Paul-Henri Nargeolet, and Stockton Rush, CEO of OceanGate Expeditions.

The loss of the submersible prompted intense scrutiny over its engineering and safety measures. Reports later revealed that the vessel had significant design flaws and had never been independently certified for deep-sea travel. Communication with the mothership was lost less

than two hours into the dive, triggering a frantic four-day search that ended with the discovery of debris by a remotely operated underwater vehicle.

In October 2023, the US Coast Guard announced the recovery of the last pieces of the wreckage, confirming earlier concerns about the sub's structural integrity. Investigators found that the Titan had been plagued with safety hazards during previous expeditions, with 70 reported equipment issues in 2021 and 48 more in 2022. The revelations raised further questions about the oversight and approval process for extreme deep-sea explorations.



## Families Not to Travel with Team India for **Champions Trophy**



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has implemented its new travel policy, which restricts players' families from accompanying them on short tours. This rule will take effect for the first time as the Indian cricket team departs for Dubai on February 15 to participate in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Under the new guidelines, families can only join players on tours lasting 45 days or more, with a maximum allowance of two weeks. Since the Champions Trophy runs for less than a month, play-

ers' wives and partners will not be allowed to travel with the team. Team India, led by Rohit Sharma, will kick off its Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh on February 20. The high-voltage clash against Pakistan is scheduled for February 23, followed by the final group-stage match against New Zealand on March 2. India will play all its matches in Dubai, while the rest of the tournament unfolds across three venues in Pakistan, starting from February 19. A senior BCCI official, speak-

ing anonymously, confirmed the decision: "Unless there is a change in policy, families will not be accompanying the players. One senior player had inquired about it but was informed that the board's decision stands." The official also noted that if any exception is made, the player will have to bear all expenses, as the BCCI will not cover any additional costs. With the final scheduled for March 9, Team India will aim to bring home the prestigious trophy, despite the absence of their families during the tour.

## Four **Indians** to Compete in Saudi Ladies International Golf Tournament



Four Indian golfers—Pranavi Urs, Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar, and Tvesa Malik—are set to compete in the sixth Saudi Ladies International, a \$5 million event featuring 112 players. Pranavi Urs, who finished 17th on the LET Merit List last season, had a strong pro start on the Women's Pro Tour, securing third-place finishes at the Dormy Open and Open de España. Diksha Dagar, ranked 29th on the LET, had an impressive start to 2025, reaching a play-off

at the Lalla Meryem Cup before finishing runner-up. She also recorded four Top-10 finishes last season and represented India at the Paris Olympics. Tvesa Malik, who finished 60th on the LET, regained her LET card and narrowly missed victory at the VP Swiss Bank Ladies Open, losing in a play-off. Aditi Ashok, who focused on the LPGA Tour, returns to LET events for this prestigious tournament.

## IGI, Hansraj, Khalsa, SRCC, and SPM Shine in 11th Padmashri Shyam Lal Memorial Hockey Tournament

Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education and Sports Sciences (IGI), Hansraj College, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (SPM) College emerged victorious in their league matches at the 11th Padmashri Shyam Lal Memorial Hockey Tournament.

IGI dominated Kirori Mal College 8-1, with Pulkit winning the Man of the Match award. Hansraj College

defeated Amity University 5-0, with Gusish earning the top honor. In the women's section, SPM College edged past Janaki Devi Memorial College 1-0, with Anshu named Player of the Match.

Khalsa College overcame Shyam Lal College Alumni 2-1, while SRCC secured a 3-1 win against IIT Delhi. SRCC's Siddharth was named Man of the Match, while IIT's Bhavesh received a Consolation Prize.

## PGTI 2025: Yuvraj Sandhu Holds Lead After Round Three



Yuvraj Sandhu of Chandigarh maintained his lead for the third consecutive day at the PGTI Players Championship 2025, carding a steady two-under 68 in round three. With scores of 63-61-68, Yuvraj holds a one-shot lead at 18-un-

der 192 at Tollygunge Club, where he is a past winner. Bangladesh's Jamal Hossain (65-62-66) continued his impressive form, posting a 66 in round three to reach 17-under 193, closing in on the leader. Bengaluru's Rahil Gangjee (63-

67-66), competing at a familiar course from his childhood, shot 66 to secure third place at 14-under 196. Kolkata's golf legend SSP Chawrasia (71) finished the day tied for 14th place at nine-under 201.

## CM Dhama Reviews Preparations for Amit Shah's National Games Visit

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is overseeing preparations for Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to the closing ceremony of the 38th National Games at Gaulapar Stadium, Kathgodam, on February 14. The state government is ensuring smooth arrangements for the event, which has featured top athletes from across the country. CM Dhama's active involvement underscores the significance of the Games for Uttarakhand. On February 12, Dhama attended wrestling events in Haridwar and participated in the 'Mauli Samvad' National Sports Vision Conclave 2025. He also played hockey with



participants. Additionally, CM Dhama and IOA President PT Usha joined a tree plantation drive at Maharana Pratap Sports College, Raipur. On February 11, he in-

augurated the Mallakhamb competition in Khatima, emphasizing the global recognition of India's traditional sports under PM Narendra Modi's leadership.

## Indian Women's Hockey Team Gears Up for FIH Pro League

Fresh off their Women's Asian Champions Trophy victory, the Indian Women's Hockey Team is set to begin its FIH Pro League campaign at the Kalinga Stadium from February 15 to 25. India will face England on February 15 and 16, followed by Spain on February 18 and 19. The team will also take on World No. 4 Germany and top-ranked Netherlands on February 21, 22, 24, and 25. Led by Arjuna Awardee Salima Tete with Navneet Kaur as her deputy, the squad blends experienced players like Savita and Vandana Katariya with rising stars such as Deepika and Sunelita Toppo. Captain Tete expressed confidence in the team's preparation, while head coach Harendra Singh emphasized the



importance of home support. After a disappointing previous season, India aims for a stronger performance this time.





## Nani's Next Big Leap: A Dream Collaboration in the Works?



Natural Star Nani has carved an enviable niche in Tollywood, seamlessly blending artistic finesse with commercial appeal. From his early days excelling in class-oriented narratives to his more recent foray into mass entertainers, he has consistently expanded his cinematic footprint. With a string of consecutive hits to his credit, Nani's career is currently in a phase of remarkable momentum.

Presently, the actor is juggling multiple ventures, including HIT 3 and Paradise, while also presenting Megastar Chiranjeevi's upcoming film. Yet, amid his packed slate, an even more exciting possibility is on the horizon—one that has been long-awaited by both the actor and his ardent fans.

For nearly a decade, Nani has harbored a deep desire to collaborate with acclaimed filmmaker Sekhar Kammula. De-

spite their mutual admiration, circumstances never quite aligned for the project to take off. However, that long-standing wish may soon materialize, as reports suggest that the two are finally in discussions. Kammula, who is currently wrapping up Kubera with Dhanush, has initiated talks with Nani, setting the stage for what could be an extraordinary cinematic union. While the project is still in its early stages, an official announcement is anticipated soon. Should all go as planned, this much-anticipated film might commence production towards the end of the year, following Nani's completion of Paradise.

For fans who have long envisioned this collaboration, the wait may soon be over—marking yet another milestone in Nani's ever-evolving journey.

## Vicky Kaushal Holds Katrina Kaif's Hand at Chhaava Screening, Fans Adore the Moment



Actor Vicky Kaushal attended the special screening of his upcoming film Chhaava in Mumbai, accompanied by his wife, actor Katrina Kaif. The film, also starring Rashmika Mandanna, is set to release in theatres on February 14. A video from the event, shared by a paparazzo, has captured the attention of fans, showcasing a sweet moment between the couple.

In the video, Vicky is seen holding Katrina's hand as he walks her to the designated photo spot at the event. Dressed in a dark outfit, Vicky looked stylish, while Katrina stunned in a sheer saree. The actor continued to hold her hand even as they posed for the photographers before heading inside. Vicky's brother, Sunny Kaushal, and other family members were also present at the screening.

Fans quickly reacted to the video, flooding the comment section with admiration. Many praised Katrina's look, while others called the couple 'royal' and showered them

with heart and evil-eye emojis. One fan referred to Katrina as the 'Queen of Bollywood,' while another simply wrote, "Hayee," expressing their adoration.

Known for their affectionate social media interactions, Vicky and Katrina often share glimpses of their relationship with fans. Just days before Valentine's Day, Katrina posted a video of Vicky on her Instagram Stories. In the clip, Vicky playfully described her as a "weird but honest being," to which Katrina responded with an angel emoji, highlighting their lighthearted bond.

Meanwhile, Vicky has been actively promoting Chhaava alongside Rashmika Mandanna. In the historical drama, he portrays Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Chhatrapati Shivaji, while Rashmika plays Maharani Yesubai, the Maratha queen. The film is set to bring the Maratha warrior's legacy to the big screen, generating significant anticipation among audiences.

## Elvish Yadav Summoned by NCW Over Racist Remark on Chum Darang

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has summoned YouTuber Elvish Yadav for his controversial remarks against actor and Bigg Boss 18 contestant Chum Darang. According to a News18 report, Elvish has been asked to appear before the commission on February 17 following backlash over his comments.

The controversy erupted after Elvish made derogatory remarks about Chum Darang's name and ethnicity during a podcast. He also mocked her appearance in Gangubai Kathiawadi, stating, "Karanveer ko pakka COVID tha kyunki Chum kisko pasand aati hai bhai, itna taste kiska kharab hota hai! Aur Chum ke toh naam mein hi ashleeta hai... Naam Chum aur kaam Gangubai Kathiawadi mein kiya hai." His remarks triggered outrage, with many calling them racist and offensive.

The Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) strongly condemned Elvish's statements, terming them an insult not just to Chum but to women across Northeast India. In a letter to the NCW chairperson, APSCW chairperson Kenjum Pakam demanded strict action against the YouTuber, urging authorities to take legal steps against him.

Reacting to the controversy, Chum Darang took to social media to express her disappointment. Without naming Elvish,



she criticized the normalization of hate under the guise of humor. "Disrespecting someone's identity and name is not 'fun.' Mocking someone's achievements is not 'banter.' It's time we draw the line between humor and hate," she wrote, emphasizing that her hard work and her role in Gangubai Kathiawadi had also been disrespected.

Elvish, in response, attempted to downplay the criticism in a vlog. He claimed he had checked whether his remarks were racist and, upon realizing that they had

offended people, removed the controversial segment from his video. "Mujhe negativity chahiye hi nahi. Agar maan lo kisiko kharab lag raha hai mere bolne se, toh bhai, wo part maine remove kar diya," he stated.

The incident has sparked widespread debate on social media, with many demanding accountability for derogatory comments targeting the Northeast Indian community. As the NCW summons approaches, calls for action against Elvish continue to grow.

## Thandel Achieves Break-Even in Six Days, Eyes ₹100 Crore Mark



Naga Chaitanya's Thandel has emerged as a major success, achieving break-even within just six days of its release. With a theatrical business target of approximately ₹40 crore, the film has already surpassed that mark, according to trade reports. The film has reportedly grossed over ₹70 crore so far, setting the stage for a strong second-week run.

With the deadline for increased ticket prices in Andhra Pradesh ending today, distributors are hopeful for a boost in collections from the region. The film's producers are also confident about pushing Thandel into the ₹100 crore club, banking on continued audience interest.

Upcoming releases like Laila and Brahma Anandham are not expected to pose a major threat, as they lack big stars. Additionally, Vishwak Sen's latest release has received an 'A' certificate, which may limit its appeal among family audiences, further benefiting Thandel.

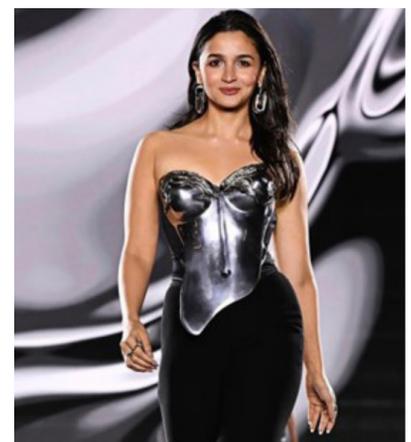
The production team is actively working on promotional strategies to sustain momentum during weekdays. With a slate of mid-range films set to release on February 21, Thandel's performance in the coming days will be crucial. If the film continues its current trend, it could deliver the highest box office numbers of Naga Chaitanya's career.

## Sonam Kapoor vs. Alia Bhatt: A Gilded Fashion Duel in Gaurav Gupta's Iconic Breastplate

Sonam Kapoor has long been synonymous with bold sartorial choices, even as she has gradually distanced herself from Bollywood's relentless spotlight following her marriage to Anand Ahuja and the birth of their son, Vayu, in 2022. Her public appearances are now rare, curated moments of grandeur—and last night was one such spectacle.

Draped in an opulent creation by Gaurav Gupta, Sonam embodied an aesthetic that was equal parts regal and avant-garde. Styled by Rhea Kapoor, she adorned a striking gold breastplate featuring molten-like frozen drips, paired with a dramatic black ballgown midi. The ensemble's sculptural waist detail, a signature of Gupta's couture, added an architectural flourish. Complementing the look were softly curled tresses tucked behind one ear, muted nude makeup, and gold-tinted French tips—a masterclass in refined elegance.

Yet, while Sonam's look was undeniably arresting, it carried an air of déjà vu. The reason? This very breastplate had already left an indelible mark on the fashion landscape when Alia Bhatt donned it months earlier in a striking silver rendition. In September 2024, Alia made her runway



debut at the L'Oréal Paris - Le Défilé show in an outfit that exuded futuristic drama. As noted by the designer's official archives, she wore a silver metal-cast breastplate intricately molded with a swan's head entwined with a serpent's sinuous body, paired with black sharara trousers. Styled by Payal Kapadia, her look was elevated with oversized geometric hoops, slick wet hair, and a luminous silver-tinted makeup

palette. Two muses. One emblematic piece. Distinctive interpretations. Sonam's take was classic, embodying old-world opulence with a contemporary twist, while Alia's approach was sleek, futuristic, and audacious. Both women served a compelling vision—but the question remains: who owned the moment?