



Weather Forecast

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

India, US agree on a ten-year defence partnership, including major arms deals.

“Mission 500” launched to increase bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

TRUST initiative to boost AI, semiconductor, and critical minerals collaboration.

India to progress towards full IEA membership, expanding nuclear cooperation.

Trump approves extradition of 26/11 convict Tahawwur Rana to India.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Donald Trump at the White House for crucial discussions on defence, trade, technology, and energy. The meeting followed PM Modi's visit to France and took place just hours after President Trump announced a new reciprocal tariff policy affecting all US trading partners, including India.

During the talks, both leaders un-

Inside PM Modi-Trump Meet 5th Gen Jets, 26/11 Extradition, 'Mission 500'

veiled the COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology for the 21st Century) initiative, aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation. Key discussions focused on defence partnerships, economic targets, and strategic cooperation. In defence, India and the US agreed on a new ten-year framework for the Major Defence Partnership, with India securing deals for Javelin anti-tank missiles, Stryker armoured vehicles, and six additional P8I maritime surveillance aircraft. Talks also covered the potential release of fifth-generation fighter jets and undersea warfare systems to India. The US committed to reviewing arms export regulations to streamline technology transfers and spare part supplies.

On the trade front, both leaders launched “Mission 500,” targeting \$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. They agreed on a bilateral trade agreement by 2025 and discussed resolving trade barriers, including tariffs. India's \$7.355 billion investments in the US and employment contribu-



tions were also highlighted. However, concerns arose over Trump's 25% tariff on global steel and aluminium imports, which could affect Indian exports. Technology cooperation saw the announcement of the TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) initiative, promoting partnerships in artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, and critical minerals.

The INDUS Innovation program will strengthen collaboration in space, energy, and biotechnology, while agreements on pharmaceutical expansion and rare earth mineral processing were also signed.

In the energy sector, both nations reaffirmed commitments under the India-US Energy Security Partnership, progressing towards India's full membership in the International En-

ergy Agency (IEA). They also advanced nuclear energy cooperation, including small modular reactor development and the implementation of the 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement.

Counterterrorism efforts were a major focus, with both leaders condemning Pakistan's inaction against terror networks. President Trump announced the approval of 26/11 convict Tahawwur Rana's extradition to India. India and the US also strengthened law enforcement cooperation on organised crime and human trafficking.

The meeting further reinforced multilateral ties through forums such as the Quad alliance (India, US, Japan, Australia), the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC), and the I2U2 Group. President Trump is expected to attend the next Quad Leaders' Summit hosted by PM Modi. Additionally, tech giant Meta announced a 50,000 km undersea cable project to enhance connectivity. The discussions set the stage for deeper strategic cooperation between India and the US, reinforcing their partnership across multiple sectors.

BY Vijayendra to continue? BJP top brass likely to resolve crisis next week

- BJP leadership crisis in Karnataka likely to be settled by February 20.
- BY Vijayendra expected to continue as state president despite internal criticism.
- Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's attacks on leadership subdued after show-cause notice.
- V Somanna and Sunil Kumar ruled out due to age and regional preferences.

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

The Karnataka BJP's leadership tussle is expected to be resolved by February 20, with BY Vijayendra likely to continue as state president despite internal criticism. The party's top brass is working to address the crisis, particularly tensions sparked by senior leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's repeated attacks on the leadership. Yatnal, who had been vocal against the party's decisions, was recently served a show-cause notice. While he has refused to

respond, the move appears to have curtailed his outbursts. However, party insiders question whether he has the ability to lead the party to electoral success. “If he were made party president, can he match Vijayendra's performance in the parliamentary elections?” a senior BJP leader asked. Vijayendra played a key role in securing 18+2 seats for the party.

Other contenders for the post face skepticism. Union Minister V Somanna, at 72, is seen as too old to counter the influence of BS Yediyurappa and lacks unwavering loyalty to the party. His past flirtations with the Congress have also raised doubts about his reliability. Meanwhile, former CM Basavaraj Bommai has stepped back due to health concerns, further narrowing the choices. Since the BJP must replace a Lingayat leader with another from the same community, this eliminates Sunil Kumar from Karkala, a promising leader who prefers local politics over a state-level role.

The party is also working to maintain



the support of B Sriramulu, a key ST leader, whose allegiance is crucial for BJP's broader electoral strategy. Additionally, the presence of former CM HD Kumaraswamy as an ally presents a major opportunity in Old Mysore, a historically weak area for the BJP. “The party must capitalize on HDK's influence in Mandya and Old Mysore strongholds,” a senior leader noted, emphasizing the importance of consolidating the BJP-JD(S) alliance ahead of upcoming elections.



Bengaluru Metro revises fare hike after CM's intervention

BMRC caps fare hike at 71% instead of 100% after public outcry.

CM Siddaramaiah called the original hike “abnormal” and ordered a revision.

Metro ridership dropped by 8-10% following the fare increase.

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

Following strong public backlash, the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRC) has reduced its proposed fare hike, capping the maximum increase at 71% instead of the earlier 100%. The revised fares will take effect from Friday, while the minimum and maximum fares remain at ₹10 and ₹90, respectively.

The move came after Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah intervened, calling the original fare hike “abnormal” and directing BMRC to address discrepan-

cies. He emphasized that the revision should ensure fairness and protect commuter interests. BMRC Managing Director M Maheshwar Rao confirmed that the revision aligns with Fare Fixation Committee (FFC) guidelines, which are legally binding under the Metro Railways (Operations and Maintenance) Act. The FFC had initially proposed a 105% hike, averaging a 6.87% increase per year over 7.5 years.

However, BMRC initially sought a 14% annual increase before discounts. According to BMRC's press release, around 46% of daily metro commuters—roughly 2.91 lakh passengers—are expected to benefit from the revision. Meanwhile, metro ridership has declined following the fare hike. On February 11, daily ridership stood at 8,28,149, down from the 8.8 lakh four-Monday average. It further dropped to 7.78 lakh on February 12 and 7.62 lakh on February 13, significantly lower than the 8.67 lakh recorded on February 5.

Shift focus to Tier-2,3 cities, urges Dy CM Shivakumar

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has urged businesses to expand beyond Bengaluru and invest in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, assuring government support in infrastructure development and incentives for such ventures. Speaking at the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Award Ceremony at Invest Karnataka 2025, he emphasized that the state is committed to industrial growth outside the capital. “If businesses seek cheaper labor and lower operational costs, Tier-2 and -3 cities are the best options. The state will ensure the necessary infrastructure, so investors need not worry,” he said. He also outlined Karnataka's new industrial policy, spearheaded by

Industries Minister MB Patil, which prioritizes small enterprises and investments in backward taluks, offering special incentives to boost economic growth in these regions. Addressing Bengaluru's infrastructure challenges, he highlighted Metro expansion, double-decker bridges, tunnel roads, and an additional six **TMCFT of Cauvery water supply as key projects.**

He further revealed that Karnataka anticipates ₹10 lakh crore in investments, with companies from 19 countries already signing agreements. Apart from industry, the state is also focusing on tourism development, with plans for a 300-km coastal corridor under a new tourism policy.



The event recognized businesses across various categories, including Best Performer in the District, Sector Excellence Award, Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur Award, and Empowerment Achievement Award.

Sukri Bommagowda's voice kept Halakki traditions alive despite hardships



TPN Correspondent | Hubballi

Sukri Bommagowda, fondly known as Sukrajji, dedicated her life to preserving the folk traditions of the Halakki community despite enduring poverty and personal hardships. Losing her husband at the young age of 16, she defied societal norms by choosing to remain single, drawing inspiration from nature. "A jungle bird mates for life, and so do I," she had famously said, refusing to remarry. Despite her struggles, Sukrajji worked tirelessly to safeguard Halakki culture. Her efforts led to a significant social transformation, particularly in Ankola

Taluk, where many villages still do not have liquor outlets—a direct result of the anti-liquor movement she spearheaded. Renowned writer Akshata Krishnamurthy, who authored three books on Sukrajji's life, recalled her deep commitment to folk music. "She had an extraordinary ability to memorize and sing for hours, even days, without stopping. At a time when many women hesitated to sing in public, Sukrajji broke barriers, using her voice to create awareness and empower her community." Environmental activist Dinesh Holla from Mangaluru emphasized her impact

beyond music. "She preached simplicity and always shared what little she had. Without formal education, she revolutionized the lives of Halakki people. Her passing is a national loss, and her contributions are irreplaceable."

Sukrajji was deeply concerned about the fading folk traditions of her community. To prevent their extinction, she trained Halakki girls and women, forming a team to continue the practice of folk singing. "She ensured that every activity—be it farming, fetching fodder, or celebrating festivals—had a song," Akshata noted. Her passion for music was inherited from her parents, Subbagowda and Devigowda, who came from a musical background. Her father performed at harvest festivals, while her mother was known for her folk singing. This upbringing deeply influenced Sukrajji, shaping her into a cultural guardian of the Halakki people. The Folk University of Ramnagar near Bengaluru was among the first institutions to recognize her contributions, thanks to Govind Mahalaya from Ankola. "Sukrajji could have sought fame for herself, but she chose to uplift her community. She formed a team of Halakki women who sang unique folk songs about nature, life, and human values," Akshata said. Sukrajji's legacy remains a testament to the power of music in preserving culture and social transformation.



Karnataka to equip blood storage units to combat maternal deaths

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

In a bid to reduce maternal mortality, the Karnataka government has approved the purchase of essential equipment for blood storage units across all taluks, ensuring better access to Cryoprecipitate and Fresh Frozen Plasma—key components in preventing obstetric hemorrhage, a leading cause of maternal deaths. The initiative will first target 50 hospitals, particularly in first referral units (FRUs) in North Karnataka, where blood storage facilities are currently unavailable. The Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd (KSMSCL) has been allocated funds to procure 147 deep freezers (-40°C) at ₹4.5 lakh

per unit and 147 plasma thawing baths at ₹2.2 lakh per unit, totaling ₹9.9 crore. A government directive has instructed officials to follow Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) rules while acquiring these life-saving units. In 2023, Karnataka reported 518 maternal deaths, with 20% linked to obstetric hemorrhage. While national health programs aim to reduce maternal mortality, many women—especially in North Karnataka—continue to face critical risks due to anemia and delayed blood transfusions. By enhancing blood storage and transfusion services, the government hopes to strengthen emergency maternal care and save more lives.

South Indian cities dominate commercial leasing with 26% rental surge

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

South Indian cities have emerged as leaders in commercial leasing, witnessing a 26% increase in average rentals over the past six years, according to a report by Anarock Research. Bengaluru leads with a 26% rise in office rents, followed by Hyderabad at 25% and Chennai at 20%. Between 2019 and 2024, Bengaluru's office rents grew from ₹74 per sq. ft. per month to ₹93, Hyderabad's from ₹56 to ₹67, and Chennai's from ₹60 to ₹75. In comparison, NCR saw the least rental growth of 10%, while Pune recorded a 19% rise and MMR 13%. Despite a record 48.11 million sq. ft. of new

office supply across the top seven cities in 2024, vacancy rates fell to 16.5% from 17.8% in 2023. Chennai recorded the lowest vacancy rate at 9.3%. "Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai accounted for 57% of new space absorption due to their strong IT infrastructure and skilled workforce," said Peush Jain, MD, ANAROCK Group. He added that demand would remain strong, driven by tech firms, flex spaces, and BFSI sector expansion. The last six years saw 283.21 million sq. ft. of office space added, with South India contributing 172.96 million sq. ft. (61% share). Western cities added 60.31 million sq. ft. (21%), while NCR contributed 47.39

million sq. ft. (17%). Sector-wise, co-working spaces gained prominence, increasing their leasing share from 15% in 2019 to over 21% in 2024. Meanwhile, the BFSI sector's share grew from 7% to 17%, while IT/ITes fell from 42% to 28%.

- South Indian cities led with 61% of total office space supply in six years.
- Chennai recorded the lowest office vacancy rate of 9.3% in 2024.
- Co-working sector leasing rose from 15% in 2019 to 21% in 2024.



Karnataka a key player in Indo-Australia trade ties

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

Karnataka is emerging as a crucial hub in the growing trade and investment relationship between India and Australia, with both countries leveraging each other's strengths across multiple sectors. Experts highlighted this during a discussion on 'Australia and Karnataka: Where Are We Now And What Are The Opportunities?' at the Invest Karnataka 2025 Global Investors Meet (GIM). Vik Singh, Australian Trade and Investment Commissioner for South Asia, emphasized the strategic role of Karnataka in Indo-Australian collaboration. "Bengaluru's vibrant ecosystem makes it an attractive destination for investment. We are actively looking at opportunities in Global Capability Centers (GCCs), and our skilling programs will complement India's push to become a global skilling hub," he said. Singh also highlighted India's evolving education landscape, noting that the National Education Policy (NEP) aims to achieve a 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), requiring 14 new universities per week. He stressed the importance of transnational education partnerships in achieving this goal. "Australia will play a key role in this transformation, and Karnataka will be at the forefront," he added. Irfan Malik, President and National Associate Chair of the Australia India Business Council (AIBC), underscored the significance of the 2022 trade agreement between the two nations. "Australia has critical minerals that India needs for its semiconductor industry, while India has the talent and expertise that



Australia seeks. There is strong collaboration in defence, space tech, skilling, and education, and Karnataka offers immense potential in all these sectors," he said. Malik also revealed ongoing engagements with Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Government Tool Room & Training Centers (GTDCs) in Karnataka, reinforcing Australia's commitment to skill development. Hilary McGeachy, Australian Consul General in Bengaluru, stressed the importance of deepening business ties. "The partnership between India and Australia is growing stronger, and Karnataka is a key player in this collaboration," she said. With continued investment in Bengaluru and increasing engagement in technology, education, and skill development, Karnataka is set to strengthen its role in shaping Indo-Australian trade relations.

Volvo to invest ₹1,400 crore in Karnataka for new manufacturing hub



- Volvo to set up its fourth global manufacturing hub in Hoskote.
- Investment of ₹1,400 crore to generate 2,000+ jobs.
- Production capacity to rise from 3,000 to 20,000 vehicles annually.

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru
Volvo Group has announced a ₹1,400 crore investment to expand its manufacturing operations in Karnataka, signing an MoU with the state government to establish its fourth international manufacturing hub in Hoskote. The new facility will create over 2,000 direct jobs and sig-

nificantly boost exports, with production capacity increasing from 3,000 to 20,000 trucks and buses annually, catering to both domestic and international markets. Volvo Group CEO Martin Lundstedt emphasized that the expansion will strengthen India and Karnataka's role in the global supply chain. "This move

will allow us to manufacture up to 20,000 buses and trucks per year, meeting local market needs while creating substantial employment," he stated. The Hoskote facility will now serve as a key node in Volvo's global operations, complementing the company's existing units in Peenya, Hoskote, and Dharwad.



Aero India 2025 traffic chaos frustrates Bengaluru commuters

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

The fourth day of Aero India 2025 turned into a nightmare for commuters, as a massive traffic jam on Ballari Road left thousands stranded for over four kilometers, causing many to miss the event despite having tickets. Despite early advisories from Bengaluru traffic police urging motorists to use alternative routes via Hebbal, Hennur, and Bagalur, heavy congestion continued, with some travelers taking an hour to cover just one kilometer. Many attendees took to X (formerly Twitter) to express

their frustration, with some demanding ticket refunds over poor traffic management. Even free BMTC buses from key locations failed to ease the gridlock. One commuter lamented that he missed the chance to see his father-in-law one last time due to the jam, while another from JP Nagar, excited for the show, could only catch a glimpse from a nearby skywalk.

The airport authorities also issued an advisory urging passengers to plan ahead and avoid the congested National Highway 44 (Bengaluru-Ballari Road).

Indian Navy showcases air power at Aero India 2025

- Indian Navy exhibits advanced aircraft at Aero India 2025.
- MiG-29K and LCA (Navy) highlight India's carrier-based air power.
- MH-60R Seahawk showcased with anti-submarine and strike capabilities.
- Navy emphasizes future plans for indigenous, advanced aircraft platforms.



TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

The Indian Navy made a strong statement at Aero India 2025, displaying its formidable air power alongside the Indian Air Force's spectacular aerial displays at Yelahanka Air Force Station. The Naval Air Arm presented a range of aircraft used for maritime security, anti-submarine warfare, and reconnaissance, reinforcing its critical role in safeguarding India's vast coastline and strategic interests.

The exhibition featured some of the Navy's most advanced assets, including the Kamov KM-31, a Russian-origin early-warning helicopter known for its contra-rotating blades and deck-based operations. The Sea King 42B, a multi-role helicopter, and the advanced MH-60R

Seahawk—armed with Mk 54 torpedoes, Hellfire missiles, and APKWS—were also on display, showcasing the Navy's cutting-edge capabilities.

The MiG-29K, a carrier-borne interceptor operating from INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya, highlighted India's ability to conduct naval air operations. Unlike its land-based counterpart, this aircraft features folding wings, an arrestor hook, and catapult attachments for carrier landings. Another key exhibit was the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (Navy), designed by ADA and manufactured by HAL. Its successful landing on INS Vikrant marked a milestone, placing India among the select nations capable of developing carrier-based fighter jets. The Naval Air Arm currently operates

around 300 aircraft, including HAL Dhruv, Kamov Ka-27, HAL Chetak, Boeing P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, Dornier 228, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Future plans focus on acquiring more deck-based fighters, airborne early warning and control aircraft, air-to-air refuellers, and amphibious aircraft to enhance maritime security.

Beyond the Navy's static display, the Indian Air Force and global defense manufacturers exhibited an impressive fleet, including the Airbus A330 MRTT refueller, Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules, and the newly inducted C-295 MW. The presence of the Sukhoi Su-57, Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II, and F-16s added to the excitement, showcasing the latest in global military aviation.

KIA targets 115 million passengers with expansion plans

1. T1 refurbishment, T2 expansion underway; T3 work to start by year-end.
2. Passenger capacity to increase from 42 million to 115 million.
3. KIA aims to boost international traffic from 15% to 25%.

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) is set to handle 115 million passengers annually with an extensive expansion plan that includes refurbishing Terminal 1 (T1), expanding Terminal 2 (T2), and constructing Terminal 3 (T3) by the end of the decade. Rao Munukutla, Executive Director and CEO of Bengaluru Airport City Limited (BACL), announced the developments at the Invest Karnataka

Global Investors' Meet.

He revealed that the design phase for T2's second phase is underway, with construction set to begin by year-end. Once T1 and T2 are upgraded, KIA will handle 80 million passengers per year.

Currently, KIA serves 75 domestic and 30 international destinations, with direct flights to major global cities like San Francisco, London, and Frankfurt. BIAL aims to position KIA



as South India's primary international hub, increasing its international passenger share to 22-25%.

"Airports drive economic growth. KIA contributes 5.2% to Bengaluru's Gross Value Addition (GVA)," Munukutla noted, adding that KWIN City and Airport City projects will generate jobs and demand for 7,000 new hotel rooms around Devanahalli, with 4,000 already under construction.

Man pushed to death from moving train after seat dispute

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru police have arrested two men for allegedly pushing a fellow passenger off a moving train following a dispute over seating space, leading to his death. The incident occurred on Tuesday night aboard the Yeshwantpur-Bidar Express.

According to officials, the victim, an unidentified man in his 30s, was traveling in the general compartment when he got into an argument over seating. The accused, identified as S Devappa (45), a gardener, and H Peerappa (31), a painter from Sedam in Kalaburagi district, allegedly refused to make room for him near the train's toilet area.

A heated argument broke out between Yelahanka and Gauribidanur stations, during which the two men reportedly pushed the victim out of the speeding train. He died on the spot due to the impact.

An eyewitness onboard the train alerted authorities, prompting a

search operation. However, the victim's body was only discovered the next morning and later sent to Victoria Hospital for post-mortem examination.

The police have registered a murder case under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) based on a complaint filed by a 28-year-old passenger from Channarayapatna, Hassan. Investigations are ongoing to gather more details.

Meanwhile, in another incident, a man allegedly attacked four people in separate incidents in Indiranagar on Saturday night while under the influence of alcohol.

Among the victims were two pani puri vendors. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) D Devaraj confirmed that the accused is a habitual mobile thief. "He was drunk when he assaulted four individuals. He is currently on the run, and four FIRs have been registered against him," he stated.

India eyes space parks and VC fund to boost commercial space sector

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru, a hub of research and innovation, is yet to witness the development of a full-fledged satellite despite its high number of PhD holders and a strong research ecosystem, said former ISRO Chairman S Somanath during a panel discussion on 'Future of Commercial Space' at the Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2025.

Somanath pointed out the lack of integration in Bengaluru's space sector, stating that while individual components like liquid engines or high-caliber software packages exist, a comprehensive solution is still missing. He emphasized the need for a company capable of integrating these technologies to create a holistic space solution.

Data monetization and its potential
Somanath underscored the vast amounts of space data collected by the government, stating that it has immense commercial potential. Groundwater mapping, forest monitoring, and tracking arid regions are among the key areas where this data can be utilized. He highlighted that while the government generates this data, its monetization is driven by the

private sector, presenting huge opportunities for businesses. As an example, he noted that oceanic data could be effectively used to help fishermen improve their catch, demonstrating how space technology can be leveraged for real-world applications.

VC fund and space parks in the pipeline

Detailing the next steps for India's commercial space sector, Somanath announced the establishment of a ₹1,000-crore Venture Capital (VC) fund. However, he clarified that the fund is not intended to finance space startups directly but to instill investor confidence by signaling professional backing from space industry experts. While the fund is yet to become operational, he assured that its implementation is underway. Additionally, the government is providing grants of up to ₹25 crore to space startups, enabling them to scale up technologies and foster innovation. Another major development in the pipeline is the establishment of space parks across states, which will provide testing and validation facilities for startups. These parks will be under state government control but will operate on a

commercial basis, ensuring sustained investments in the sector.

Global recognition of India's space advancements

Jacob Gullish, Executive Director of Digital Economy Media, Entertainment, and Satcom at the US-India Business Council, praised India's remarkable progress in the space sector. He highlighted the country's growing commercial capabilities, leadership in space applications, and evolving policies that position India as a key player in the global space industry. Gullish also emphasized that India's technological advancements in areas like semiconductors, software, and space applications are gaining international recognition. He noted that while ISRO possesses cutting-edge technology, the private sector has innovative ideas that can be leveraged for global collaborations and advancements. India's focus on developing space parks, commercializing space data, and boosting investment through a VC fund marks a significant step toward strengthening its commercial space ecosystem, making it an attractive destination for investors and entrepreneurs.

'Bengaluru is not just CBD'

Residents react to BBMP's Windsor Manor beautification

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has come under criticism after sharing a video of the beautification of Windsor Manor Circle, a key junction in the Central Business District (CBD), as part of its Brand Bengaluru - Vibrant Bengaluru initiative. BBMP, in a post on X (formerly Twitter), stated: "A view of Windsor Manor Circle beautified by BBMP as part of Brand Bengaluru, Vibrant Bengaluru initiative. All major junctions are being beautified."

While the civic body claims it is enhancing the city's aesthetic appeal at major intersections, many residents argue that the focus remains limited to the CBD, neglecting other areas facing severe infrastructure issues.

Social media users reacted sharply to BBMP's initiative, with one user stating, "Shame on you for only prioritizing CBD and neglecting the rest of the city. As they say, apna time ayega (My

time will come)."

Another commented, "They forget that the first character of BBMP stands for 'Bruhat,' which includes newly added villages and areas. They are still stuck in the mindset of Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, which only managed a few parts of the city."

Some critics alleged that the beautification at Windsor Manor Circle was merely an attempt to impress investors ahead of the Invest Karnataka-2025 summit. "Windsor Manor Circle is beautified only for investor attraction," a user claimed. Residents also pointed out that areas like Peenya, Kadubeesanahalli, Electronic City, Whitefield, and the Outer Ring Road are in greater need of attention. "The real makeover for Brand Bengaluru is needed there, not at the already swanky Windsor Manor Circle!" one person remarked.

Summing up the frustration of many, a user simply wrote: "Just give us pothole-free roads!"

Invest Karnataka 2025 attracts ₹10.27 lakh crore in investments, over 6 lakh jobs to be created

TPN Correspondent, Karnataka

The Government of Karnataka has announced the successful completion of Invest Karnataka 2025, securing a total investment commitment of ₹10.27 lakh crore and the creation of over six lakh jobs. The announcement was made on Friday by MB Patil, Minister for Large and Medium Scale Industries, alongside Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

Minister Patil highlighted the regional spread of investments, stating that nearly 75% of the committed investments are outside Bengaluru, with over 45% directed towards North Karnataka. "This aligns with our vision of balanced regional growth, ensuring development is not limited to Bengaluru but extends across the state," he said.

Major investment commitments

Among the total investments, ₹4 lakh crore were recognized commitments, while ₹6.2 lakh crore were formalized through MoUs signed at the event. The renewable energy sector emerged as the biggest contributor, accounting for 41% of the total investments, followed by core manufacturing (15%), sunrise sectors (14%), infrastructure and logistics parks (11%), general manufacturing (10%), and startups (9%). Minister Patil also pointed out that 70% of the projects under the industries department are greenfield projects, indicating fresh investments rather



than expansions.

Key investment announcements

Several major corporations pledged large-scale investments, including:

- JSW Group – ₹1,20,000 crore across renewable energy, cement, steel, and affiliated businesses.
- Baldota Steel & Power Ltd – ₹54,000 crore for an integrated steel plant.
- Mahindra Susten – ₹36,000 crore for renewable energy projects and tourism.
- Hero Future Energies – ₹22,200 crore for renewable energy, green hydrogen, and its derivatives.
- Epsilon Group – ₹15,350 crore for anode and cathode materials manufacturing.

• Lam Research – ₹10,000 crore for semiconductor equipment manufacturing and R&D.

New policies for industrial growth

The event also saw the launch of key policies aimed at boosting industrial and clean energy sectors. The New Industrial Policy 2025-30 aims to generate 20 lakh jobs and attract ₹7.5 lakh crore in investments. Additionally, the Clean Mobility Policy 2025-30 is set to bring in ₹50,000 crore and create 1 lakh new jobs in the sector.

The Karnataka government's strategic push for regional and sustainable development is expected to bolster industrial growth, positioning the state as a leading investment destination.



Mani Shankar Aiyar: '21st century poised to become the Asian century'

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Former Union Minister and ex-diplomat Mani Shankar Aiyar has stated that the 21st century is set to be the Asian century, marking a shift from 500 years of Western dominance to a revival of Asia's historical influence. Speaking at the Alliance Literary Festival at Alliance University on Thursday, Aiyar emphasized that this transformation is not about conquest but a return to Asia's legacy of innovation, resilience, and intellectual achievements.

Highlighting global geopolitical shifts, Aiyar questioned whether the world is witnessing an American century in Asia or standing at

the threshold of a true Asian century. He pointed out that recent global events indicate that the American empire may have peaked and entered a phase of gradual decline. Aiyar underscored that Asia's rise is not about isolation but collaboration, inviting global engagement with Asia as a leader in dialogue and development. "This is not a future to be built from scratch, but a past to be revived and reimagined," he said.

Asserting that Asia's economic and cultural resurgence is reshaping global power dynamics, Aiyar urged nations to embrace this transformation as an opportunity for cooperation rather than competition.

"How Can Chief Justice..." Vice President's Big Remark On Separation Of Powers



TPN Correspondent | Bhopal

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has strongly questioned the involvement of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) in executive appointments, calling it a deviation from democratic principles. Speaking at the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal, Dhankhar argued that governance should remain within the domain of elected representatives and not be influenced by judicial intervention. "How can the Chief Justice of India participate in the selection of a CBI director in a democracy like ours? Can there be any legal rationale for it?" he asked, asserting that the practice arose because the executive had previously yielded to a judicial verdict. His remarks come ahead of a crucial meeting for selecting the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), the first such selection under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. The law removed the CJI from the selection panel, which had been mandated by a March 2023 Supreme Court ruling. Critics argue that the new law increases executive control over the Election Commission, potentially compromising its independence.

CEC Selection and Judicial Role in Governance

The selection committee, comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, is set to meet on Monday to appoint a successor to CEC Rajiv Kumar, who retires on February 18. The meeting will take place a day before the Supreme Court hears petitions challenging the new law. Dhankhar warned against

"executive governance by judicial decree", calling it a "constitutional paradox" that India cannot afford. He emphasized that governance must remain with the elected government, which is accountable to both the legislature and the electorate. "If executive governance is outsourced, accountability disappears," he added.

Need for Defined Boundaries Between Institutions

Reflecting on his tenure as Parliamentary Affairs Minister in 1990, Dhankhar noted that when the Supreme Court had just eight judges, constitutional interpretation required a five-judge bench under Article 145(3). He argued that judicial interpretation should not lead to "arrogation of authority" and must respect the intent of India's founding fathers. Dhankhar also addressed the limits of judicial review, stating that Parliament remains the final authority in constitutional amendments, with no room for external intervention. He maintained that judicial presence in public life should be through judgments rather than other forms of expression, warning that excessive public engagement by judges could "undermine institutional dignity." Stressing the importance of open dialogue, Dhankhar remarked that democracy is weakened when freedom of expression is compromised. He encouraged constructive discourse, stating, "A difference of opinion should not lead to confrontation, but rather spark dialogue to find common ground." His remarks underline a growing debate over judicial overreach and executive autonomy, especially as India prepares for a critical transition in the Election Commission.

Seer urges Karnataka govt to withdraw cases against Mysore Royal family

TPN Correspondent | Chitradurga

Dr. Shivamurthy Shivacharya Swamiji of the Taralabalu Mutt has urged the Karnataka government to withdraw all cases filed against the Mysore Royal family and ensure they receive due respect.

Speaking at the Taralabalu Hunnime program in Bharamasagara village on Wednesday, the Swamiji emphasized the contributions of the Mysore kingdom to Karnataka's development. He stated that the royal family had donated the entire state to the Union of India and should not be subjected to unnecessary troubles.

Swamiji called upon the public to pressure the government into withdrawing all pending cases and suggested that the state should hold discussions with the royal family to resolve disputes. He

questioned, "Why can't the state cabinet withdraw all cases against the Mysore Royal family?" and urged former CM Basavaraj Bommai to intervene and help resolve the matter.

Push for electoral reforms

Swamiji also expressed discontent with the current election process, suggesting a major electoral reform. He proposed that in the event of an elected representative's death, the runner-up should automatically be given the position instead of holding re-elections. Citing the Praja Prathinidhi system from the Mysore kingdom, he urged the Election Commission of India to implement this reform, arguing that it would help reduce political instability and address governance issues. His remarks have sparked discussions on both the Mysore Royal family's legal



disputes and potential electoral changes, bringing attention to longstanding political and historical concerns.

Vivek Ramaswamy calls it an 'honour' to welcome PM Modi in the US



TPN Correspondent | United States

Indian-origin entrepreneur and Republican leader Vivek Ramaswamy expressed his delight in welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States, calling it a "pleasure and honour". Following their bilateral meeting at Blair House, Ramaswamy stated that he had a "great meeting" with the Indian Prime Minister and wished him a "wonderful visit" to the

US.

During the meeting, PM Modi and Ramaswamy discussed key areas such as India-US relations, innovation, biotechnology, and entrepreneurship. The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed the discussions in a post on X (formerly Twitter), stating, "PM @narendramodi met with @VivekGRamaswamy at Blair House today. They had insightful discussions on

India-U.S. ties, innovation, biotechnology, and the role of entrepreneurship in shaping the future."

Ramaswamy's role in US politics

Vivek Ramaswamy, who previously ran for the Republican presidential nomination, gained national recognition for his outspoken debate performances. However, he later withdrew from the race and endorsed Donald Trump, whom he had earlier called the "best president of the 21st century."

Ramaswamy was also briefly appointed as the co-head of the US Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) alongside Elon Musk, but later stepped down, reportedly due to differences with the Tesla CEO.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in the United States on Wednesday (local time), marking his first visit to the US after Donald Trump assumed office for the second term.

Upon arrival, PM Modi emphasized the importance of strengthening the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

He is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump at the White House later in the day, where discussions are expected to focus on expanding bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.



PM Modi, Trump's Big Nuclear Push To Get More Atomic Reactors To India

- **Modi and Trump reaffirm commitment to bringing US nuclear reactors to India.**
- **Proposed amendments to India's nuclear laws to ease liability concerns.**
- **Westinghouse in talks to build six AP 1000 reactors in Andhra Pradesh.**
- **India targets 100 GW nuclear energy capacity by 2047 under new mission.**
- **Rs 20,000 crore allocated for R&D in small modular reactors.**



ation, with a major push to bring US-designed nuclear reactors to India. The two leaders, in their meeting at the White House, discussed plans to localize nuclear reactor manufacturing in India and enable technology transfers to accelerate atomic energy development. This marks a renewed effort to break the deadlock that has persisted since the 2008 India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement.

Since the historic deal, progress in implementing nuclear projects has been stalled, primarily due to India's stringent nuclear liability laws. To address this, Modi and Trump welcomed

the proposed amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), which aim to ease concerns of American nuclear suppliers and facilitate collaboration between Indian and US industries. The leaders have also agreed to set up bilateral arrangements under the CLNDA framework to resolve liability issues.

The discussions covered plans for the construction of large-scale nuclear reactors as well as advanced small modular reactors (SMRs). The US-based Westinghouse Electric Company has been in negotiations to supply AP 1000 nu-

clear reactors to India, with the Kovvada site in Andhra Pradesh identified for a potential six-reactor project. Additionally, industrial cooperation on SMRs was emphasized, with Modi discussing their development during a separate meeting with US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz.

With an eye on long-term energy security, the Indian government has announced a new 'Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat' in the 2025 Budget. The initiative aims to develop 100 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2047, a goal that experts believe is achievable if issues related to land acquisition and atomic fuel supply are addressed. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has also allocated Rs 20,000 crore for R&D in SMRs, with a target to operationalize five indigenous reactors by 2033.

India currently has 24 operational nuclear reactors with a total installed capacity of 8,180 MW. The country's focus on nuclear power comes as part of its efforts to transition to cleaner energy sources, with atomic energy seen as a key component in reducing carbon emissions while ensuring a stable power supply. The collaboration between India and the US is expected to unlock new opportunities in nuclear technology and enhance energy security for the future.

TPN Correspondent
Washington DC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing nuclear energy cooper-

Over 50 Crore Devotees Take Holy Dip at Maha Kumbh

TPN Correspondent | Prayagraj

The ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj has witnessed an unprecedented turnout, with over 50 crore devotees taking a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam till Friday evening, the Uttar Pradesh government announced.

The massive gathering marks the largest congregation in human history for any religious, cultural, or social event.

According to the state government, the number of devotees at Maha Kumbh has surpassed the population of every country except India and China.

The Hindu pilgrimage, which began on January 13, will continue till February 26 at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers.

Despite a deadly stampede on January 29,



the fair continues to draw millions of pilgrims daily.

The UP government reported that over 92 lakh devotees took a dip at the Sangam on Friday alone, pushing the total count past 50 crore as of February 14.

"The number of devotees immersing themselves in the sacred waters exceeds the population of nations like the United States, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, and Bangladesh," the government stated. Citing US Census Bureau data, it highlighted that only India and China surpass the Maha Kumbh's footfall, while other populous nations fall significantly behind. Initially, the government had estimated a turnout between 40 to 45 crore, but the response has exceeded expectations. On January 29, a record-breaking eight crore devotees took part in the holy bath on the auspicious occasion of Mauni Amavasya. However, the same day also saw a tragic stampede, claiming 30 lives and injuring 60 others.

Bengaluru woman drowns in lake, boyfriend alleges caste killing

TPN Correspondent, Bengaluru

Authorities in Bengaluru Rural have launched an investigation into the death of a 20-year-old woman who drowned in Huskur Lake, following allegations from her boyfriend that her father opposed their relationship due to caste differences. The victim, identified as Sahana, worked at a private firm in Kudlu Gate. On February 12, her father, Ramamurthy, rushed to Hebbagodi police station, claiming that both he and his daughter had fallen into the lake after he lost control of his bike due to microsleep, as he had not rested the previous night. However, Sahana's boyfriend, Nitin, alleged that her family had been against their relationship. He claimed they had been in love for over a year, but her parents refused

to let them marry due to caste differences. Sahana belonged to the Kuruba community, while Nitin is from the Naidu caste.

According to Madan Kumar, a friend of Nitin, the couple had been together for 18 months after meeting through mutual friends. A day before the incident, Ramamurthy allegedly summoned Nitin to a friend's house and forbade him from marrying Sahana.

While police have not classified the case as an honour killing, they acknowledged the need for further investigation. "The father reported an accident, but given the allegations made, we are looking into all possibilities," an officer from Hebbagodi police station said. The investigation is expected to gain clarity once the post-mortem report is available.

TVK Leader Vijay Granted 'Y' Scale Security Cover

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Actor-turned-politician Vijay has been provided with a 'Y' scale security cover, comprising an 8-person entourage, as he prepares for his political journey. Vijay, who launched his political party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in February 2024, has been given this security cover in Tamil Nadu, where he is primarily based.

The 'Y' level security detail includes a mix of civil police officers and one or two National Security Guard (NSG) commandos, and is typically assigned to individuals who face a specific threat to their safety.

This type of security is more comprehensive than the basic 'X' category, which involves only two armed civil police officers rotating every eight hours.

India offers four primary levels of security: X, Y, Z, and Z+, based on an individual's perceived risk. The X-level security is the most basic and provides just two armed civil officers on duty throughout the day.

The Z-level security, on the other hand, includes 22 personnel, including 4-5 NSG commandos, and comes with an escort vehicle for added safe-



ty. The highest level, Z+ security, provides 55 personnel, including 10 NSG commandos and additional coverage from the Special Protection Group (SPG) for high-profile figures like the Prime Minister.

The Y-level security that Vijay has been assigned is seen as a precautionary measure as he prepares to contest the Tamil Nadu assembly elections in 2026.

As a prominent figure in both the film industry and now in politics, this level of protection reflects the security concerns surrounding him and his public profile.

The political landscape in Tamil Nadu is expected to witness an increase in competition as elections approach, making safety and security a critical consideration for leaders like Vijay.

Four arrested for brutal murder of criminal Bhagappa Harijan

TPN Correspondent | Vijayapura

Karnataka police have arrested four individuals in connection with the brutal murder of notorious criminal Bhagappa Huchappa Harijan, who was killed outside his residence in Madeena Nagar on February 11. The arrested accused have been identified as Prakash alias Pintu Laxman Melinakeri (26), Rahul Bheemashankar Talakeri (20), Sudeep Renuka Kamble (20), and Manikantha alias Gadigeppa Shankarappa Benakopp. The arrests followed an extensive investigation by the police. Superintendent of Police Laxman Nimbargi stated that Bhagappa was shot before being attacked with axes and machetes, resulting in his immediate

death. His daughter, Ganugubai, accused Prakash of leading the attack. Bhagappa had a long history of criminal activities, including six murders. His killing is suspected to be linked to the murder of Ravi Melinakeri, a relative and former business associate. Prakash, Ravi's younger brother, had allegedly been pressured by Bhagappa to hand over ₹10 crore in property and money while also facing threats against Ravi's wife. On the night of February 11, as Bhagappa stepped out for a walk, the assailants arrived in an auto-rickshaw, shot him, and then attacked him with sharp weapons. Police are now working to recover the weapons used and expect further arrests in the case.



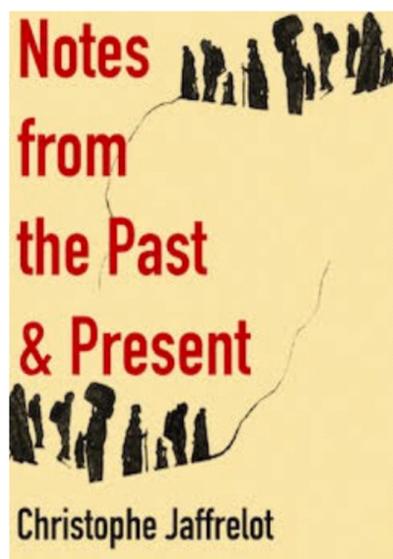
Why are Gujarati Migrants Fleeing the Model State?

Gujarat, a state often hailed as a model of economic growth in India, presents a paradox: despite boasting one of the highest growth rates and per capita GDPs in the country, it remains plagued by high levels of poverty and a lack of job opportunities. This contradiction has prompted thousands of Gujaratis, particularly from rural areas, to risk their lives migrating illegally to the United States. In fact, Gujaratis constitute a significant portion of illegal Indian migrants to the US, with 41,330 out of 67,391 illegal Indian migrants in 2023 hailing from Gujarat. The plight of these migrants has been tragically underscored by incidents such as the deaths of Jagdish Patel and his family, who froze to death while attempting to cross the US-Canada border in 2022.

Despite its high economic growth, Gujarat continues to struggle with mass poverty. The state's GDP per capita was Rs 181,963 in 2022-23, more than double the national average of Rs 99,404. However, much of this wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, while the majority of the population continues to live in poverty. This is largely due to a failure to create enough jobs that provide decent wages for the state's poor, particularly in rural areas.

The state's labor market is marked by a trend of informalization, with 74% of workers in Gujarat lacking formal contracts, compared to 41% in Karnataka and 53% in Tamil Nadu. This casualization results in lower wages for workers, with the average daily wage for casual labor in Gujarat in 2024 at Rs 375—well below the national average of Rs 433. Furthermore, the average monthly earnings from regular salaried jobs in Gujarat are also below the national average, standing at Rs 17,503 compared to Rs 21,103.

The rural economy of Gujarat is particularly dire. In 2023, agricultural workers earned the lowest daily wage in India, with an average of Rs 242. This is even



lower than in Bihar, one of India's poorest states. Other rural workers, such as artisans, also face low wages, with daily earnings of just Rs 273. In comparison, Bihar's rural workers earn higher wages, with construction workers in Gujarat earning Rs 323 per day, again trailing behind states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Moreover, the state's rural and urban populations exhibit relatively low consumption levels. The Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) in Gujarat's urban areas was Rs 6,621, and in rural areas, it was just Rs 3,798 in 2022-23. These figures place Gujarat behind other states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka in terms of basic living standards.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which measures poverty by considering access to education, healthcare, and food, also reveals Gujarat's challenges. In 2020-21, 11.66% of the state's population was classified as poor according to the MPI, a

figure that is better than some states but still indicates significant poverty.

The root cause of this paradox lies in Gujarat's economic policies, which prioritize capital-intensive industries over labor-intensive ones. Under Narendra Modi's leadership, Gujarat's industrial strategy shifted dramatically, focusing on large-scale infrastructure projects and petrochemicals at the expense of labor-intensive industries and social spending, including education and healthcare. This change marked a departure from Gujarat's previous model, which had supported small and medium enterprises (SMEs), known for their higher employment potential.

The shift in industrial policy, particularly the introduction of the Gujarat Special Investment Region Act in 2009, led to the creation of industrial mega-projects that generated few jobs relative to the investment. For example, a Rs 10 billion project would only employ about 2,000 people, resulting in a ratio of Rs 500,000 per job. This capital-intensive model led to the decline of SMEs, with many shutting down due to delays in payments and the high cost of doing business.

The rise of crony capitalism, exemplified by industrial giants like the Adani Group, further exacerbated the problem. Despite being among the largest conglomerates in India, the Adani Group employs just 36,000 people, the fewest among the top six business groups in the country.

In conclusion, Gujarat's high GDP and economic growth are not reflected in the standard of living for most of its residents. The state's focus on large-scale, capital-intensive industries, coupled with the decline of labor-intensive sectors, has resulted in poor job creation, low wages, and continued poverty. This economic disparity has pushed many Gujaratis to seek a better life abroad, often through dangerous and illegal means.

SC's stinging comments on freebies miss the real harm they do



Justice B.R. Gavai has recently raised concerns about the long-term effects of freebies distributed by political parties, particularly in Maharashtra, where such incentives are provided prior to elections. He criticized the practice, arguing that it undermines the national work ethic by reducing the motivation to work. Gavai pointed out a specific issue faced by farmers in Maharashtra, noting that due to the distribution of free benefits, agricultural laborers were increasingly reluctant to work. "Because of the freebies in Maharashtra, which were announced prior to the elections, the agriculturists are not getting laborers. When everybody is getting free [money] at home, why would they want to work?" Gavai remarked, highlighting the adverse consequences these measures can have on the productivity of vital sectors like agriculture.

This criticism of freebies extends beyond Maharashtra, reflecting a broader concern about government social welfare programs. Gavai's comments echo a significant fear that such practices may erode the work culture by fostering dependency on free handouts, thereby discouraging individuals from contributing to the economy through productive labor. According to Gavai, these types of freebies often become a blanket criticism of all forms of social welfare, making it harder to build a robust and sustainable social security system that can support citizens without creating dependency.

However, evidence from government schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) challenges this assumption. Data from the MGNREGA program contradicts the idea that welfare schemes discourage people from working. It shows that the demand for work under MGNREGA spikes during the lean season in agriculture, when there is less availability of work in farming, and many people turn to these government-backed employment opportunities as a means to support themselves.

Despite such data, there remains growing discontent among the middle class regarding the financing of these freebies, particularly when they are funded through taxpayer money. Many view the extensive distribution of free benefits as an unsustainable financial practice that may strain the economy in the long term. That said, well-established government welfare programs like the Public Distribution System (PDS), old-age pensions, and PM-Kisan remain valuable tools for addressing the needs of vulnerable sections of society, offering targeted assistance where necessary.

The challenge remains in balancing the need for effective welfare measures with maintaining a productive, self-sustaining workforce that doesn't rely solely on government support. While schemes like MGNREGA play a crucial role, the debate about freebies and their implications for work culture and economic sustainability is likely to continue.

Modi-Macron Power Combo: What Makes France Such A Loyal Partner To India?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to France was a significant diplomatic moment, underscoring the strengthening of India-France relations. The visit was marked by warm exchanges between Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron, highlighting a partnership based on trust, mutual respect, and strategic autonomy. The duo co-chaired the Paris AI Action Summit, where India took center stage, advocating for a democratic and unbiased approach to AI development, aiming for inclusivity, particularly for the Global South. This summit aimed to present an alternative to the US-led OpenAI and China's DeepSeek, focusing on harnessing AI's potential without succumbing to fear and skepticism.

One of Modi's standout contributions was his call for a democratised

AI model, free from biases that often reflect political and social prejudices. His argument emphasized the importance of training AI systems on diverse, balanced datasets, a message that resonated widely on social media. India's growing AI ambitions are backed by a strong talent pool, with over 650,000 professionals in the sector, and the country's AI mission is rapidly expanding, with plans to add more GPUs to its infrastructure. Furthermore, AI model training costs in India are significantly lower than in other parts of the world, thanks to government subsidies.

Modi's visit also included a focus on economic ties, with the India-France CEO Forum co-hosted by the two leaders, reinforcing their commitment to strengthening bilateral economic relations. Modi's interactions extended



beyond AI and economics, as he visited Marseille, where he inaugurated a new Indian consulate and toured key

energy projects, including the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

The strategic alignment between India and France has long been based on shared values, with both nations prioritizing strategic autonomy in their foreign policies. Unlike other Western nations, France has consistently supported India in critical moments, particularly during the 1998 nuclear tests when it chose not to impose sanctions. This partnership extends across various sectors, including defense, where a \$10 billion defense deal is set to be finalized soon, and nuclear energy, where France is helping India develop the Jaitapur nuclear power plant. This deep-rooted cooperation between India and France is set to continue shaping global technology, energy, and defense landscapes, with both countries working together to drive the future of AI and beyond.

Mission-500: India, US Aim To Double Bilateral Trade To \$500 Billion By 2030

- Modi, Trump launch Mission-500 for \$500B trade by 2030.
- New 10-year US-India defense partnership set (2025-2035).
- Modi visits US after Trump's second-term inauguration.



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

During a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, both leaders unveiled several key initiatives aimed at enhancing bilateral relations. One of the major highlights was the launch of Mission-500, a trade and investment initiative designed to more than double the current two-way trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri shared the details of these ambitious plans during a press briefing.

In addition to Mission-500, the leaders introduced the US-India Compact for the 21st Century, which aims to accelerate military partnerships, bolster commerce, and drive technological advancements. Both nations

also committed to negotiating a **multi-sector trade agreement by the fall of 2025, with the goal of enhancing trade across goods and services sectors.

Mr. Misri elaborated, stating that the two leaders were determined to focus on strengthening trade relations by making greenfield investments in high-value industries in each other's countries. He also highlighted plans to negotiate and finalize a 10-year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership covering the period from 2025 to 2035. As part of this agreement, both countries will move forward with ongoing defence procurement negotiations, including platforms for land and air systems, as well as coproduction agreements. The leaders also agreed to initiate discus-

sions for a reciprocal defence procurement agreement, which could further enhance defence ties between the nations.

In a warm gesture, President Trump welcomed PM Modi with a hug at the White House, reaffirming the strength of their personal and diplomatic relationship. During the meeting, PM Modi expressed his delight at seeing Trump back at the White House for his second term and reiterated India's commitment to advancing the strategic partnership between the two countries.

This visit marks PM Modi's first official trip to the US since President Trump's second term began, and it underscores the growing cooperation between the world's largest democracies.

'Srinagar people deserved better: J&K CM as no night prayers at Jamia Masjid

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Jammu and Kashmir's former Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, condemned the security establishment's decision to seal Srinagar's historic Jama Masjid on Shab-e-Baraat, one of the holiest nights in the Islamic calendar. The decision to restrict access to the mosque during this significant religious observance sparked widespread criticism.

In a post on X, Abdullah expressed his disappointment, calling the action "very unfortunate" and claiming it demonstrated a lack of confidence in both the people and the law-and-order system. He further emphasized that the decision undermined the belief that peace and calm would not prevail without extreme measures. Abdullah added, "The people of Srinagar deserved better."

The incident occurred when the police placed Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who was scheduled to deliver a sermon at the mosque on Shab-e-Baraat, under house arrest. People present at the mosque were asked to leave, and the mosque management was informed that there would be no night prayers.



Meanwhile, elsewhere in Srinagar, thousands of faithful gathered at various mosques and shrines to observe Shab-e-Baraat, with the Hazratbal shrine hosting the largest congregation on Thursday night. The occasion is observed by Muslims across South Asia and beyond, including in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and several Central Asian countries. The night commemorates significant events in Islamic history, including the Prophet Muhammad's entry into Makkah and his prayers for the forgiveness of departed souls.

Dalai Lama Granted Z-Category Security Cover

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

In light of potential security threats, the Indian government has provided a **Z-category armed protection cover** to Tibetan spiritual leader **Dalai Lama**. Official sources confirmed the move on Thursday, citing concerns for the safety of the 89-year-old leader.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has directed the **VIP security wing of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** to handle the security arrangements for Dalai Lama. This decision comes as part of efforts to safeguard the leader, who has long been a prominent figure in the global Tibetan independence movement.



The Z-category security detail is among the highest levels of protection provided by the Indian government. It includes a large team of armed personnel and specialized security measures to ensure the safety of individuals facing specific threats.

Dalai Lama, who has been residing in India since 1959 following his exile from Tibet, continues to be a revered spiritual figure. Despite his peaceful approach to advocacy, he has faced various threats due to his stance on Tibetan autonomy and his global influence.

This enhanced security arrangement underscores the importance of safeguarding influential leaders, particularly in light of their symbolic significance on the international stage.

CRPF Jawan Opens Fire at Manipur Camp, Kills Two Before Shooting Himself

TPN Correspondent | Imphal

A CRPF jawan opened fire on his colleagues at a camp in Lamsang, Imphal West, on Monday night, killing two personnel and injuring eight others before taking his own life. The incident occurred around 8 PM within the 120th battalion of the force. Senior police and CRPF officials rushed to the scene following the gunfire. The injured personnel were immediately shifted to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal for treatment. Authorities are investigating the motive behind the shooting, while security at the camp has been reinforced to prevent further incidents.

Allegations of National Security Threats: Assam CM Targets Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Assam Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, is set to discuss the national security implications surrounding Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, following claims of alleged Pakistani links involving his wife. Sarma announced that on February 16, the cabinet would deliberate on whether the recent revelations concerning the MP from Assam require a thorough examination of national security concerns.

In his posts on X, Sarma alluded to Gogoi's parliamentary actions after his marriage to Elizabeth Colebourn, a British citizen, who allegedly had professional ties with Pakistani individuals linked to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Sarma's statements reference social media posts from pro-BJP handles claiming that Colebourn had worked under Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, a former advisor to Pakistan's Planning Commission, raising questions about her associations.

Additionally, Sarma accused Gogoi of seeking sensitive defense information in Parliament, particularly related to the country's coastal radar systems and defense infrastructure. The Chief Minister's posts pointed to a visit by Gogoi, along with his startup, to the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi in 2015, where they discussed India-Pakistan relations, despite India's formal protest over the Pakistani High Commission's interference in internal matters. Sarma argued that the timing of these actions, including Gogoi's growing focus on defense matters, raised national security concerns.

In response, Gaurav Gogoi dismissed the allegations as politically motivated, sarcastically suggesting that if his wife could be an ISI agent, he must be a RAW agent. He further claimed that Sarma's accusations were an attempt to deflect attention from ongoing land grabbing cases involving his family. Gogoi suggested that Sarma's actions were motivated by the potential loss of his position as the Chief Minister, with the BJP leadership allegedly planning to replace him with Dilip Saikia.

The dispute has sparked intense political exchanges, with both sides exchanging serious accusations, setting the stage for an important debate on national security and political maneuvering in Assam.

US Approves Extradition of Mumbai Terror Attack Accused Tahawwur Rana to India

TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

In a significant development following his bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, to India. During a joint press briefing, Trump expressed his satisfaction over the decision, calling Rana one of the "evil people" involved in the horrific attacks and confirming that he would face justice in India.

"I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters, Tahawwur Rana, to face justice in India," Trump said. He further added, "He is going back to India to face justice." Prime Minister Modi thanked President Trump for expediting the extradition process, stating, "A perpetrator

of the Mumbai terror attack is being extradited for his interrogation and trial in India."

This announcement follows the US Supreme Court's rejection of Rana's review petition on January 21, clearing the way for his extradition. The US State Department had previously stated that, in light of the Supreme Court's decision, it was evaluating the next steps in the case. The Department reaffirmed its support for India's efforts to ensure that those responsible for the Mumbai attacks face justice.

Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistani-origin businessman, is accused of being involved in the 2008 attacks that killed 166 people, including six Americans. He was linked to David Coleman Headley, another key



Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Rana had traveled to India in November 2008, staying at Mumbai's Renaissance Hotel during the attack.

Indian agencies will now interrogate Rana and proceed with his trial in India. Rana had been previously convicted in the US for providing material support to terrorism and had faced prosecution for his involvement with Lashkar-e-Taiba, the terrorist group behind the Mumbai attacks.

PM Modi Meets Elon Musk, Discusses Space, AI, and Innovation

TPN Correspondent | Washington DC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk during his two-day visit to the United States, engaging in discussions on technology, innovation, and space exploration. The meeting took place at Blair House, just hours before Modi's scheduled bilateral talks with US President Donald Trump.

Modi described the meeting as "very good" in a post on X, highlighting discussions on strengthening India-US collaboration in artificial intelligence, space exploration, and sustainable development. Sources added that the talks also covered emerging technologies, entrepreneurship, and governance.

Musk was accompanied by his three young children, who were seen interacting with Modi during the meeting. Neuralink director Shvonn Zilis was also present. The Prime Minister gifted the children three books—Rabindranath Tagore's *The Crescent Moon*, *The Great RK*



Narayan Collection, and *Panchatantra*. Earlier in the day, Modi met US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, with Indian NSA Ajit Doval also in attendance. He later held talks with Tulsi Gabbard, who was recently sworn in as the US Director of National Intelligence, and India-origin entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy. PM Modi and Musk have met several times in the past, including during Modi's visit

to the Tesla facility in 2015. Musk, who now oversees the Department of Government Efficiency under the Trump administration, has expressed interest in expanding Tesla's presence in India. Modi's meeting with Trump is expected to focus on trade agreements, a new defense partnership, and military sales. The two leaders will hold a joint press conference following their discussions.



"No Role For Deep State, Leave It To PM Modi": Trump On Bangladesh Crisis

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

US President Donald Trump distanced his administration from any involvement in the political crisis in Bangladesh, stating that the matter should be left to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His remarks came during a joint press briefing with PM Modi in Washington DC when he was questioned about the alleged role of the US deep state in the recent regime change in Bangladesh.

"There was no role for our deep state. This is something that the Prime Minister has been working on for a long time, for hundreds of years, frankly, I have been reading about it. I will leave Bangladesh to the Prime Minister," Trump said, without directly addressing whether the previous Democratic government under Joe Biden had played a part in the change.

Speculation is growing that the Trump administration may avoid direct involvement in Bangladesh, where Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has taken charge as caretaker leader following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has since sought refuge in India. The new interim government has faced criticism for failing to control rising attacks on minorities by alleged radical Islamist elements. Tensions between India and Bangladesh have escalated since Hasina's departure in August amid widespread anti-government protests. India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed that PM Modi raised concerns about the situation with President Trump during their discussions.

"We hope that the situation in Bangladesh will also move forward in a direction where we can pursue relations in a constructive and stable way with them. But there are concerns about that situation. And the Prime Minister shared those views with President Trump," Misri stated.

PM Modi, who is on a two-day visit to the US, also met billionaire businessman Elon Musk during his trip.

Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore to Return to Earth on March 12



TPN Correspondent | Newyork

who are set to arrive at the ISS.

NASA and SpaceX are expediting the upcoming crew rotation missions to the International Space Station (ISS), aiming to bring astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore back to Earth. The two astronauts have been stranded in space since June 2024 due to technical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, which had originally brought them to the ISS.

The Crew-10 mission, previously slated for a late March launch, is now targeting March 12, pending final mission readiness and the completion of NASA's flight certification process. NASA made the announcement on Tuesday, signaling that preparations are progressing ahead of schedule.

Williams and Wilmore are currently part of the Crew-9 mission, which also includes NASA astronauts Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov. The Crew-9 team will return to Earth after a few days of handover activities with the Crew-10 astronauts,

The Crew-10 mission will carry NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Takuya Onishi, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Kirill Peskov to the space station. This accelerated launch was made possible after a decision to use a previously flown Dragon spacecraft, named *Endurance*, rather than a new Dragon spacecraft that was originally planned. SpaceX's teams are now conducting additional assessments of the spacecraft's hardware to ensure it meets NASA's Commercial Crew Program safety standards.

The decision to speed up the return of Williams and Wilmore comes after US President Donald Trump personally asked SpaceX CEO Elon Musk to help bring the astronauts home as soon as possible. Musk has expressed his frustration with the prolonged stay of the astronauts, calling it "terrible" that they have been stranded on the ISS for so long, despite NASA's coordination with SpaceX for their return.

Netanyahu Warns of Renewed Military Action If Hamas Fails to Release Hostages



TPN Correspondent | Tel Aviv

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a stern warning to Hamas following the group's recent announcement that it will not release Israeli hostages, citing a violation of the ceasefire-hostage agreement. Netanyahu emphasized that Israel will resume intense military action if Hamas fails to meet the Saturday deadline for releasing the hostages.

The Prime Minister's office released a statement on X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday, indicating that Netanyahu had instructed the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to mobilize inside and around the Gaza Strip. The military buildup is intended to prepare for a resumption of military operations, which Netanyahu said would focus on the "final defeat" of Hamas if the group fails to uphold the ceasefire.

"I have instructed the IDF to amass forces inside and surrounding the Gaza Strip. This action is underway and will soon be completed," Netanyahu's office stated. The post also clarified the government's position: "If Hamas does not return our hostages by Saturday noon, the ceasefire will end, and the IDF will resume intense fighting until the final defeat of Hamas."

The growing tensions come after Hamas broke the terms of the ceasefire agreement, which was intended to facilitate the release of hostages held by the militant group. The hostages' release had been a key element of the agreement, but Hamas now refuses to honor it, prompting Netanyahu's firm response.

Earlier, U.S. President Donald Trump also weighed in on the situation, advising Israel to take a tough stance on Hamas in order to secure the release of the hostages.

The situation in Gaza remains volatile as both sides brace for further escalation. With the deadline fast approaching, the international community is closely monitoring developments, as the outcome could have significant implications for regional security and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Zelensky Willing to Swap Land with Putin, On Condition of US Mediation

TPN Correspondent | Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has expressed readiness to swap land with Russian President Vladimir Putin under one condition – if US President Donald Trump facilitates negotiations between the two nations. This development comes after Russia released at least one American prisoner, which Trump described as a gesture aimed at fostering peace in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.



Zelenskyy also emphasized that Ukraine's security guarantees could not be fulfilled by European partners alone, asserting that security without the involvement of the United States would not be viable. He warned that a deal lacking firm military commitments, such as NATO membership or peacekeeping forces, would allow Russia the opportunity to regroup and potentially attack Ukraine again.

Furthermore, Zelenskyy sought to involve US businesses in Ukraine's reconstruction, offering lucrative deals to firms that contribute to rebuilding the war-torn nation.

Zelenskyy has historically rejected ceding any Ukrainian territory after Russia's invasion in February 2022. However, in a recent interview with *The Guardian*, he stated that Ukraine would consider trading territories, including the Kursk region of Russia, which Ukraine had seized following a surprise offensive last year. Zelenskyy remained noncommittal on which areas Ukraine might request in return but emphasized the importance of all Ukrainian territories.

Nothing To Buy, Will Take It: Trump Doubles Down On Gaza Takeover Plan



TPN Correspondent | Washington DC

US President Donald Trump has doubled down on his controversial proposal to "own" the Gaza Strip, asserting that the United States will take control of the region and manage its redevelopment, which would involve displacing the 2.2 million Palestinians living there. The plan was discussed during a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

"We're going to have Gaza. We don't have to buy it. There's nothing to buy. We will have Gaza... We're going to take it, we're going to hold it, we're going to cherish it," Trump said, while also denying any personal involvement in real estate development in the region. He emphasized that the redevelopment would benefit the broader Middle East, creating jobs for the region's people.

Trump suggested that Palestinians in Gaza would be willing to leave, citing the dire living conditions in the enclave following the ongoing conflict. "Look at the way they're living now. Nobody's living like that in the entire world," he stated, referring to the destruction caused by over a year of fighting following the October 7 terror attacks by Hamas.

While Trump has presented his proposal to take over Gaza as a potential solution, Jordan's King Abdullah expressed opposition, emphasizing the Arab world's position against the displacement of Palestinians. He affirmed the importance of rebuilding Gaza without forcing Palestinians to leave and prioritizing the region's humanitarian needs. Abdullah added that Egypt was working on a plan that could align with Trump's vision without displacing Gaza's residents.

Trump had previously mentioned the possibility of halting US aid to Jordan if it did not accept refugees, but during the meeting, he retreated from this stance. In response, King Abdullah offered to take in 2,000 severely ill Palestinian children as a goodwill gesture.

Meanwhile, Israel has warned that it will resume intense fighting in Gaza if hostages are not returned by this weekend, with Hamas maintaining its commitment to the ceasefire deal that has largely held since the fighting paused in recent months.



India's Wholesale Inflation Eases to 2.31% in January

India's wholesale inflation moderated to 2.31% in January on an annual basis, slightly lower than the 2.37% recorded in December, according to government data released on Friday.

The data shows a notable decline in the inflation rate for primary articles, which dropped to 4.69% in January from 6.02% in December. Primary articles include food items, which are a significant component of the wholesale price index, and this decrease reflects a more stable pricing environment for agricultural and raw materials.

Additionally, fuel and power wholesale prices saw a smaller decline of 2.78% in January, compared to a sharper 3.79% drop in December. The moderation in fuel prices indicates a less volatile energy market, contributing to the overall easing of wholesale inflation.

The January figures indicate a stabiliza-

tion in the cost of goods at the wholesale level, offering some relief to both businesses and consumers. The easing of inflation in primary articles and fuel prices suggests that input costs may not rise as sharply in the near term, which could have a positive impact on the broader economy.

While the overall wholesale inflation remains subdued, analysts will be closely watching the upcoming months to see if these trends continue, particularly in sectors like food and energy, which have a significant influence on the overall inflationary landscape.

India's wholesale inflation is a key indicator for policymakers, as it influences decisions related to interest rates and economic growth strategies. The government's efforts to stabilize inflation may help support economic growth while maintaining price stability for consumers and industries.

UM Hardeep Puri emphasises commitment to attract investors in energy sector

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, on Friday emphasized India's dedication to creating a predictable, stable, and growth-oriented business environment within the energy sector. Speaking at a discussion during the India Energy Week 2025 in New Delhi, Puri underlined the government's commitment to facilitating ease of doing business in the energy industry, referencing the recently tabled Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 in Parliament.



Puri explained that the bill aims to attract international investments while solidifying India's position on the global energy map. He noted that the law's enactment would reduce unpredictability, thereby boosting confidence in the sector and encouraging greater foreign involvement. Highlighting India's rapidly growing energy needs, driven by its goal to become a developed nation by 2047, Puri pointed out that this expansion would open substantial opportunities in both traditional and green energy sectors. He emphasized that India's strategy not only focuses on securing its

energy future but also on contributing to the global energy market. Collaborative efforts in clean energy technologies are already underway with countries like Italy, the UK, Brazil, and several Middle Eastern nations.

Puri also underscored India's eagerness to share innovative solutions with the world. He mentioned that technologies developed in India, such as clean cooking and energy-efficient products, have the potential to be scaled internationally and can significantly aid global efforts to transition to cleaner energy sources.

Additionally, Puri shared insights from discussions with international partners, including the US-India Business Council (USIBC), which is exploring AI applications. He noted that the themes of "frugality, efficiency, and innovation" were central to these conversations, indicating a positive outlook for future collaborations. He also highlighted productive meetings with representatives from the Gulf and Latin America, reinforcing India's active role in the global energy landscape.

Indian Oil and Gas Companies Secure Long-Term LNG Deals Amid Growing Demand



In a bid to secure natural gas supplies as demand rapidly increases, Indian oil and gas companies have entered into three significant long-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) import agreements with global energy giants. The deals, which were finalized during the India Energy Week, are valued in billions of dollars and include contracts with major international players such as Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and TotalEnergies.

Among the key agreements, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the country's largest refiner and fuel retailer, has signed a substantial deal with ADNOC Gas, a subsidiary of ADNOC. The agreement is worth between \$7 billion and \$9 billion, with IOC set

to import 1.2 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of LNG over a period of 14 years, starting in 2026. This deal aims to address India's growing energy demand, particularly as the country transitions toward cleaner energy sources.

In addition to the IOC-ADNOC deal, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) also finalized a long-term contract with ADNOC, strengthening India's energy ties with the UAE. The deals highlight India's efforts to diversify and secure reliable sources of natural gas, an essential component of the country's energy mix. Furthermore, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC) has secured an LNG import agreement with French energy giant TotalEnergies, further diversifying India's energy partnerships.

These long-term LNG contracts are part of India's strategy to ensure energy security while meeting the growing needs of its expanding economy. As the country aims to reduce its carbon footprint and transition to more sustainable energy sources, securing reliable natural gas supplies is crucial for supporting industries and infrastructure projects across the nation.

The agreements solidify India's position in the global LNG market and highlight the country's efforts to diversify its energy sources in line with its broader energy security and sustainability goals.

BSNL Returns to Profitability After 17 Years, Reports Rs 262 Crore Net Profit for Q3



BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) has posted a net profit of Rs 262 crore for the third quarter of FY2024-25, marking a significant milestone in the state-owned telecom company's recovery. This is the first time in 17 years that BSNL has recorded a quarterly profit, with the last such instance dating back to 2007. Union Minister for Communications, Jyotiraditya Scindia, hailed this achievement as a "significant turning point" for the company, which has focused on expanding its service offerings and growing its subscriber base.

BSNL's growth across several segments is noteworthy, with the company seeing a 14-18% increase in revenue from its mobility, Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH), and leased line services. Additionally, its subscriber base grew from 8.4 crore in June to approximately 9 crore in December, reflecting strong demand for its services.

The positive results are attributed to BSNL's emphasis on network expansion, innovation, and cost optimi-

zation. For instance, mobility services revenue rose by 15%, FTTH revenue saw an 18% increase, and leased line services experienced a 14% growth compared to the same quarter last year. These improvements contributed to BSNL's overall recovery, helping reduce losses by over Rs 1,800 crore compared to the previous year.

In an effort to enhance customer experience, BSNL introduced several new offerings, including National Wi-Fi Roaming, BiTV (Free Entertainment for All Mobile Customers), IFTV for FTTH customers, and the first private 5G connectivity for mining. The company has also been working on cutting finance costs and controlling overall expenditure to boost profitability.

Looking ahead, Scindia expressed confidence that BSNL would continue to grow, with the hope of further revenue increases by the end of the fourth quarter. He emphasized that maintaining control over costs and expenditure would be key in reducing losses further in the coming year.

Over the past four years, BSNL has made significant strides, with its EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) doubling from Rs 1,100 crore in FY2019-20 to nearly Rs 2,100 crore in FY2023-24.

One of BSNL's major ongoing projects is its 4G service rollout. Scindia stated that out of 100,000 planned towers, around 75,000 have already been installed, with nearly 60,000 commissioned. The company aims to have all 100,000 towers operational by June this year, which will mark a critical step in BSNL's digital transformation and expansion across India.

India Launches EFTA Desk to Strengthen Economic Ties with Europe

India's industrial growth, as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), stood at 3.2% in December 2024, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics on Wednesday. The growth was slightly slower compared to the 5.2% recorded in November, marking a slowdown after reaching a six-month high.

The manufacturing sector, which constitutes over three-fourths of the IIP, grew by 3% in December 2024. The sector is vital for creating quality jobs, particularly for the young graduates emerging from India's engineering institutes and universities. Notably, 16 out of 23 industry groups at the NIC 2-digit level showed positive growth in December, indicating a broad-based



recovery within manufacturing.

Key contributors to this growth included "Manufacture of basic metals," which saw a 6.7% rise, "Manufacture of electrical equipment," which grew by an impressive 40.1%, and "Manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products," which expanded by 3.9%. Within the basic metals sector, products like MS blooms, galvanized steel, and pipes made significant contributions to the overall performance.

In addition to manufacturing, the electricity sector posted robust growth of 6.2%, while the mining sector grew at a slower pace of 2.6%. The data also highlighted a substantial increase in the production of capital goods, which

surged by 10.3% in December, signaling strong investment in machinery and factory equipment—key drivers for future economic growth and job creation. Additionally, the production of consumer durables, including electronic goods, refrigerators, and TVs, rose by 8.3%, reflecting increasing consumer demand amid rising incomes.

For the period of April-December 2024, industrial production increased by 4%, down from 6.3% during the same period in the previous year. Despite the slowdown, the growth trend in sectors like manufacturing and electricity continues to provide optimism for India's industrial outlook in the coming months.

After Meta, Google will use AI to determine if a user is lying about their age

Google has announced plans to test a new machine learning-powered model designed to determine if a user is under 18. This initiative, set to launch in the United States later this year, will eventually expand to more countries. The goal is to enhance online safety and ensure that users under the age of 18 are shielded from potentially harmful content across Google products. In a blog post, Google explained that the new system would be integrated across its platform, including YouTube, Google Search, and other services. Once the system determines a user is under 18, it will automatically apply several protective measures. These measures include limiting exposure to sensitive advertising content, enabling SafeSearch filters to block explicit search results, and restricting access to age-restricted videos on YouTube. Google emphasized that this age verification model aims to create a safer online environment for younger users, especially in an era where dig-



ital content and advertising are increasingly prevalent. The company has stated that the machine learning model would not require users to manually input their birth dates, but instead, it will use advanced algorithms to detect a user's age based on certain behavioral patterns and data. The company's move follows growing concerns about online safety, privacy, and the well-being of young users. With this new system, Google seeks to build a more age-appropriate online experience that aligns with both regulatory guidelines and user ex-

pectations. It's expected that this approach will evolve over time, as the company gathers feedback and refines the technology. While the model is still in the testing phase, Google is committed to transparency and providing clear options for users to manage their privacy settings. As the testing rolls out in the United States, it will be interesting to see how the model is received and whether it successfully addresses concerns about the protection of young users on the internet.

Outrage in Bengaluru Over 'Rent A Boyfriend' Service Posters During Valentine's Day

A new trend has sparked outrage in Bengaluru, with posters advertising the rental of boyfriends appearing across the city, particularly in areas like Jayanagar, Banashankari, and BDA complexes. The posters, promoting the "Rent A Boyfriend" service, have caught the public's attention, especially as Valentine's Week approaches. The service is being marketed with the tagline "This Valentine's Day, Rent A Boyfriend, Scan Me" and is priced at Rs 389 for a day's rental.



The service, which allows individuals to rent a "boyfriend" for various purposes such as attending public events, parties, or simply to stave off loneliness, has raised concerns among residents of Bengaluru. Many have taken to X, formerly Twitter, to express their outrage, tagging the Bengaluru Police in their posts and demanding action against the service providers. The controversy has sparked heated debates about cultural values and the potential impact of such services on society, with some individuals viewing it as

a threat to the city's traditions. This "rent-a-partner" phenomenon, although not new, has been gaining popularity globally, particularly in countries like China, Japan, and Thailand. Now, it appears to be making its way into India, with new apps and websites emerging to cater to this demand, especially during times like Valentine's Week. In these countries, renting a partner, whether for social events or to meet specific emotional needs, has become a growing trend. However, the practice is now drawing significant attention

in India, where it has sparked discussions around the implications for social behavior, emotional well-being, and public culture. With Bengaluru at the forefront of this controversy, many are calling for greater scrutiny and regulation of such services to ensure that they align with societal norms. As the city grapples with this issue, authorities are expected to examine the legalities surrounding these types of services and their potential consequences for local communities.

AI detects 96% of policy-violating YouTube content



On Safer Internet Day 2025, Google reaffirmed its dedication to user safety by highlighting significant measures implemented to protect billions of users in India. The company reported that in 2024, it prevented fraudulent Google Pay transactions totaling ₹13,000 crore and issued 41 million warnings to safeguard Indian users. Google has intensified its security protocols across various platforms. With Google Play Protect, the service scanned over 200 billion apps daily, identifying more than 13 million new malicious apps outside of Google Play. The company also took action to enforce its policies, blocking over 2.36 million policy-violating apps from reaching Google

Play and banning more than 158,000 developer accounts globally for attempting to publish harmful apps. In its efforts to combat online scams, Google took proactive steps, particularly on YouTube, where in the third quarter of 2024, over 4.1 million channels and 85,000 videos were removed for violating spam, deceptive practices, and scams policies. The platform also strengthened its efforts to tackle clickbait, especially for videos on sensitive topics like news and current events, ensuring viewers weren't misled. Google has also explored innovative approaches to digital literacy, including a pilot study of a mobile game, "ShieldUp!," designed to help

users recognize common manipulation techniques used by scammers. Results showed that playing the game improved users' ability to spot scams, with the effect lasting for weeks. To further enhance online safety, Google engaged in cross-industry collaborations, such as the partnership with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre. This collaboration led to the integration of Google Pay into the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, enabling better information sharing to investigate fraudulent financial activities. These initiatives underscore Google's ongoing commitment to creating a safer and more trustworthy digital ecosystem for users worldwide.

Zuckerberg Reveals He Faced Possible Death Sentence in Pakistan



Indians are renowned for their remarkable 'jugaad' — the ability to find innovative, out-of-the-box solutions to any problem. A recent viral video showcasing an inventive "chai jugaad" perfectly captures this ingenious spirit and has caught the attention of social media users worldwide. The video, shared on Instagram, shows a scene from an Indian train where a tea vendor encounters a problem: a passenger wants tea, but the window has tiny holes in it. Rather than give up, the vendor uses his creativity to serve tea in a way that leaves viewers amazed. The vendor stands outside the train near the window and crumples a small paper cup to fit through the tiny hole. Once the cup is inside, the

passenger carefully unfolds it, allowing the cup to regain its original shape. With precision, the tea vendor then places the spout of his kettle through the same hole and pours hot chai into the paper cup. This "jugaad" method allows the passenger to receive their tea without having to open the window or step outside. The video's caption, originally written in Gujarati, translates to: "This technique has not been tried outside India," followed by a laughing emoji. The clever tea-serving technique quickly gained popularity on social media. Users were impressed by the vendor's ingenuity and flooded the comment section with enthusiastic reactions. One user

remarked, "That's Indian jugaad! So smart," while another joked, "The good thing is that this era cannot even go outside the country." Comments like "Hacker ultra pro max" and "India is definitely not for Beginners" further showcased how the video resonated with viewers. However, not all responses were without concern. One individual raised a hygiene issue, pointing out that "regular travelers know people spit from that gap." Despite the mixed reactions, the video remains a testament to India's knack for creative problem-solving, and the vendor's resourceful technique is a shining example of 'jugaad' in action.

Women In Assam State Consume The Most Alcohol, Shows Survey

A recent survey by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has revealed interesting insights into alcohol consumption patterns among women in India, shedding light on the states with the highest prevalence of female alcohol consumption. According to the survey, Assam stands out with the highest proportion of women consuming alcohol. While the national average for women aged 15-49 who drink alcohol is just 1.2%, Assam's figure is significantly higher, with 16.5% of women in this age group reporting alcohol consumption. This marks a sub-

stantial deviation from the national trend, placing Assam at the top in this regard. Following Assam is Meghalaya, where 8.7% of women aged 15-49 report consuming alcohol. While this figure is lower than Assam's, it is still considerably above the national average, indicating a notable prevalence of alcohol consumption among women in the state. Arunachal Pradesh holds the third spot on the list, with 3.3% of women aged 15-49 consuming alcohol. Though this marks a decline compared to previous years, the fig-

ure remains substantial. Notably, Arunachal Pradesh also has the highest proportion of male alcohol consumers in the country, with 59% of men in the same age group reporting alcohol consumption. Other states such as Sikkim and Chhattisgarh report much lower figures, with only 0.3% and 0.2% of women aged 15-49 consuming alcohol, respectively. These findings shed light on regional differences in alcohol consumption patterns among women in India, with certain northeastern states showing higher prevalence compared to the national average.



Chennai Heat Shock Hyderabad Falcons with 85-82 Victory in InBL Pro U25



In a thrilling upset, the Chennai Heat defeated the league-leading Hyderabad Falcons 85-82 at the Thyagraj Indoor Stadium in the InBL Pro U25. Jack Stanwix (20 points) led the charge early, hitting key three-pointers, while Matt Gray (17 points) kept the Heat in control. Despite a strong comeback led by Jack Purchase (21 points) in the final minutes, the Falcons fell short. The Heat built a commanding lead in the first half, and though the Falcons pushed back, Chennai's defense held firm. A clutch three-pointer from Gray extended the Heat's lead, and despite a last-minute rally, the Heat held on for a dramatic victory. The Falcons, missing key players Kushal Singh and Harsh Dagar, fought hard but couldn't overcome the Heat's resilience.

Sports Ministry Dismisses Speculation About Converting Cricketers into Baseball Players



The Sports Ministry has firmly rejected speculation about turning India's aspiring cricketers into baseball players for future Asian Games or Olympics, clarifying that such an idea has never been discussed. A ministry source stated that baseball is not even a recognized na-

tional federation in India, and the suggestion that it was discussed at the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) meeting was "completely imaginary." The Amateur Baseball Federation of India is affiliated with the global body but lacks recognition from the ministry. The focus, accord-

ing to the ministry, remains on improving sports where India is already performing well. The BCCI also dismissed the idea, highlighting that cricket offers financially rewarding career options, especially with lucrative leagues like the IPL.

WPL 2025: Smriti Mandhana Confident in RCB's Strength Despite Injury Setbacks



Ahead of the Women's Premier League 3 opener, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) captain Smriti Mandhana expressed faith in her squad, despite facing multiple injury challenges. The defending champions, who kick off their campaign against the Gujarat Giants, have been hit hard by injuries to key players. Australia's Sophie Molineux and New Zealand's Sophie Devine were ruled out, while legspinner Asha Sobhana also sustained an

injury. Despite these setbacks, Mandhana remains confident, highlighting the depth and quality of RCB's squad. "We have really good youngsters and strong replacements," she stated, emphasizing the team's determination to honor the injured players. Mandhana's optimism reflects RCB's readiness to overcome adversity and defend their WPL title with talent and resilience.

India Eliminated from Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships After Loss to Japan



India's campaign at the 2025 Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships ended in the quarterfinals with a 3-0 defeat to Japan in Qingdao, China. In the opening match, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto showed resilience against the world

No. 12 Japanese pair Hiroki Midorikawa and Natsu Saito, but eventually lost 21-13, 17-21, 21-13 after 61 minutes. Malvika Bansod then faced World No. 8 Tomoka Miyazaki, but her efforts fell short, losing 21-12, 21-19. India's hopes rested on Asian

Games bronze medallist HS Prannoy, who fought back from a game down against Kenta Nishimoto. However, Nishimoto dominated the decider, securing a 21-14, 15-21, 21-12 victory, sealing India's exit from the tournament.

Indian Men's Hockey Team Gears Up for FIH Pro League 2024-25



The Indian Men's Hockey Team, ranked fifth globally, is set to begin their FIH Pro League 2024-25 campaign at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar. Under the leadership of Harmanpreet Singh, the team will face World No. 7 Spain in their opening matches on

February 15 and 16, followed by encounters with World No. 4 Germany on February 18 and 19. India's momentum is strong after a bronze medal win at the 2024 Paris Olympics and a successful defense of the Asian Champions Trophy 2024. With a mix of seasoned stars and young talent,

including Vice-Captain Hardik Singh, the team aims to improve on their seventh-place finish from last season and secure World Cup qualification. Chief Coach Craig Fulton emphasized performance over rankings, preparing for a tough series of back-to-back matches.

SESA Football Academy Clinch Goa Regional Round Title in Thrilling Penalty Shootout

SESA Football Academy secured their place in the National Finals of the Dream Sports Championship 2025 after a dramatic penalty shootout victory against Dempo SC in the Goa regional round final on Friday at the Fields of Dreams. The match ended 2-2, with SESA initially taking a 2-0 lead through goals by Aniket Terane and Pramod Gawas. However, Dempo SC mounted a fierce comeback with goals from Jonathan Silva and Jodric Abranches, leveling the score in injury time. In the ensuing shootout, SESA goalkeeper Sakib Lamture became the hero, saving two penalties as SESA triumphed 4-2. Dempo SC will also advance to the National Finals as the best losing regional finalist, completing the lineup for the finals in Goa in April 2025.





Mahesh Babu Unveils Romantic Song 'Wherever You Go' from Robinhood



Superstar Mahesh Babu has launched the much-anticipated second song, "Wherever You Go," from the upcoming heist comedy **Robinhood**, starring Nithiin and Sreeleela. The song, composed by popular Kollywood music director GV Prakash Kumar, is a delightful romantic track, perfectly timed for this year's Valentine's Day. "Wherever You Go" showcases Nithiin's affection for Sreeleela in a creative and quirky manner, with a playful blend of well-known brands and their iconic taglines. Armaan Malik's enchanting vocals bring an extra layer of charm to the song, while Krishnakanth's lyrics elevate its emotional depth. The song's upbeat tempo and infectious rhythm make it a perfect romantic anthem.

In the track, Nithiin appears in a stylish, energetic avatar, while Sreeleela dazzles with her elegance and charm. The chemistry between the two stars is palpable, with their vibrant dance moves and sizzling screen presence enhancing the song's appeal. The visually stunning music video complements the energetic vibe of the song, making it a treat for fans. Directed by Venky Kudumula and produced by the Mythri Movie Makers banner, **Robinhood** promises to be a fun-filled entertainer. The film is slated for a worldwide release on March 28, 2025. With its exciting mix of romance, humor, and action, **Robinhood** is shaping up to be one of the most anticipated films of the year.

Laila : A Misfire with Missed Potential



Mass Ka Das Vishwak Sen's latest film **Laila** has been released amidst much controversy, but does it live up to the hype? Unfortunately, the film falls short in several areas, leaving audiences underwhelmed.

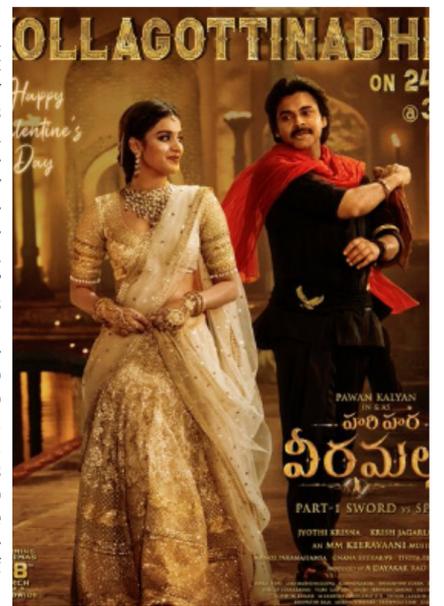
Sonu (Vishwak Sen), a beauty parlour owner admired by many women in his neighborhood, finds himself entangled in a conflict with local rowdy Rustum (Abhimanyu Singh) and SI Shankar (Bablu Prithviraj). In an attempt to escape their threats, Sonu adopts a new identity as Laila. The transformation and its consequences form the crux of the story. Vishwak Sen's bold decision to take on a challenging role as Laila (dressed as a woman) is commendable, and he does a passable job in the role. His performance as Laila, while not extraordinary, does manage to hold the film together in parts. Abhimanyu Singh shines with his comic timing, especially in the second half. His presence provides much-needed levity in an otherwise dreary narrative. The biggest drawback of *Laila* is its outdated and weak storyline,

which lacks depth or originality. The film follows a predictable, formulaic approach with little novelty beyond what the trailers already revealed. Despite an attempt at humor, crass dialogues and ill-timed jokes only diminish the film's appeal. Vishwak Sen's character transformation feels unnecessary and lacks emotional depth. The screenplay is underdeveloped, and the direction appears unfocused. Moreover, the film suffers from some outdated notions about complexions that feel out of place and offensive. Akanksha Sharma's role is limited to an extended cameo with minimal impact, and the rest of the characters remain underdeveloped. The random references to Chiranjeevi feel forced and do nothing to enhance the experience. Director Ram Narayan's execution falters, with a poorly structured screenplay that hinders the film's potential. The music by Leon James doesn't create much of an impact, and the cinematography feels lackluster. While the runtime is short, the editing does little to maintain the film's flow.

HHVM: Valentine's Day treat served with a special update

Powerstar Pawan Kalyan's much-awaited period action drama, **Hari Hara Veera Mallu**, is all set for its grand release, and the makers have confirmed that it will hit the screens on March 28, 2025, despite earlier speculations suggesting a delay. The confirmation came with a special Valentine's Day treat for fans, as the team released a romantic poster featuring Pawan Kalyan and Nidhi Agerwal, along with an exciting update about the second single from the film. The second single, titled "Kollagottinadhiro," will be unveiled on February 24, 2025, at 3 PM. Fans can expect the song's release simultaneously in multiple languages, adding to the anticipation surrounding the film's music. This romantic track promises to capture the chemistry between the lead pair and is expected to be one of the highlights of the film. **Hari Hara Veera Mallu** is current-

ly in the final stages of shooting, and the film is shaping up to be a high-budget spectacle. Set against the backdrop of the 17th-century Mughal Empire, the film promises to be a thrilling ride. Pawan Kalyan plays the titular role of Veera Mallu, a fearless warrior, while Bobby Deol portrays the villainous Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The ensemble cast also includes Anupam Kher, Subbaraju, Sunil, and Nasser in pivotal roles, adding to the film's star power. The film is directed by Jyothi Krishna and Krish Jagarlamudi, who have combined their expertise to bring this historical drama to life. The production is handled by A. Dayakar Rao, and A.M. Ratnam is presenting the film. Music maestro MM Keeravani has composed the soundtrack, further raising expectations for the musical elements of the film.



Interstellar Sets New Records with Re-release in Telugu States



The Telugu audience's deep love for cinema was once again proven with the overwhelming success of the re-release of **Interstellar**, Christopher Nolan's iconic space exploration masterpiece. The film, which is considered one

of the greatest in its genre, marked a decade since its original release, and its re-release in India generated immense excitement, particularly in the Telugu states. Right from the start, the re-release bookings showed strong demand, especially in Hyderabad, where the response was exceptionally positive. One of the standout locations was Prasads Multiplex, a well-known hub for movie lovers. The numbers reported from this cinema were nothing short of extraordinary, setting a new benchmark for re-release films in the region. Prasads Multiplex screened **Interstellar** across 50 shows, attracting an impressive 25,242 admissions and grossing a remarkable ₹74,46,390. This was

the highest-ever earnings for any re-release film at the multiplex, surpassing previous records by a wide margin. The screenings were met with an astounding 99.9% occupancy, indicating that the film was in high demand. The numbers were so strong that even the most popular Telugu cult classics, which are often the stars of the cinema scene in the region, couldn't compete with the massive turnout for **Interstellar**. This trend highlights the diversity and tenacity of the Telugu audience, who not only have a deep appreciation for their local films but also show immense admiration for high-quality international cinema.

Chhaava – Watchable historical action drama



Chhaava opens with the poignant death of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, a moment that deeply shakes the Maratha Empire. Stepping into his father's shoes, Sambhaji (Vicky Kaushal) embarks on a daring assault on the Mughal stronghold of Burhanpur. Aurangzeb (Akshaye Khanna), enraged by the Maratha audacity, sees this as the perfect opportunity to crush the Marathas once and for all. Yet, Sambhaji's strategic brilliance keeps the mighty Mughal Empire on its toes. However, betrayal from within leads to his capture, setting the stage for a saga of defiance, sacrifice, and undying courage. intensity, exceptional dialogue delivery, and strong screen presence make the film captivating, particularly during the gripping climax. He elevates the film

with his portrayal of the brave and resilient warrior. Rashmika Mandanna's brief role is handled well, even though her screen time is limited. Akshaye Khanna's portrayal of Aurangzeb is decent, and supporting actors like Ashutosh Rana, Divya Dutta, and Diana Penty contribute solid performances to the overall narrative. While the film holds immense historical significance, its execution lacks finesse. Director Laxman Utekar presents the story competently, but the screenplay could have been more engaging, especially in the first half. The war sequences in the second half fall short of being truly gripping, and the internal betrayals don't have the emotional depth they deserve. Despite a strong ensemble cast, only a

few characters are given the depth they need. While Shivaji Maharaj is present through voiceovers, visual representations of him would have strengthened the emotional resonance. Aurangzeb, played by Akshaye Khanna, could have had more depth in his characterization to intensify the conflict with Sambhaji. Laxman Utekar's direction is competent, but a sharper screenplay would have enhanced the narrative. AR Rahman's music complements the film, and the dialogues by Rishi Virmani and Irshad Kamil stand out in the climax. The cinematography by Saurabh Goswami, while functional, could have been more striking, and the editing could have been tighter to improve the pacing.