



Weather Forecast

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

Home Ministry Seeks Presidential Nod To Prosecute Satyendar Jain



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Union Home Ministry has sought the President's sanction to prosecute AAP leader and former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain in a money-laundering case under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. The request is based on an Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe, which reportedly found "adequate proof" against him. Jain was arrested by the ED in May 2022 in connection with a money-laundering case linked to alleged hawala transactions. The case originates from a 2017 CBI FIR alleging he possessed disproportionate assets worth Rs 1.47 crore, nearly 217% above his known sources of income between 2015-17. The ED claims Jain controlled four companies that received Rs 4.81 crore in accommodation entries through the hawala route, which was allegedly used to purchase agricultural land in and around Delhi. Jain, who held key portfolios including health and power in the Delhi government, is currently out on bail but has been charge-sheeted in the case. AAP chief and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has defended him, calling him a "hardcore honest patriot" and alleging a political vendetta behind the case.

Inside PM Modi-Trump Meet

5th Gen Jets, 26/11 Extradition, 'Mission 500'

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 unveiled 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 po-



tential 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 contributions 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 Energy 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.

BJP Says Delhi Chief Minister's X Handle Renamed By AAP, Party Hits Back

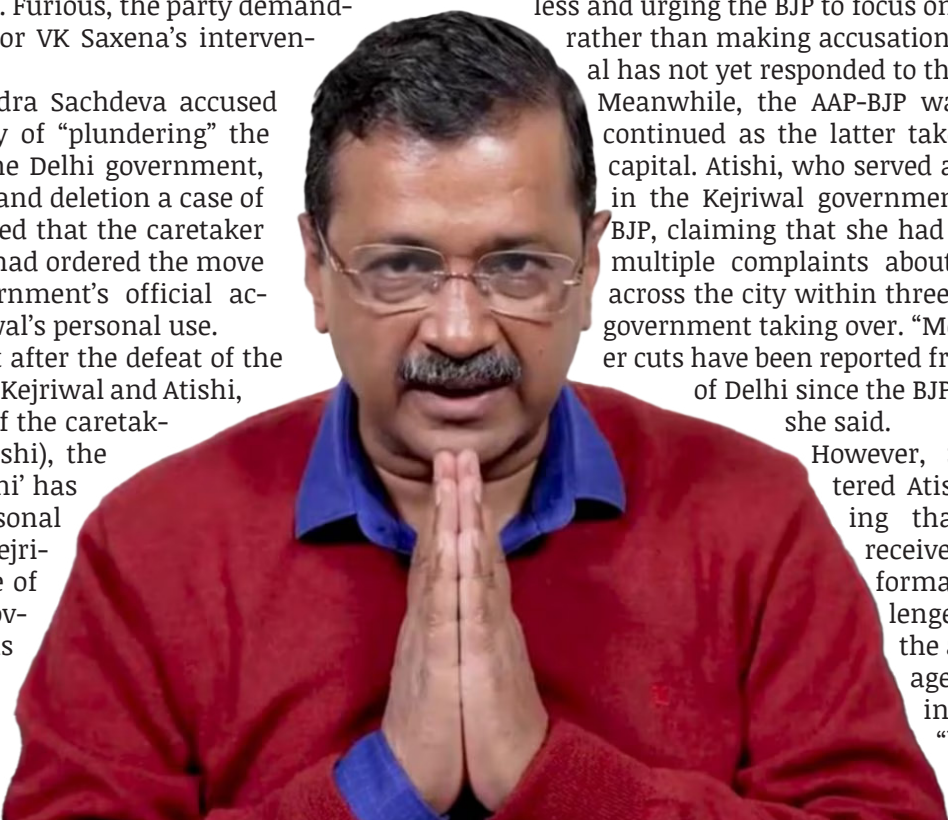
TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Delhi BJP has demanded a report from the IT Department to establish who had ordered the change in, and deletion of, the Chief Minister's X handle. The Bharatiya Janata Party - eager to get going with its first Delhi government in nearly three decades - ran into a bit of a roadblock Thursday after the Chief Minister's X account, @CMODelhi, was suddenly renamed @KejriwalAtWork, and then wiped clean and deleted from the social media platform. Furious, the party demanded Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's intervention. Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva accused the Aam Aadmi Party of "plundering" the digital resources of the Delhi government, calling the renaming and deletion a case of "digital loot." He alleged that the caretaker Chief Minister Atishi had ordered the move to transfer the government's official account to Arvind Kejriwal's personal use. "It is unfortunate that after the defeat of the government of Arvind Kejriwal and Atishi, today, on the orders of the caretaker Chief Minister (Atishi), the (account) of 'CMO Delhi' has been made the personal (account) of Arvind Kejriwal. Sir, this is a case of digital loot by the government, and it needs to be investigated," Sachdeva said, tagging Kejriwal and Atishi on X. He further accused

the former Chief Minister of orchestrating a "digital heist" to misuse government resources and compromise public data. "During his ten years in power, he committed numerous scams ranging from ration card to 'sheeshmahal' and from auto permit to liquor, but the new digital loot is unprecedented," Sachdeva alleged. He demanded an investigation into who authorized the renaming and deletion of the account and called for legal action.

The AAP has dismissed the allegations, calling them baseless and urging the BJP to focus on governing Delhi rather than making accusations. Arvind Kejriwal has not yet responded to the controversy. Meanwhile, the AAP-BJP war of words has continued as the latter takes charge of the capital. Atishi, who served as a key minister in the Kejriwal government, slammed the BJP, claiming that she had already received multiple complaints about power outages across the city within three days of the new government taking over. "More than 40 power cuts have been reported from various parts of Delhi since the BJP came to power," she said.

However, Sachdeva countered Atishi's claim, stating that he had not received any such information. He challenged her to specify the areas where outages had occurred instead of making "baseless" statements.



"Personal Attack": Raghav Chadha Hits Back After Finance Minister's Remarks



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

AAP MP Raghav Chadha has hit back at Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, accusing her of making a "personal attack" instead of addressing concerns over taxation. Chadha claimed he was denied the opportunity to respond in Parliament after Sitharaman countered his remarks on tax calculations. "I raised several issues on the Union Budget, but the FM chose to respond only to my example on tax rebate, alleging I misled the House. I stand by my statement," Chadha said in a video message on X. He argued that if an individual earns ₹12.76 lakh annually, they are taxed on the entire amount, not just the excess

₹76,000. Chadha further accused Sitharaman of "confusing taxpayers with technicalities," asserting that ₹12 lakh is a tax rebate threshold, not an exemption. "FM tried to mislead the middle class. The reality is that income beyond ₹12 lakh attracts tax on the full amount, not just the incremental portion," he said. Sitharaman, in her Rajya Sabha response, rejected Chadha's claims, stating that marginal relief significantly lowers the tax burden for those earning slightly above ₹12 lakh. She accused Chadha of misrepresenting the taxation structure and questioned his credibility as a chartered accountant.

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.



TPN Correspondent
Washington DC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing nuclear energy cooperation, 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 nuclear reactors to India, with the Kovvada site in Andhra Pradesh identified for a potential six-reactor project. Additionally, industrial co-operation 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.

Atishi Alleges BJP Will Bring Power Crisis in Delhi, Party Dismisses Claim

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Acting Delhi Chief Minister Atishi has alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will push Delhi into a power crisis similar to Uttar Pradesh, accusing the party of being responsible for frequent power outages in the city just days after AAP lost control. The BJP, however, has strongly denied the claims, calling them baseless.



Addressing a press conference, Atishi claimed that within three days of AAP's exit from power, Delhi has witnessed over 40 power outages across various areas, forcing residents to buy inverters. "Under the AAP government, the power sector was closely monitored, but now, with the BJP taking charge, the system is collapsing," she alleged. She further accused the BJP of being incapable of governance and warned that the national capital would soon face prolonged power cuts similar to those in Uttar Pradesh.

Countering these allegations, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva refuted the claims, stating that there have been no reported power outages

in the city. He challenged Atishi to name specific areas experiencing power cuts instead of making what he called "false accusations."

Sachdeva also warned power distribution companies against any collusion with the acting Chief Minister to enforce outages or delay repairs, stating that such actions would be investigated once the new government is formed. He accused the AAP government of long-standing ties with private power discoms and exploiting Delhi residents.

The BJP secured a massive victory in the February 5 Assembly elections, winning 48 out of 70 seats, ending AAP's decade-long rule. However, the party has yet to officially form the government in Delhi.

Supreme Court Directs Action on Industrial Pollution in Delhi NCR



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Ahead of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government assuming power in Delhi, the Supreme Court on Thursday instructed the new political leadership to report progress on curbing pollution caused by industrial waste burning. The court also requested real-time data on polluting industries within two weeks.

A bench headed by Justice Abhay S. Oka, hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by lawyer-activist M.C. Mehta on Delhi's air pollution, was informed that political tensions between the central government and the Delhi administration might ease with the BJP now governing both. However, the bench cautioned that this change should not be seen as an automatic guarantee of proactive action.

The court was reviewing a report by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on industrial pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) and found that the Delhi government had yet to respond to a proposed action plan. Justice Oka emphasized the necessity

of real-time pollution monitoring, calling for clarity on how data is being collected and processed.

The Additional Solicitor General (ASG), Aishwarya Bhati, who represented CAQM and the Centre, noted that while an online reporting system for industrial emissions is being developed, it was not yet operational. The CAQM had previously set a target to reduce industrial waste burning to zero by September 2022, but Bhati admitted that compliance had been poor. She also highlighted that while industrial units in Delhi had mostly switched to using piped natural gas (PNG), many NCR industries still relied on biomass and other fuels.

The court expressed concern that Delhi should not receive preferential treatment in tackling pollution, given that air quality issues also affect surrounding cities. It urged CAQM to consider replicating its efforts across other NCR cities.

The matter will be revisited by the court on Monday, with CAQM instructed to submit air quality data for review.

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.

Women's Panel Summons Elvish Yadav For "Racist" Remarks Against Chum Darang

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Social media influencer Elvish Yadav has been summoned by the National Commission for Women (NCW) over alleged racist remarks against Miss Arunachal and Bigg Boss contestant Chum Darang. Officials stated that Yadav has been asked to appear before the commission on Monday.

The controversy erupted after Yadav, in a podcast with Bigg Boss 18 contestant Rajat Dalal, made remarks about Chum Darang that were deemed "derogatory and racist." His statements sparked outrage, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, where state authorities and women's rights organizations condemned the



comments. On February 11, the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) issued a strong condemnation of Yadav's remarks. In a letter to NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma, APSCW Chairperson Kenjum Pakam asserted that

the remarks were not just an insult to Darang but also deeply offensive to women across northeast India.

The incident has ignited widespread criticism on social media, with many calling for strict action against Yadav. Activists and public figures have emphasized the need to curb racism and discrimination against northeastern communities in mainstream media and online platforms.

As the controversy gains momentum, the NCW is expected to investigate the matter further, and Yadav's response during his appearance before the commission will likely determine the next course of action.

BJP Plans Grand Swearing-in Ceremony for Delhi CM

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is preparing for a grand swearing-in ceremony for the next Chief Minister of Delhi, marking the party's return to power in the national capital after 27 years. While the party is yet to announce its chief ministerial candidate, sources indicate that the event will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chief ministers of National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-ruled states, and other senior party leaders. The ceremony is expected to take place next week, as the party awaits the Prime Minister's return from his official foreign tour. BJP leaders are currently exploring prominent venues, including Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium and Ramlila Maidan, for the historic occasion.

A senior BJP leader described the event as "historic" and a moment of grati-

tude towards the people of Delhi for reposing their faith in the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. "The BJP has come to power in Delhi after 27 years with a decisive mandate. The swearing-in ceremony will reflect this historic victory and will serve as an opportunity to thank the people of Delhi. Apart from chief ministers of NDA-ruled states, over 200 MPs and former MPs, as well as senior leaders who played an active role in the election campaign, will be invited," the leader said.

Party insiders mentioned that security and public convenience will play a crucial role in finalizing the venue, with an official announcement expected soon.

Additionally, the swearing-in ceremony will also include the oath-taking of the new cabinet, ensuring that the government can start functioning im-

mediately. "The new government must hit the ground running and fulfill the promises made by PM Modi to the people of Delhi," another BJP leader stated. The BJP secured a decisive victory in the recently concluded Delhi Assembly elections, winning 48 seats in the 70-member House and unseating the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The party contested the elections without projecting a chief ministerial candidate, leading to widespread speculation about the next CM. Since the vote count on February 8, several names have been circulating within party circles, with an official announcement expected in the coming days.

The upcoming swearing-in ceremony is set to be a grand political event, signifying the BJP's renewed foothold in Delhi and its commitment to governance under PM Modi's leadership.



BJP's Gupta on AAP's Downfall: "The Common Man Party Won't Last Long"



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

After the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) victory in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, there has been significant speculation about who will be appointed as the Chief Minister. While the party has yet to announce the CM candidate, newly elected BJP MLA Arvinder Singh Lovely weighed in with his thoughts. He stated that the final decision on the CM post will be made by the party's top leadership, emphasizing that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership will

play a key role in the selection process.

Lovely also shared the BJP's priorities for Delhi, stating that the cleaning of the Yamuna River would be a top guarantee for the party. In a subtle attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Lovely criticized Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal for his "habit of living in a Sheeshmahal" – a reference to his elite lifestyle, which contrasts with the BJP's focus on addressing common people's issues.

Vijendra Gupta, another BJP leader, added to the rhetoric, predicting the downfall of AAP. He confidently stated that the AAP's reign in Delhi is over and that the party would no longer be able to cover up its shortcomings. Delhi BJP MP Yogendra Chandaulia also joined the chorus, alleging a collaboration between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal, while declaring that Congress has been effectively eliminated from Delhi's political landscape.

In the midst of this speculation, sources indicate that BJP leader Entrance Verma could be a strong contender for the CM post. Verma, who defeated AAP's national convenor and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in the New Delhi seat, has reportedly garnered support from both the BJP and RSS.

The BJP's success in this election is significant, as the party won 48 out of the 70 seats, securing almost two-thirds of Delhi's legislative assembly. In contrast, AAP, which had dominated the city for the past several years, won only 22 seats, a stark drop from their commanding victories in the 2015 and 2020 elections.

FIR Against AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for Obstructing Police



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noel Barrot, in Paris, where the two leaders engaged in discussions on a wide range of cooperative efforts between India and France. The focus of their meeting was primarily on artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, connectivity, clean energy, and shared regional and global challenges.

Jaishankar, who is in Paris as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's three-day visit to France, expressed his pleasure at meeting Barrot, not-

ing the strengthening of India-France ties in key areas. The two ministers acknowledged the significant progress made in their strategic partnership and discussed ways to further enhance collaboration in the future.

In a post on social media, Jaishankar highlighted the "strong convergence" between the two countries, a sentiment shared by Barrot, who emphasized that AI would be a new frontier in their growing partnership. Barrot further announced that in 2026, India and France would jointly celebrate a "Year of Innovation," marking a milestone in their collaborative efforts.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Modi's arrival in Paris was met with a warm welcome from the Indian diaspora. Despite the chilly weather, the community showed its strong support for the Prime Minister, reflecting the deep ties between India and France. Modi's visit includes a co-chairing role in the AI Action Summit alongside French President Emmanuel Macron.

Additionally, Modi and Macron are set to inaugurate the new Consulate General of India in Marseille during this visit. This marks the sixth time that Modi has visited France, underscoring the importance of the bilateral relationship.

As India and France continue to deepen their cooperation in areas like AI and clean energy, the upcoming "Year of Innovation" promises to be a pivotal moment in strengthening their strategic partnership even further. FIR Filed Against AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for Obstructing Police, Aiding Fleeing Criminal

Delhi Police filed an FIR on Monday against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Amanatullah Khan for allegedly obstructing police work, aiding a proclaimed offender's escape, and assaulting a police team in Jamia Nagar, southeast Delhi.

SP MP Afzal Ansari Booked Over Maha Kumbh 'Houseful' Remark

TPN Correspondent | Ghazipur

A case has been registered against Samajwadi Party MP Afzal Ansari over his remarks on the Maha Kumbh, which allegedly hurt Hindu religious sentiments. Ansari had stated that if every sinner takes a holy dip at the Sangam, "heaven will be houseful." The complaint, filed by former District Cooperative Bank President Dev Prakash Singh, accuses Ansari of undermining the dignity of his office and making statements that offended religious beliefs. The controversy deepened after he criticized the government for allegedly underreporting deaths in last month's Maha Kumbh stampede, which officially claimed 30 lives and left 60 injured. Ghazipur SP Dr. Iraj Raja confirmed that an FIR has been lodged under Sections 299 and 353(2) of the Bhar-



tiya Nyaya Sanhita. Ansari has previously faced backlash for comments about cannabis consumption at Kumbh Mela, which led to widespread condemnation from Hindu religious groups.

14 Students Detained Amid Protests at Jamia Millia Islamia

TPN Correspondent, New Delhi

Fourteen students from Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) were detained by Delhi Police on Thursday morning as protests against the university's disciplinary action entered their third day. The detentions occurred hours after six students were suspended for allegedly vandalizing university property. Security was heightened around the university, particularly at Gate 7, where guards conducted identity checks, allowing entry only to authorized students. The administration accused protestors of damaging university property, including the central canteen, breaking security office gates, defacing walls, and carrying contraband objects. The university defended its actions, stating that the removals were a preventive measure to maintain order. "Taking preventive measures, today morning the university administration and the Proctorial team removed the students from the site of the protest, and they have been evicted from the campus. The police have been requested to maintain law and order situation," the administration said in a statement, emphasizing that police personnel did not enter the campus.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh confirmed that the university administration had informed them about the protesting students. "The ad-

ministration brought the students outside the university. They were handed over to the police. A total of 14 students were then taken to three different police stations where they were detained and released after verification," he said. However, the police denied allegations of mistreatment made by the students.

The detained students were protesting against show-cause notices issued to participants of a December 2024 demonstration marking the anniversary of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests and alleged police brutality on campus in 2019.

Uthara UR, a 22-year-old MA Sociology student who was among those detained, alleged that the protest was peaceful and aimed at addressing the suppression of students' voices by the administration. "I was asleep at 5:30 AM at the protest site near the central canteen when security guards carried me out by force," she claimed, adding that police confiscated their phones and prevented them from making calls. At least three students alleged that their phones were snatched by police personnel and that they were mistreated at different police stations, including Bawana, Badarpur, and Fatehpur Beri.

With tensions escalating, the situation at Jamia remains volatile, and further student demonstrations are expected in response to the university's disciplinary actions.

AAP's hold on MCD weakens despite tax schedule clearance

TPN Correspondent,
New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Thursday cleared the schedule of taxes for the next financial year, but with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) losing the Delhi assembly elections, its control over the MCD remains fragile. The party's strength in the House will be tested when amendment motions on the budget proposals are taken up, and the upcoming mayoral election in April is expected to pose a significant challenge.

BJP Leader of Opposition Raja Iqbal Singh accused AAP of stalling development and pushing Delhi back by a decade. "People have lost faith in AAP. Many councillors unhappy with AAP's governance have joined the BJP. Once we get a chance to serve in the corporation, the city's problems will be solved," he said.

MCD officials noted that AAP currently maintains a narrow lead, but defections and councillor resignations could change the numbers. With 11 councillors—eight from BJP and three from AAP—elected to the assembly and another seat



- AAP holds a slim lead with 121 councillors to BJP's 120, with 8 from Congress.
- 11 sitting councillors have been elected as MLAs, potentially altering the balance.
- BJP's strength could rise through nominated MLAs, shifting control in its favor.

vacant, at least 12 seats are expected to be unoccupied soon. "If these councillors resign, BJP's number will drop to 112, while AAP will have 118. However, the 14 nominated MLAs—likely 12 from BJP and two from AAP—could shift the balance towards BJP even without bypolls," an official said. The mayoral electoral college includes elected councillors, seven Lok Sabha MPs, three

Rajya Sabha MPs, and 14 nominated MLAs. Another MCD official stated that AAP's strength would become evident during the voting on budget amendments. If its proposals are rejected, it would indicate a loss of majority. While the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act has no provision to remove a mayor, the April election could lead to a regime change in the civic body.

Rajiv Kumar's Retirement Marks End of Eventful CEC Term

TPN Correspondent
New Delhi

The process for selecting the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), who will oversee key elections in states like Bihar later this year, as well as Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Kerala in the coming years, is set to begin shortly, according to sources. The selection committee, which includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi (in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition), is scheduled to meet on Monday.

This comes a day before the Supreme Court hears petitions challenging the new law governing the selection of the CEC and Election Commissioners (ECs). Critics of the law argue that it gives the central government undue influence in the selection process.

Current CEC Rajiv Kumar, who assumed office in May 2022, will retire on Tuesday. During his tenure, he oversaw several high-profile elections, including the Lok Sabha elections of 2024, the presidential election in 2022, and assembly elections in Karnataka, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan,



and Delhi. His leadership was marked by both praise and controversy.

Kumar, a 1984-batch IAS officer from the Bihar/Jharkhand cadre, had plans for post-retirement solitude, quipping in January that he intended to "detoxify" by spending several months in the Himalayas away from the media spotlight. He also expressed a desire to give back by teaching underprivileged children.

However, his tenure as CEC was not without its challenges. There were numerous allegations, particularly from the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), that the Election

Commission showed bias toward the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The opposition also raised concerns about the integrity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), claiming that they could be tampered with, a claim that was repeatedly denied by the Election Commission.

In his final days as CEC, Kumar defended the robustness of the election system, particularly the EVMs, asserting that the technology had passed judicial scrutiny and was not susceptible to tampering. Despite the controversies, he remained confident in the integrity of India's electoral process.

PM Modi To Address Textile Industry Buyers At Bharat Tex In Delhi On Feb 16

- 6,000 foreign buyers, 5,000 exhibitors to attend.
- Event to showcase India's global textile growth.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to address both domestic and international textile industry buyers at the Bharat Tex event, scheduled for February 16, as announced by Union Minister for Textiles, Giriraj Singh, on Friday.

Singh revealed that this year's Bharat Tex will host a significant increase in foreign participation, with 6,000 international buyers attending—double the number seen in last year's event. As a result, the fair has earned the title of the world's largest textile exhibition.

The event, which runs from February 14 to 17, will be held at Bharat Mandapam. Prime Minister Modi's address to the gathered buyers and industry

leaders will highlight the importance of the textile industry both domestically and globally.

The Bharat Tex exhibition is expected to feature over 5,000 exhibitors, attracting more than 120,000 visitors from across the world. This includes



key figures such as policymakers, global CEOs, and industry leaders, who will gather to explore the latest innovations

and opportunities in the textile sector. With buyers from over 110 countries, the event aims to showcase India's growing prominence in the global textile market.

Singh emphasized the significance of the event for fostering international collaborations and expanding India's textile industry, which is one of the largest in the world. The fair will also serve as a platform to explore new trends, technologies, and market dynamics, contributing to the industry's growth and global competitiveness.

As the largest textile trade fair, Bharat Tex promises to be a key event in the global textile calendar, offering immense business opportunities for stakeholders from across the industry.

UK Confers Honorary Knighthood To Tata Group Chief N Chandrasekaran



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Tata Sons Chairman, N Chandrasekaran, has been honored with an honorary knighthood by the United Kingdom for his significant contributions to strengthening UK-India business relations. He was conferred "The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Civil Division) - honorary DBE/KBE" by His Majesty King Charles, the group announced on Friday.

In a post on social media platform X, the Tata Group shared that Chandrasekaran received this prestigious recognition for his role in fostering economic and business ties between the UK and India. Expressing his gratitude for the honor, Mr. Chandrasekaran highlighted the deep and longstanding

relationship between the Tata Group and the UK.

He emphasized that the Tata Group's presence in the UK spans various key sectors, including technology, consumer goods, hospitality, steel, chemicals, and automotive. Mr. Chandrasekaran also pointed out the group's iconic British brands, such as Jaguar Land Rover and Tetley, both of which are integral to the company's global portfolio. The Tata Group currently employs over 70,000 people across the UK, further solidifying its deep economic footprint in the region.

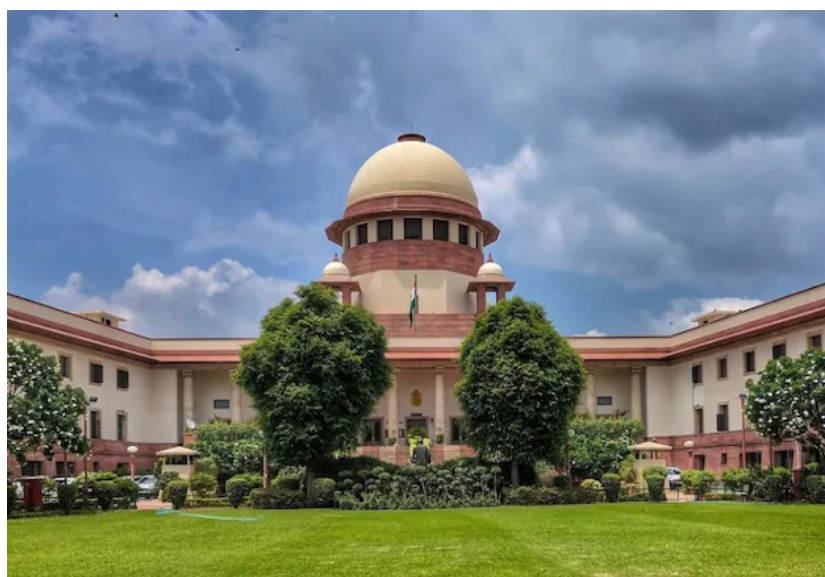
"We are incredibly proud of our British brands and our ongoing relationships with esteemed institutions in the UK, including the University of Oxford, the London School of

Economics, the University of Warwick, and the University of Swansea," he remarked.

In addition to his gratitude towards the UK, Chandrasekaran also expressed his appreciation to the UK Government for its ongoing support of the Tata Group. He reiterated that this relationship, built on mutual respect and collaboration, is both strong and enduring. Looking to the future, Mr. Chandrasekaran conveyed his excitement about further deepening the Tata Group's presence and contributions to the UK.

This honorary knighthood marks a significant milestone in the recognition of N Chandrasekaran's role in advancing UK-India business relations.

Waqf Amendment Bill Faces Strong Opposition from All India Shia Personal Law Board



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Waqf Amendment Bill has sparked significant controversy, with the All India Shia Personal Law Board leading the charge against the proposed legislation. On Thursday, Maulana Yasoob Abbas, the General Secretary of the Board, expressed his strong opposition to the bill, calling it "not right" and announcing that the Board would formally challenge it. He also indicated that if necessary, the Board would approach the Supreme Court to contest the bill.

In a bid to mobilize support for their cause, Abbas revealed plans to convene a meeting with the executive board of the

All India Shia Personal Law Board to discuss the next steps in their opposition to the bill. He emphasized that the Board would fight the bill through all available legal channels and sought to rally fellow stakeholders against it.

"The Waqf Amendment Bill is not right. Through the All India Shia Personal Law Board, we are opposing this bill. I will soon hold a meeting of the executive board, and if necessary, we will approach the Supreme Court," Abbas stated.

The bill, which seeks to amend the Waqf Act that governs the management of Waqf properties in India, has raised concerns among various groups about its potential

impact on the community's rights and the management of Waqf assets. Several stakeholders have voiced their opposition, with the All India Shia Personal Law Board being one of the most vocal critics.

Meanwhile, the Waqf Amendment Bill was tabled in both houses of Parliament, though discussions on the bill were adjourned to March 10. The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) report on the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 was also submitted, with BJP member Jagdambika Pal presenting it in the Lok Sabha and MP Medha Vishram Kulkarni doing so in the Rajya Sabha. Opposition members, however, raised concerns that their dissent notes were not included in the report.

PM Modi returns after France, US visit

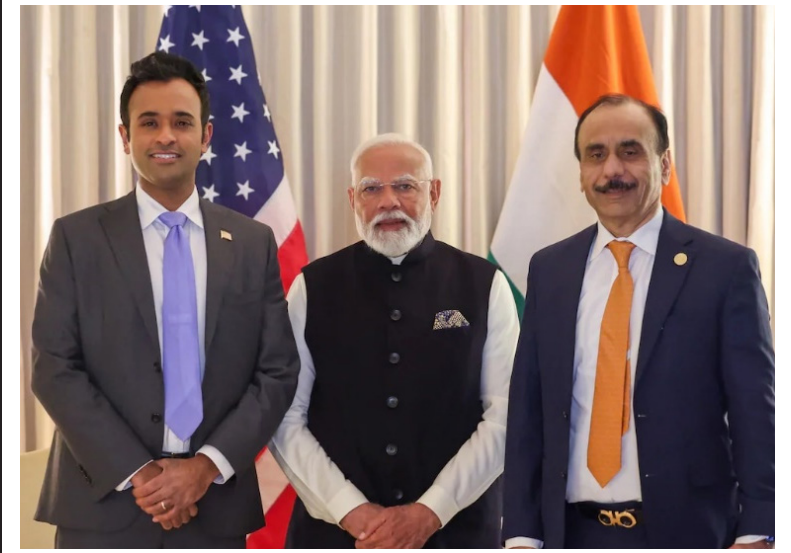


TPN Correspondent | New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Delhi on Friday after concluding his two-nation visit to France and the United States. During his visit, PM Modi co-chaired an AI summit in France and later met US President Donald Trump, marking their first meeting since Trump assumed office for his second term on January 20, 2025. PM Modi held extensive discussions with President Trump at the White House, where both leaders emphasized strengthening India-US ties. Trump described the relationship as one of “great unity and

great friendship” and stressed the importance of continued cooperation between the two nations. PM Modi, in response, expressed his delight at seeing Trump back at the White House and reaffirmed India’s commitment to advancing the strategic partnership with the same “bond, trust, and excitement.” This visit marks PM Modi’s first to the US since Trump’s re-election. He is among the first world leaders to visit the US under the new administration, highlighting the priority both countries place on their bilateral relationship. Foreign Secretary Vikram

Misri provided insights into the visit, stating that PM Modi held discussions with key figures, including newly appointed US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy. The extensive four-hour talks at the White House covered a range of topics, including strategic security cooperation, defense, trade, economic engagement, technology, energy security, and regional and global concerns. Before arriving in the US, PM Modi was on a three-day visit to France from February 10-12. He co-chaired the AI Action Summit and participated in discussions on commerce, energy, and cultural linkages. In Marseille, he and French President Emmanuel Macron visited the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project, where India is a consortium member. PM Modi also paid tributes to Indian soldiers who lost their lives during World War I and II at the Mazargues War Cemetery. The leaders visited the control room of CMA-CGM, a global shipping and logistics leader, and jointly inaugurated the Indian Consulate in Marseille. President Macron personally saw off PM Modi at Marseille Airport as he departed for the US. The visit reinforced India’s growing international influence and the deepening engagement with key global partners. PM Modi’s meetings in France and the US are expected to have long-term implications in areas of strategic cooperation, trade, and technological advancements.

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 pre-

viously 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.

“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 “execu-

tive 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.

31-Member Panel Formed to Examine Income Tax Bill



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi
Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday constituted a 31-member Select Committee to examine the Income Tax Bill. The panel, headed by BJP MP Baijayant Panda, is required to submit its report by the first day of the next session. The ongoing Budget Session is set to conclude on April 4, while the Monsoon Session is expected to begin in the third or fourth week of July. The bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, aims to simplify tax laws, including replacing terms like “assessment year” and “previous year” with “tax year” for better clarity.

Special Vande Bharat Train for Maha Kumbh Devotees

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi
Northern Railways has announced a special Vande Bharat train service between New Delhi and Varanasi via Prayagraj on February 15, 16, and 17 to accommodate the rush of devotees traveling for the Maha Kumbh Mela. Train number 02252 will depart from New Delhi at 5:30 AM, reaching Prayagraj at 12:00 PM before arriving in Varanasi at 2:20 PM. In the return direction, train number 02251 will leave Varanasi at 3:15 PM, stopping at Prayagraj at 5:20 PM, and reaching New Delhi by 11:50 PM the same day. Chief Public Relations Officer of Northern Railways, Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, stated that the special service aims to manage the increased travel demand during the week-end, ensuring a smooth journey for devotees.



Centre-Farmers Talks Held Cordially, Next Meeting on February 22



TPN Correspondent | Chandigarh
A meeting between a central team led by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and farmers’ representatives was held in Chandigarh on Friday to discuss various demands, including a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). The discussions lasted over two and a half hours and were described as cordial. The next round of talks is scheduled for February 22. The meeting included a 28-member delegation from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, who have been leading the ongoing farmers’ protest at the Punjab-Haryana border. Punjab

Agriculture Minister Gurmmeet Singh Khuddian and Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Lal Chand Kataruchak also participated. Union Minister Pralhad Joshi stated that details of the Modi government’s efforts for farmers’ welfare were shared, and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will lead the next round of talks. Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite hunger strike since November 26, was brought to the meeting venue by ambulance. Farmer representatives reiterated their demand for a legal guarantee on MSP, stressing that it would benefit all sections of society.



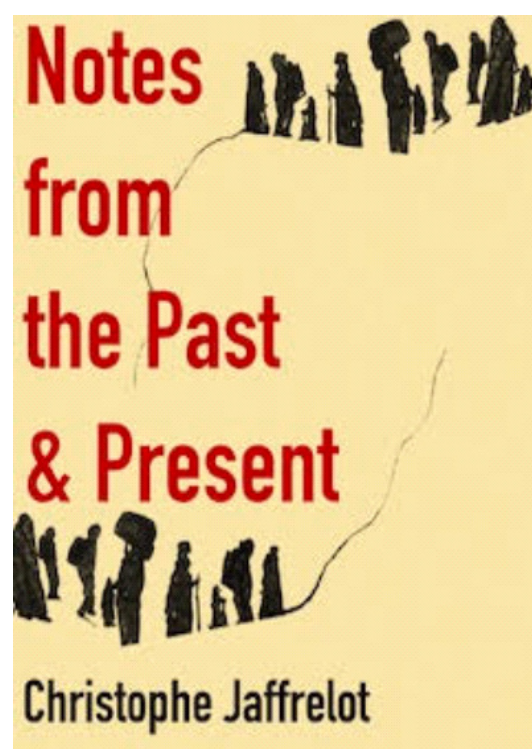
Why are Gujarati Migrants Fleeing the Model State?

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*



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 Zelensky 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.



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

Zelensky 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. Zelensky 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.

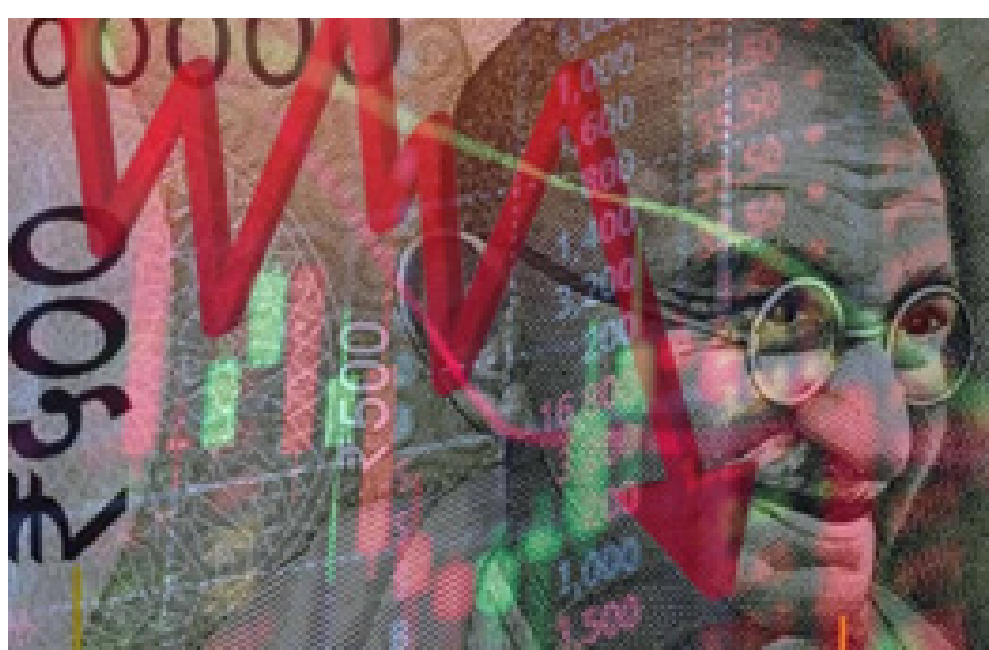
Over the past four years, BSNL has made significant strides, with its EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) doubling from Rs 1,100 crore in FY2019-20 to nearly Rs 2,100 crore in FY2023-24.

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.

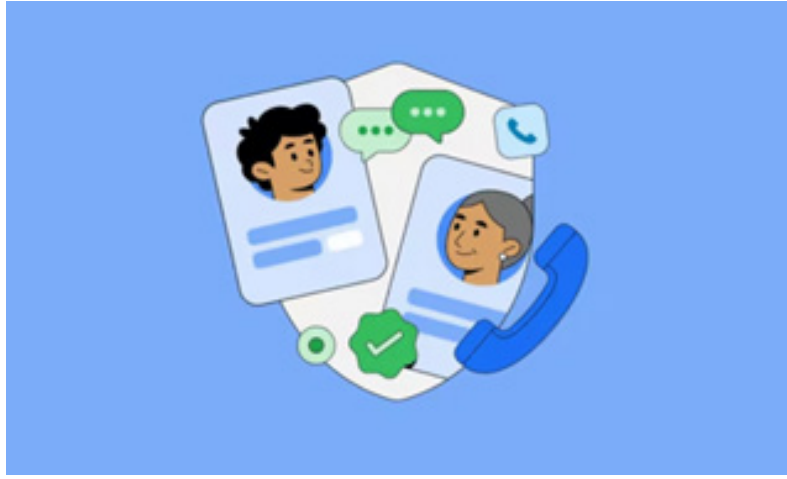
In addition to manufacturing, the electricity sector posted robust growth of 6.2%, while the mining sector grew at a slower pace of 2.6%. The data also highlighted a substantial increase in the production of capital goods, which

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.