



Weather Forecast

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



Indian Students Contribute Over \$8 Billion Annually To US Economy



INDIAN STUDENTS ADDING TO THE US ECONOMY

India-US to ease student, work visas.

\$8B Indian student impact in the US.

Joint action on illegal immigration.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump have expressed their shared commitment to enhancing the India-US relationship, focusing on legal mobility for students and professionals, security cooperation, and academic collaboration. During a bilateral meeting, the leaders recognized the significant contribution of the more than 300,000 strong Indian student community in the US, which contributes over \$8 billion annually to the US economy and creates numerous direct and indirect jobs.

The two leaders emphasized the importance of streamlining avenues for legal mobility, including facilitating short-term tourist and business travel. Both leaders acknowledged the mutual benefits of talent flow and movement between the two countries, noting how students, researchers, and professionals have fostered growth and innovation in both nations.

In their joint statement, PM Modi and President Trump discussed the value of advancing people-to-people ties. They committed to strengthening collab-

orations between higher education institutions, with a focus on joint/dual degree programs, twinning programs, and the establishment of joint Centers of Excellence. They also expressed interest in setting up offshore campuses of leading US educational institutions in India to further enhance academic exchanges and opportunities for students.

The leaders also highlighted the critical role of international academic collaborations in fostering innovation, improving learning outcomes, and preparing a future-ready workforce. As part of their commitment, they agreed

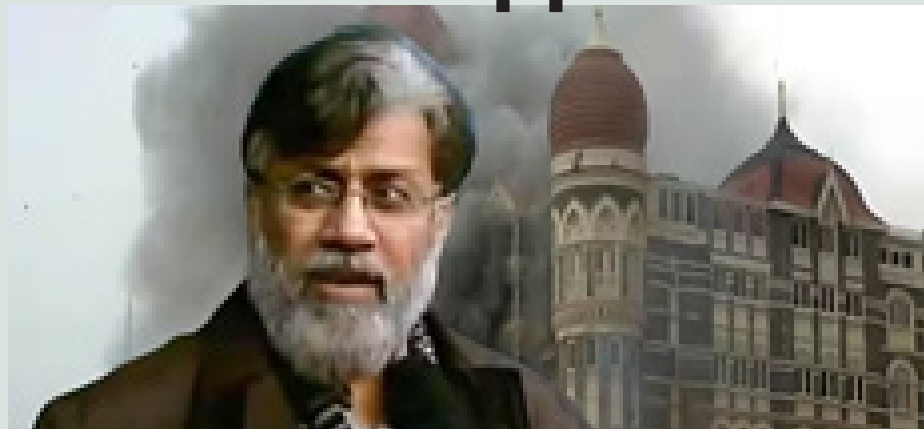
to work together on academic initiatives that would benefit both countries, such as new educational partnerships and research opportunities.

On security, the leaders emphasized the need for stronger cooperation in tackling illegal immigration and human trafficking. They vowed to take decisive action against criminal networks, including narco-terrorists, human and arms traffickers, and other elements that threaten public and diplomatic safety. Both leaders committed to enhancing law enforcement collaboration to ensure the safety and

security of both nations, as well as their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Finally, the leaders stressed the need for innovative and secure mobility frameworks to support a global workplace. They pledged to continue high-level engagement between the governments, industries, and academic institutions of both nations to realize their vision of a bright and prosperous future. Their partnership aims to advance the aspirations of both peoples, contribute to global good, and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Tahawwur Rana's Extradition Delayed by Final Appeal



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a key accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, which was announced by US President Donald Trump during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States, is likely to face a delay. Sources have informed NDTV that Rana, who has been convicted for providing material support to Lashkar-e-Taiba, the terrorist group responsible for the 2008 attacks, has filed a final appeal on humanitarian grounds. This appeal comes after the US Supreme Court rejected his review petition, clearing the way for his extradition, but the latest move could push back his transfer to India by several weeks.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, was convicted in 2011 for his role in the attacks that took place in Mumbai, where over 166 people were killed, including 20 police and security personnel and 26 foreign nationals. The attack targeted multiple locations across Mumbai, including the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus and the iconic Taj Mahal Hotel. Rana's involvement in the attack was centered on his support to Lashkar-e-Taiba's operational plans.

During a joint press conference with PM Modi on Thursday, President Trump had made a public announcement regarding the approval of Rana's extradition, stating, "Today, I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters and one of the very evil people of the world (Tahawwur Rana), having to do with the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack to face justice in India." Trump also emphasized that India and the US would collaborate more closely than ever before to combat the global threat of "radical Islamic terror."

Despite the excitement surrounding Rana's imminent return to India, legal proceedings have now introduced a potential delay. Sources have indicated that his appeal on humanitarian grounds, which is being heard in a US appeals forum, could push back his extradition. However, experts have noted that this legal matter is unlikely to affect the strong diplomatic ties between India and the United States.

The ongoing case underscores the complexities of international legal processes, but the delay is expected to be temporary. India continues to press for justice for the victims of the horrific Mumbai attacks.

BJP Sweeps All 10 Mayor Posts In Urban Bodies Election In Chhattisgarh



TPN Correspondent | Raipur

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emerged victorious in the Chhattisgarh civic body elections, winning the majority of mayoral and chairperson posts across urban bodies. The elections, held on February 11, saw the saffron party securing a clean sweep with ten mayoral posts in the state, marking a significant achievement following their triumph in recent assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

According to the Election Commis-

sion, the BJP claimed all ten mayoral positions in municipal corporations, which were previously held by the Congress party in the 2019-2020 elections. In addition to this, the BJP won 35 chairperson positions in 49 municipal councils, with the Congress securing only eight. Independent candidates and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also made their mark, with independent candidates winning five chairperson posts and AAP securing one.

The BJP also dominated the Nagar Panchayats, winning 81 chairper-

son posts out of 114, while Congress secured 22, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) won one, and independent candidates claimed ten. The BJP's success was particularly notable in Raipur, where the party won 60 out of 70 municipal wards, while Congress managed just seven.

The victory was especially remarkable in the mayoral race in Raipur, where BJP's Meenal Choubey triumphed with 3,15,835 votes, defeating Congress' Dipti Dubey by

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Controversy Over Mahatma Gandhi's Image on Russian Beer Cans

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A Russian brewery has sparked a wave of outrage after using Mahatma Gandhi's image on its beer cans, with social media users criticizing the brand for what many have deemed an inappropriate and disrespectful act. The cans, produced by the Russian brand Rewort, surfaced online, triggering a backlash that quickly gained momentum.



The controversy began when Suparno Satpathy, a politician and the grandson of former Odi-

sha Chief Minister Nandini Satpathy, shared the photos of the beer cans on social media. He urged the Indian government

to take up the issue with Russian authorities. In his post, he appealed directly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to raise the matter with Russian President Vladimir Putin, expressing his disappointment over the use of Mahatma Gandhi's image in connection with alcohol.

"My humble request with PM Narendra Modi ji is to

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Centre and Farmers Hold Talks in Chandigarh, Next Round Scheduled for February 22

TPN Correspondent | Punjab

A key meeting took place on Friday in Chandigarh between the Centre and representatives of farmers to address their long-standing demands, including the legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) on crops. Following the discussions, Union Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi announced that another round of talks would be held on February 22, under the leadership of Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.



on February 22 to continue the discussions.

This meeting follows a year-long protest by farmers at the Khanauri border in Punjab's Sangrur district, where they have been pressing the government to meet their demands. Joshi characterized the meeting as positive, noting that the government briefed the farmers on decisions taken by the PM Modi-led government to benefit the farming community.

"We had a very positive meeting with farmer leaders... We heard all the demands of the farmer leaders... We apprised them of the decisions taken by the PM Modi-led government in the interest of farmers," Joshi said after the meeting concluded. He also confirmed that another session would be held

During the meeting, Joshi urged farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal to end his hunger strike against the government, highlighting the government's willingness to continue negotiations. Dallewal, however, indicated he would consider the request.

The meeting was attended by a 28-member delegation from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, two key organizations leading the ongoing protests. Joshi mentioned that both sides exchanged views, and the government outlined what it had already done in response to the farmers' previous demands.

Pariksha Pe Charcha: Be Smarter Than Smart Phone, Sadhguru Tells Students

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Spiritual leader and Isha Foundation head Jaggi Vasudev, popularly known as Sadhguru, shared valuable insights with students during the annual Pariksha Pe Charcha event, urging them to view exams not as challenges to their intelligence but as a simple step to assess their readiness for the next phase of education.



Sadhguru emphasized that education's true purpose is to provide the fundamentals of life and open the door to new opportunities. "Exams are just a measure of whether you're ready to move on to the next stage," he said, reminding students that their education is a tool for understanding the world around them. He encouraged them to look at everyday objects like grass or a motorcycle and think about the physics, math, and chemistry behind them, stressing the importance of developing active dynamic intelligence.

Addressing concerns about addiction to smartphones and social media, Sadhguru advised students not to let their devices

dictate their lives. "You should decide how to use your smartphone, not the other way around," he stated. He also refuted the idea of "overthinking," explaining that true stress stems from an improperly aligned mind, which creates friction and anxiety. By aligning the mind properly, he explained, one could overcome these challenges and enhance their mental clarity. Sadhguru also highlighted the transformative power of meditation, particularly the Shambhavi Mahamudra practice, which he said activates large areas of the brain. He argued that just as physical exercise improves bodily health, mental exercises like meditation can enhance cognitive function and intelligence.

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Controversy Over Mahatma Gandhi's Image on Russian Beer Cans

take up this matter with his friend, President of Russia. It has been found that Russia's Rewort is selling beer in the name of Gandhi ji," Satpathy wrote.

The post quickly garnered attention, with many social media users voicing their anger and disapproval. One commenter pointed out the stark contrast between Gandhi's image and alcohol consumption, stating, "Highly unacceptable. What is the relation between Gandhiji and alcohol? Stop using his name and image on alcohol, he wasn't an alcoholic. Instead, use his name and image on other products that suit his personality."

Many others echoed similar sentiments,

emphasizing that Mahatma Gandhi, a staunch advocate of non-violence and temperance, would never have endorsed or associated with alcohol in any form. The use of his image on such products was seen as a violation of the principles he stood for.

This controversy has reignited debates over cultural sensitivity and respect for national symbols, especially when it comes to figures of immense historical significance like Gandhi. While it remains to be seen how the Russian company will respond to the backlash, the incident highlights the global impact and reverence that Mahatma Gandhi's image continues to carry.

BJP Sweeps All 10 Mayor Posts In Urban Bodies Election In Chhattisgarh

a margin of 1,53,290 votes. Similarly, in Rajnandgaon, BJP's Madhusudan Yadav secured the mayor's post with 62,517 votes, beating Congress' Nikhil Dwivedi by a wide margin.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, who played a key role in the BJP's success, expressed his gratitude to the people for their unwavering support. He credited the BJP's victory to its developmental work and promises kept under the 'Atal Viswas Patra' manifesto. Sai also took a jibe at the Congress, accusing them of "murdering democracy" by introducing indirect mayoral elections during their previous term.

While the Congress party managed to win

a few posts, including the chairperson position in Kunkuri Nagar Panchayat, its performance was largely lackluster. State Congress chief Dipak Baij acknowledged the defeat, stating that although the results were disappointing, the party would continue to fight against the BJP's alleged misuse of government machinery. Baij also raised concerns about the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and alleged malfunctioning at several polling stations.

Despite the setbacks, the BJP's victory in Chhattisgarh's civic body elections is seen as a significant political achievement, solidifying its stronghold in the state ahead of future elections.

Deported Indians Arrive in Amritsar Amid Controversy Over US Immigration Crackdown

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A second US plane carrying 119 deported Indian nationals is expected to arrive at Amritsar's Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport around 10 pm today, as part of the ongoing crackdown on illegal immigration by the US government. Among the deportees, 67 are from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, 8 from Gujarat, and others from Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The arrival of a plane with more deportees is also expected tomorrow. Reports suggest that these deportations are likely to continue on a bi-weekly basis, with similar flights scheduled to return undocumented Indian immigrants in the coming weeks.

This is the second batch of deported Indians, following the first US military plane carrying 104 deportees that landed in India on February 5. Many of the deported migrants had paid large sums of money to human traffickers in exchange for promises of legal entry into the US, only to endure harrowing journeys across multiple countries. Upon arrival, the



migrants were reportedly shackled and handcuffed, with videos from the US Border Patrol showing them walking in a manner typically reserved for hardened criminals. These visuals have sparked a strong response from Indian opposition leaders, who have criticized the manner of the deportations and questioned why the Indian government did not intervene to bring back its citizens in a more humane manner.

Congress leader P Chidambaram raised concerns about the second batch of deportees, questioning whether they would again face shackles during their deportation. In response to the criticism, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar clarified that the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is responsible for the

deportations and that restraints are only used on adult male deportees, while women and children are not restrained.

The issue has also sparked political tensions in Punjab, with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann accusing the BJP-led central government of intentionally selecting Amritsar as the landing site for these deported flights to defame the state. In response, BJP spokesperson RP Singh defended the decision, stating that Amritsar is the nearest international airport for US flights returning deported immigrants.

The situation continues to fuel debate over immigration policies and diplomatic responses between India and the US.

Big Concerns Addressed: Shashi Tharoor On PM Modi-Donald Trump Meet In US

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor expressed optimism following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent meeting with US President Donald Trump, highlighting the significant strides made in defense and trade. Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru on the sidelines of the Global Investors' Meet (GIM), Tharoor praised the US's commitment to sell India F-35 stealth aircraft, calling it a valuable development for India's defense capabilities.



"The commitment to sell us the F-35 stealth aircraft is very valued," Tharoor said. "It's a state-of-the-art aircraft, and along with the Rafale, the Indian Air Force will be in excellent shape." His comments underscored the importance of the deal for India's military readiness.

Tharoor also expressed encouragement over the progress made on trade and tariffs, a key concern in the bilateral relationship. He noted that the US and India have agreed to engage in serious negotiations to address trade issues, with a resolution expected by the fall of this year. "I think this is a very

good outcome," he added, as it provides time for thorough discussions and avoids hasty decisions from Washington that could negatively affect Indian exports.

On the issue of illegal immigration, Tharoor acknowledged the Prime Minister's stance that deported individuals should return to India, calling them "mised youths" who belong in their home country. However, Tharoor raised concerns

about the manner in which these deportees were treated, especially regarding the use of handcuffs and military aircraft in their deportation. He emphasized the need for a more respectful approach. "The handcuffs, mistreatment, and insults should be avoided in future," he said.

While Tharoor appreciated the public statements made by both leaders, he hoped that more details regarding the treatment of deportees were discussed privately. He expressed confidence that the US would listen to India's concerns on this matter, ensuring future deportations are handled in a more humane manner.

Is democracy in danger? S Jaishankar shows inked finger after US Senator's remark

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar challenged the Western narrative that democracy is facing global challenges during his participation in the Munich Security Conference 2025. Speaking on the panel titled "Live to Vote Another Day: Fortifying Democratic Resilience," Jaishankar highlighted the resilience of India's democracy, offering a different perspective from the prevalent global view that democracy is in crisis.



Jaishankar was joined on the panel by notable figures including Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, US Senator Elissa Slotkin, and Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski. During the discussion, when asked about his views on Western democracy, Jaishankar took a moment to share his personal experience, offering a positive outlook amidst a generally pessimistic atmosphere in the room.

"I will begin by sticking up my finger and don't take it badly, it is the index finger," Jaishankar said, humorously referring to the mark on his nail, a sign that he had recently cast his vote. "We just had an

election in my state just over. Last year, we had a national election." This reference to India's recent elections was his way of underscoring the robust democratic process in his country, where elections are regularly held and voters actively participate in shaping the future.

Jaishankar's remarks come in the context of growing concerns about the state of democracy in various parts of the world. While many Western countries have expressed concerns about the decline in democratic values and rising authoritarianism, India's External Affairs Minister stressed that democracy in India remains vibrant and resilient, with citizens actively engaging in elections despite challenges.

Jaishankar's remarks reflect India's firm stance on its democratic principles, positioning the country as a counter-narrative to Western pessimism. His comments were a reminder of India's long-standing democratic tradition and its commitment to ensuring that every citizen's vote counts, regardless of external viewpoints on the global state of democracy.

BJP's Baijayant Panda To Head 31-Member Select Committee To Examine I-T Bill



- Lok Sabha forms panel for tax bill.
- BJP's Baijayant Panda leads 31 MPs.
- Report due by July Monsoon session.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Lok Sabha on Friday formed a select committee to examine the Income-Tax Bill, 2025, with BJP MP Baijayant Jay Panda appointed as its chairman. The committee, which will consist of 31 Members of Parliament (MPs), includes 17 representatives from the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and 13 MPs from opposition parties.

The NDA members on the committee include 14 MPs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), along with one each from the TDP, JD(U), and Shiv Sena. Opposition representation includes 13 MPs, with six from the Congress, two from the Samajwadi Party, and one each from the DMK, the TMC, the Shiv Sena (UBT), the NCP

(SP), and the RSP. Additionally, Richard Vanlalhmangaiha from Mizoram's ruling Zoram People's Movement is part of the panel.

BJP MPs such as Nishikant Dubey, P.P. Chaudhary, Bhartruhari Mahtab, and Anil Baluni will also be members of the committee, while opposition MPs like Deepender Singh Hooda from Congress, Mahua Moitra from TMC, Supriya Sule from NCP (SP), and N.K. Premachandran from RSP will provide diverse viewpoints during deliberations.

The committee has been tasked with examining the provisions of the Income-Tax Bill, which is aimed at simplifying and modernizing India's taxation framework. The panel is expected to submit its report

by the first day of the Monsoon session, which is anticipated to begin in the third week of July. The ongoing Budget session, which commenced earlier this year, will conclude on April 4.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had introduced the draft law in the Lok Sabha on Thursday and urged Speaker Om Birla to refer it to the select committee for detailed examination. The Bill proposes to replace complex terminologies such as "assessment year" and "previous year" with the more straightforward "tax year," aiming to make the tax framework more comprehensible while removing complicated provisos and explanations.

Shah Highlights Uttarakhand's Progress in Sports at 38th National Games Closing Ceremony

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Minister Amit Shah announced that Uttarakhand has significantly improved its standing on the national sports map, rising from 25th to 7th place, during the closing ceremony of the 38th National Games on Friday. The event, held at the International Sports Stadium in Golapar, Haldwani, celebrated the state's sports achievements under the leadership of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

Shah praised the development of sports infrastructure across all districts of Uttarakhand, noting that athletes have transformed the state from "the land of gods" into a "land of sports." The Union Home Minister emphasized the importance of building resilience and the spirit of victory in ath-

letes, urging those who did not win to continue striving for future success.

The National Games, which saw over 16,000 athletes compete across 35 sports disciplines, concluded with impressive performances. The Services team, followed by Maharashtra and Haryana, claimed the top three spots. Uttarakhand secured 7th place with a record 103 medals, including 24 golds.

The games were held at multiple locations, including Dehradun, Haldwani, and Almora, with events taking place in both urban and remote areas. The state also introduced traditional sports like yoga and Mallakhamb, while setting a world record in a nighttime river rafting competition.

Shah also highlighted the eco-friendly initiatives taken during the games, including tree planting, reduced plastic usage, and the creation of a 'Sports Forest' in honor of medal winners.

Looking ahead, Shah expressed India's readiness to host the 2036 Olympics, pointing to the country's growing sports infrastructure and increased budget for sports development. He also acknowledged Prime Minister Modi's initiatives like 'Khelo India' and 'Fit India,' which are inspiring the youth to pursue sports.

In closing, Shah praised Uttarakhand's role in hosting the National Games and called the state a model for future large-scale sports events in India.



India needs clear vision to produce new tech, not empty words: Rahul Gandhi



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday emphasized the importance of building a robust production base in India to harness its talent and generate job opportunities for the youth. In a post on X, Gandhi critiqued the lack of substantial industrial development and stressed that mere rhetoric would not suffice to advance the country's position in new technologies.

Drawing attention to China's

advancements in drone technology, Gandhi noted how drones have revolutionized warfare by integrating batteries, motors, and optics for unprecedented battlefield maneuvering and communication. He highlighted that while drones are a significant technological breakthrough, they are also a product of a well-established industrial system that nurtures bottom-up innovations.

India, according to Gandhi, needs to focus on developing

a strategic approach that will make the country competitive in emerging fields like drone production. He argued that for India to succeed in new technologies, it must build a robust industrial base, rather than relying on superficial policies.

Gandhi's remarks come as part of his ongoing push to address the need for long-term structural changes in India's industrial sector, ensuring it is equipped to meet the technological demands of the future.

Another blow to Arvind Kejriwal as 3 AAP councillors join BJP



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a significant political shift, three councillors from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday, giving a boost to the saffron party ahead of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) mayoral election. The defected councillors—Anita Basoya from Andrews Ganj, Nikhil Chaprana from Hari Nagar, and Dharamvir from R K Puram—joined the BJP just days after the party's strong performance in the Delhi assembly elections.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva addressed the media following the defections, emphasizing that Delhi would soon witness a "triple engine" government at the Centre, in the state assembly, and at the municipal level, which would aid in transforming the city in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a "Viksit Bharat." He added that the councillors joined the BJP with the aim of making Delhi a cleaner and more beautiful city.

The shift in allegiance has strengthened BJP's position ahead of the MCD mayoral election, which is set to take place in April. The AAP had won the last mayoral election in November 2024 by a narrow margin of three votes. However, with the addition of these three councillors, the BJP now holds a numerical advantage, surpassing the AAP's tally in the MCD.

In the MCD polls held in 2022, the AAP secured 134 wards, while the BJP won 104, with Congress and independents taking a smaller share of the votes. The outcome of the mayoral election is expected to be closely contested, with crucial votes coming from the seven BJP Lok Sabha MPs, three Rajya Sabha MPs from AAP, and 14 nominated MLAs.

In the meantime, the MCD has announced a ₹17,000 crore budget for the upcoming financial year, with a significant portion allocated to sanitation (₹4,907 crore). Other priorities include infrastructure development, education, and waste management. The budget reflects the MCD's focus on improving city services as the mayoral race intensifies.

Congress Appoints New In-Charges for Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a recent organizational reshuffle, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed new general secretaries and in-charges for several key states. The move aims to strengthen the party's structure and address the political challenges in these regions ahead of upcoming elections.

Bhupesh Baghel, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, has been entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing Punjab as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in charge. His appointment comes at a crucial time as the Congress party seeks to bolster its presence in the state. Rajani Patil, a Rajya Sabha member, will now manage the party's affairs in Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, while BK Hariprasad has been appointed as the AICC in-charge for Haryana.

Other significant appointments include Syed Naseer Hussain, who will now take charge of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The reshuffle

also sees Harish Chaudhary overseeing Madhya Pradesh, Girish Chodankar taking responsibility for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, and Ajay Kumar Lallu appointed as the in-charge for Odisha. Additionally, K Raju has been assigned to handle Jharkhand, while Meenakshi Natarajan will manage Telangana.

Other states also see fresh leadership, with Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka taking charge of Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim, while Krishna Allavaru has been appointed to oversee Bihar.

This reshuffle is seen as a strategic move by Congress to revitalize its leadership in various states and tackle regional challenges effectively. The new in-charges are expected to play a vital role in strengthening party unity and preparing for future electoral battles across India. The appointments reflect the party's commitment to enhancing its organizational strength and leadership structure at both the state and national levels.





- CBI raids 11 sites in cyber fraud case.
- Rs 1.08 crore cash, gadgets seized.
- Crypto scam linked to VoIP, darknet.

CBI Raids Cyber Criminals in Delhi and Haryana, Seizes Rs 1.08 Crore

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted searches at 11 locations across Delhi and Haryana on Friday as part of an investigation into a cybercrime syndicate. The accused are alleged to have been cheating people by impersonating government officials, and the operation led to the seizure of Rs 1.08 crore in cash.

The searches took place in nine locations in Delhi and two in Hisar, Haryana. The case dates back two years and involves the illegal activities of the accused, who were report-

edly committing crypto fraud and offering fake technical support consultations to people in India and abroad. These criminals deceived individuals into transferring money in cryptocurrency, which was then funneled through multiple crypto wallets and converted into cash.

The CBI has already filed a charge sheet against three individuals involved in the fraud. During the recent raids, significant incriminating evidence was uncovered, including six laptops, eight mobile phones, and an iPad. The investigation also revealed the use of com-

puter programs for making VoIP-based calls and accessing the darknet, which aided the fraudulent activities.

Additionally, the agency seized foreign currency worth USD 1,000 and 252 grams of gold. The ongoing investigation aims to trace further details of the fraudulent network and identify more individuals involved in this multi-layered scheme. The CBI's swift action underscores its commitment to tackling cybercrime and bringing those responsible to justice.

Delhi Man, Addicted To Drugs, Kills Mother During Fight Over Money

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

A 40-year-old man, identified as Sonu, has been arrested for allegedly murdering his 65-year-old mother in the Dayalpur area of northeast Delhi. According to the police, the incident occurred on the night of Friday, February 14, when a heated argument between Sonu and his mother over money turned deadly.

The police received a call at around 9 pm reporting the crime. Upon reaching the location, they found the elderly woman's lifeless body. Authorities immediately launched an investigation, revealing that Sonu, who works as a driver, had been struggling with addiction and was currently unemployed.

Sources say that Sonu had a history of frequent disputes with his mother over money, with the elderly woman being the primary financial supporter. On the night of the murder, an argument flared up



once again, escalating quickly to violence. In the heat of the altercation, Sonu attacked his mother, leading to her death.

Sonu was taken into custody shortly after the incident, and a case of murder has been registered against him. Police confirmed that further investigation is underway to determine the full circumstances surrounding the crime.

The body of the deceased woman has been sent for post-mortem at GTB Hospital for examination, and the authorities are gathering more evidence to strengthen the case.

The tragic event has shocked the local community, highlighting the severity of familial conflicts exacerbated by addiction and financial stress. Authorities are urging the public to seek help and support in situations where mental health and substance abuse issues threaten to spiral out of control.

Sonu remains in police custody, where he will face legal consequences for his actions. The investigation is expected to shed more light on the circumstances that led to this tragic and senseless crime.

Not All Disputes For Courts, Mediation Mode For Redressal: Chief Justice



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

At the third convocation ceremony of Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU) in Nagpur, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna emphasized that not all disputes are suited for courtrooms or litigation. He highlighted the importance of mediation as a more effective method for dispute resolution, offering creative solutions while also strengthening relationships.

The CJI remarked that every case should be viewed not only through the lens of legal issues but also as a human story. He

pointed out that India's legal aid system is one of the most robust in the world, ensuring assistance is provided to all stakeholders, including both the accused and victims.

"Mediation is the mode for redressal that offers us more than just dispute resolution," CJI Khanna said. "It opens doors to creative solutions beyond simple yes or no answers." By opting for mediation, conflicts can be resolved efficiently, which not only addresses legal matters but also fosters better relationships between people and businesses.

The CJI further emphasized the role of lawyers as problem-solvers, needing to come up with innovative solutions that tackle both the legal and human aspects of disputes. "As our problems become more dynamic, the need for solutions must also be more flexible," he said, stressing that justice delivery itself should not become an obstacle to achieving it.

In his address, CJI Khanna also urged the legal community to think beyond conventional methods and strive for justice that is cost-effective and timely. He touched on the challenges faced by today's generation, such as climate change, digital evolution, and privacy concerns, which demand innovative legal solutions.

Justice B R Gavai, a Supreme Court judge and Chancellor of MNLU, also spoke at the event, acknowledging the contributions of the state government in establishing the university, especially recognizing the support of former Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Uddhav Thackeray.

Delhi Bungalow At Centre Of 'Sheeshmahal' Row To Face Central Probe

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Centre has initiated an investigation into the alleged irregularities surrounding the renovation of the former official residence of Delhi's ex-Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The probe follows a report submitted by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) on February 13, which raised concerns about potential violations of building norms during the construction of the 6 Flagstaff Road Bungalow, a sprawling property covering 40,000 square yards (8 acres).

The CPWD has been tasked with conducting a detailed inquiry to determine whether government regulations were bypassed to facilitate the construction of what the BJP has called a "Sheeshmahal." Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva has also urged Lt Governor VK Saxena to annul the merger of four government properties with the bungalow, accusing the expansion of the residence as unauthorized.

In a letter to the Lt Governor, Sachdeva alleged that the bungalow's expansion involved the illegal merger of four government properties. He also stated that once the BJP forms the government in Delhi, the



newly elected Chief Minister will not occupy the controversial bungalow.

The renovated bungalow served as Kejriwal's official residence from 2015 until October 2024, when he vacated the premises after resigning under intense political pressure. The BJP had made corruption allegations a central theme of its campaign for the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, which contributed to Kejriwal's resignation.

A Public Works Department (PWD) report released in October 2024 detailed the luxurious renovations made to the bungalow, including high-end ap-

pliances and extravagant interiors. These findings provided ammunition to the BJP's relentless campaign against the AAP leadership, accusing Kejriwal of misusing public funds.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also criticized Kejriwal during a rally, making a veiled reference to the bungalow by stating, "I could have built a 'Sheeshmahal' too, but I chose to build more than 4 crore homes for the poor."

Kejriwal dismissed the allegations as politically motivated, accusing the BJP of using personal attacks to divert attention from its own failures in Delhi.

Railways To Run Special Delhi-Varanasi Vande Bharat Via Prayagraj



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Northern Railways has announced the operation of the Vande Bharat Special Train (No. 02252/02251) on February 15, 16, and 17 to facilitate the movement of devotees traveling to the Maha Kumbh Mela in Varanasi. The special train will run between New Delhi and Varanasi, passing through

Prayagraj, to cater to the expected surge in passengers during the weekend.

The Vande Bharat Special Train No. 02252 will depart from New Delhi at 5:30 AM and travel via Prayagraj, arriving in Varanasi at 2:20 PM. On the return journey, Train No. 02251 will depart from Varanasi at 3:15 PM, passing through Prayagraj at 5:20 PM, and will

reach New Delhi by 11:50 PM on the same day.

According to Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, Chief Public Relations Officer of Northern Railways, this service has been introduced to address the anticipated high demand for transportation during the Maha Kumbh Mela. The special trains are expected to help smooth the travel experience for thousands of devotees attending this significant spiritual event.

The Northern Railways' move to run this Vande Bharat Special Train reflects the efforts to ensure efficient and convenient transportation for the large number of pilgrims heading to Varanasi, especially during the busy period of the Kumbh Mela.

Future Will Be Dramatic With Advances In AI: President Droupadi Murmu



President Murmu also underscored the importance of ensuring that technical opportunities created by AI and related innovations reach marginalized communities. "The great transformation brought about by these technologies should benefit all," she added, emphasizing the need for inclusivity in the rapidly changing landscape of higher education.

While celebrating technological progress, the President also urged innovators and entrepreneurs to remain mindful of the knowledge base in traditional communities. She cautioned that "problems do not always require big technological interventions," encouraging a balanced approach that respects and incorporates traditional wisdom alongside modern innovations.

As part of the celebrations, President Murmu inaugurated an exhibition that showcased a range of science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, including AI-enabled robots and self-driving cars. The exhibition highlighted the evolving role of AI in various sectors and demonstrated the potential for innovation in addressing complex societal challenges.

During her two-day visit to Jharkhand, President Murmu arrived on Friday and stayed overnight at Raj Bhavan. In light of her visit, security measures in Ranchi were heightened to ensure safety.

- President Murmu highlights AI's role in education.
- Urges inclusive tech benefits for all communities.
- Inaugurates AI and innovation exhibition at BIT Mesra.

TPN Correspondent | Ranchi

President Droupadi Murmu emphasized the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning during her address at the platinum jubilee celebrations of Birla Institute of Technology (BIT), Mesra, on Saturday. She noted that these advancements would dramatically shape the future and affirmed the Indian government's commitment to in-

corporating AI into higher education.

"The future is going to be dramatic with far-reaching advances expected in artificial intelligence and machine learning," President Murmu said. She praised the initiatives of BIT Mesra, which launched AI-related courses in 2023, positioning the institute ahead of the curve in embracing these cutting-edge technologies.

Vice President Dhankhar Questions CJI's Role in CBI Director Selection



The Vice President further stirred debate by questioning how the CJI's involvement in executive matters, such as the appointment of the CBI Director, could be justified in a democracy like India. "How can in a country like ours or in any democracy, by statutory prescription, Chief Justice of India participate in the selection of the CBI Director? Can there be any legal rationale for it?" he asked.

His remarks come amid ongoing debates about the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive in India. The selection of the CBI Director, a crucial post in the nation's investigative body, is typically decided by a committee that includes the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India. Dhankhar's statement challenges this arrangement, questioning whether it undermines the integrity of democratic processes by allowing the judiciary to play a role in executive decisions.

The Vice President's comments have sparked significant discussion on the need for a clear delineation of powers and responsibilities between India's judicial and executive branches to ensure the health of the country's democracy.

TPN Correspondent | Bhopal

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar raised concerns on Friday regarding the involvement of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) in the selection process of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director and other executive appointments. Speaking at a gathering at the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal, Dhankhar questioned the legal rationale behind such participation, suggesting that it could blur the lines between the judicial and executive

branches.

He described the boundary between judicial activism and overreach as "thin," but emphasized that the consequences of such overreach on democracy were substantial. "The line between judicial activism and overreach is thin, but the impact on democracy is thick. I say the line is thin, but this thin line is between democracy and despotism," Dhankhar remarked.

Test For Indian Diplomacy: Congress On Handcuff Row On Illegal Immigrants Return

TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

A second US plane, carrying 119 deported Indians, is set to land at Amritsar airport on Saturday, continuing US President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration. The plane, which is scheduled to arrive at 10 PM, has drawn attention, particularly from Congress leader P Chidambaram, who questioned whether the deportees would be shackled during the process. Chidambaram labeled this as a "test for Indian diplomacy" and took to social media to raise his concerns, posting, "All eyes will be on the U.S. aircraft... Will the deportees be handcuffed and their legs tied with ropes?"

Among the 119 deported individuals, 67 are from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, and smaller numbers from other states such as Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Himachal

Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir, according to official sources. This second batch of deportees follows a similar flight that landed last week, carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants.



The arrival of the plane coincides with the return of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to India after his official visit to the United States, where he held bilateral talks with President Trump. A third US flight is expected to land on February 16.

The first batch of deportees sparked a controversy when opposition leaders criticized the US for using handcuffs and leg restraints during deportation. This led to protests outside Parliament on February 6, with the opposition raising concerns about the treatment of Indian nationals.

In response to the controversy, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar clarified in Parliament that the use of restraint during deportation is a "standard operating procedure" followed by the US. Jaishankar also stated that the Indian government would engage with the US to ensure that the deportees were treated with dignity during their return. He emphasized that it is the obligation of every country to take back its citizens if they are found to be living illegally abroad.

10 Devotees Killed As Car Collides With Bus On Way To Maha Kumbh



TPN Correspondent | Mahakumbh

At least 10 people were killed, and 19 others were injured in a tragic accident that occurred around 2 am on the Mirzapur-Prayagraj highway near the Meja police station in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The accident involved a Bolero car, which collided with a bus. The Bolero was carrying Maha Kumbh devotees from Chhattisgarh, while the bus was reportedly transporting pilgrims from Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh.

The incident is suspected to have occurred when the driver of the Bolero dozed off behind the wheel, losing control of the vehicle. The car, which was en route to the Kumbh Mela for the devotees to take a holy dip at the Sangam, collided with the oncoming bus, resulting in a devastating crash.

DCP Vivek Chandra Yadav confirmed the fatalities and injuries, stating that the bodies had been sent to Swaroop Rani Nehru Medical Hospital for post-mortem examination. Authorities are continuing with

further procedures and investigations into the cause of the accident.

The devotees, who were traveling from Korba in Chhattisgarh, were on their way to witness the spiritual event at the Kumbh Mela when the tragic incident occurred. Many of the injured were immediately rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment, while authorities worked at the site of the crash to clear the wreckage and begin investigations.

This unfortunate accident highlights the risks faced by travelers, especially during large religious gatherings like the Kumbh Mela, where pilgrims often travel long distances in crowded vehicles. Local authorities have promised to enhance safety measures on highways and ensure better monitoring of transportation conditions during peak festival seasons.

As the community mourns the loss of lives, families of the victims are hoping for a swift and thorough investigation into the accident.

J&K LG Manoj Sinha Fires Three Employees with Terror Links Amid Rising Tensions



TPN Correspondent | Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha took swift action on Saturday by dismissing three government employees, including a police constable, a teacher, and a forest department orderly, after investigations revealed their links to terrorism. The move follows Sinha's earlier pledge to take the "strongest possible action" against individuals providing logistical and financial support to terrorism.

The terminated employees are identified as Firdous Ahmad Bhat, a Jammu and Kashmir police constable arrested in May 2024; Mohammad Ashraf Bhat, a teacher currently detained in district jail; and Nisar Ahmad Khan, an orderly in the forest department. Their dismissals come after a thorough investigation by law enforcement and intelligence agencies confirmed their involvement in terror-related activities.

The action by the Lieutenant Governor came in the wake of increased security concerns,

particularly after a series of incidents along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Jammu division. On February 11, two army personnel, including a captain, were killed in a terror attack using an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the Akhnour sector. A soldier was also injured the previous day in cross-border firing in the Rajouri sector.

Amid these escalating incidents, LG Sinha chaired two high-level security review meetings earlier this week. He emphasized the need for "effective steps" to dismantle terrorism in Jammu, urging officials to eliminate both the infrastructure and the local support networks of terrorism. He specifically instructed that individuals or groups creating fear in society be classified as terrorists and prosecuted under the law.

Sinha's bold actions signal the administration's zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and its supporters in Jammu and Kashmir, reinforcing the commitment to restore peace and security in the region.



A Forgotten Crisis? Nagaland's Peace Process Drags On For Years But Sees No Solution

The Naga peace process has been dragging on for decades, with little to show for the significant efforts made by both the Indian government and insurgent groups. Despite multiple agreements, the situation remains unresolved, leaving Nagaland in a state of turmoil. On February 12, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) or NSCN (I-M) clarified that the 2015 Framework Agreement with the Indian government should not be seen as the final peace deal. Instead, it emphasized that the agreement was just a starting point for future negotiations and should not be confused with the Agreed Position signed with the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) in 2017.

The NSCN (I-M) has been in talks with New Delhi since 1997, with the 2015 Framework Agreement initially hailed as a historic step. However, internal disagreements and key demands, such as the call for a separate Naga constitution and flag, have kept the peace process from reaching a resolution. The Indian government has been firm in rejecting these demands, fearing that granting such concessions would encourage separatism, as seen in Jammu and Kashmir.

Recently, 21 opposition parliamentarians raised concerns about the stalled peace process, pointing out the absence of a full-time interlocutor since 2021. They also criticized the lack of



transparency in the negotiations. However, the MPs overlooked the Agreed Position signed by the NNPGs, sidelining a crucial part of the peace process. This omission undermines the role of the NNPGs, who represent a significant portion of the Naga population and have worked alongside the NSCN (I-M) to resolve the issue.

Additionally, the former interlocutor, N Ravi, caused confusion by claiming that the talks had concluded in 2019. If the talks were indeed completed, why is the peace process still

at an impasse? This raises questions about whether the NSCN (I-M) has been stalling the process by refusing to compromise. The demand for a separate constitution and flag remains a major obstacle. The Indian government cannot afford to grant such provisions, as they would set a dangerous precedent for separatism. For peace to prevail, all parties must engage in constructive dialogue and work together to find a lasting solution that addresses the aspirations of all Naga tribes.



What India Needs to Do in the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean has become a vital arena for global geopolitics, with the "Indo-Pacific" discourse at the forefront of international discussions. India, with its strategic location in the heart of this region, must prioritize its maritime interests and take proactive measures to ensure peace, security, and economic growth in the Indian Ocean.

India's historical relationship with the Indian Ocean dates back thousands of years. From ancient trade routes to the influence of dynasties like the Pallavas and Cholas, India has long been a seafaring nation. However, post-independence, India focused more on land-based security, neglecting its maritime potential. Over the past few decades, India has begun to realize the immense importance of the Indian Ocean to its economy, security, and global positioning. The Indian Ocean is a critical maritime corridor, with nearly 70% of the world's container traffic passing through it and 80% of India's external trade traversing its waters. Ad-

ditionally, 90% of India's energy imports rely on this region, making it essential for the country's economic stability. Recognizing this, India has strengthened its diplomatic and military engagement with countries in the region, including Oman and Singapore, and has been instrumental in hosting initiatives like the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC).

However, the region faces numerous challenges, including piracy, terrorism, and environmental threats like rising sea levels. External powers, particularly China, have ramped up their influence through infrastructure investments and military presence in strategic locations. China's Belt and Road Initiative and its growing naval presence add complexity to the regional security dynamics. India must respond by enhancing its naval capabilities and asserting its influence in the region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative launched in 2015 emphasized India's commitment

to regional peace and cooperation. India must now focus on enhancing its blue-water navy, capable of projecting power across the vast Indian Ocean. Strengthening alliances with regional powers, addressing piracy and transnational crimes, and ensuring safe maritime routes are crucial for India's strategy.

India must also take a leadership role in shaping the security architecture of the Indian Ocean to ensure that it remains a region of peace and cooperation, not one dominated by external powers. Through greater diplomatic engagement and military cooperation, India can promote regional stability and economic growth, reinforcing its position as a key player in the Indo-Pacific.

In conclusion, India must prioritize its maritime strategy, leveraging its historical influence, expanding naval power, and building partnerships to ensure a secure, prosperous Indian Ocean. By doing so, India will solidify its role as a global maritime power in the 21st century.



Deals, Dil, And A Terrorist: PM Modi's US Visit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States marked a significant advancement in the Indo-US relationship, focusing on defence, artificial intelligence (AI), trade, and counterterrorism. The trip, characterized by the warm personal rapport between Modi and President Trump, underscored the growing strategic convergence between the two nations.

A key takeaway was the agreement to enhance defence cooperation, including discussions on the purchase of F-35 fighter jets. While the procurement process for such sophisticated equipment will take years, this agreement signals a move toward a more advanced defence partnership. The process involves detailed discussions, technology transfers, and logistical planning, highlighting the commitment to strengthening security ties.

AI also featured prominently in the discussions. While India stands to gain from AI collaboration, the partnership appears to be more beneficial to the US, which views AI as a strategic asset. India must ensure that its AI ecosystem remains independent and does not become reliant on foreign interests, especially given that the US seeks to maintain technological supremacy. India's role should be more than just a supplier of resources to global AI engines; it should strive to harness AI for public good.

Trade was another critical issue. Both sides set a target to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. However, the negotiations were influenced by Trump's transactional approach to diplomacy, using tariffs as leverage. In contrast, the Biden administration has focused on defence and technology cooperation, sidestepping contentious trade issues that could disrupt the relationship.

A landmark development during Modi's visit was the approval for the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a suspect in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. This marked a significant step in counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries. While this is a positive development, a more comprehensive counterterrorism strategy should target financial networks that sustain terrorist organizations. Strengthening intelligence-sharing and financial tracking should be prioritized.

Overall, Modi's visit to the US strengthened Indo-US ties, particularly in defence, AI, and counterterrorism. While challenges remain in the implementation of agreements, the trajectory of the relationship is positive, with Modi's leadership adeptly navigating the evolving diplomatic landscape.



Naxals Are Indian Citizens: Ruthless Force Is Not the Solution

The Naxal issue in India is one of internal rebellion, where the government faces its own citizens, primarily tribals, fighting due to deep-seated grievances. While the government rightly uses force against foreign terrorists, the Naxal issue requires a different, more nuanced approach. The Naxals are not external enemies but citizens who, for various reasons, joined the movement after feeling marginalized and oppressed by the state.

The Naxals' grievances are real. Historical reports, such as one from the Ministry of Rural Development in 2006, highlighted how tribals were deprived of their land, pushed out of forests, and displaced for industrialization. This alienation led to frustration, and many joined the Naxal movement, which over time adopted a Maoist ideology. However, for many, the core issue was not Marxism but a struggle against perceived injustice by the state. This makes the situation complex, as force cannot be the only solution.

While security forces are necessary for tackling violent uprisings, a more constructive and compassionate approach could yield better results. A ceasefire, even for a short period, could encourage the Naxals to come forward and surrender. The government could promise rehabilitation, address individual cases, and ensure justice for those who have grievances. Such an approach would not only prevent further bloodshed but would also offer a chance for reconciliation.

In contrast, the current strategy of relentless force and the ongoing "war on Naxals" has resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Reports of killings in Chhattisgarh and other Naxal-affected regions only add to the cycle of violence. The government's current rhetoric of eradicating Naxalism by 2026 is concerning because it risks alienating the very people who need to be brought into the fold.

A broader strategy must include political initiatives, land reforms, and socio-economic inclusion for the tribals who have been left behind. The state must stop viewing the Naxals as a simple enemy to be defeated and instead address the root causes of their discontent. A balanced approach, combining firmness with empathy, could lead to long-lasting peace.

The Naxal issue cannot be solved on a strict timeline. Past home ministers, such as P Chidambaram and Rajnath Singh, set deadlines that proved unrealistic. Instead, the government should focus on genuine engagement with the people and recalibrate its approach to foster peace and stability without resorting to endless violence.

PM Modi to Inaugurate New Pamban Bridge in Tamil Nadu on February 28

- India's first vertical lift bridge.
- Boosts connectivity and tourism.

PM MODI TO INAUGURATE NEW PAMBAN BRIDGE



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu on February 28 for the grand inauguration of the new Pamban Bridge. The bridge, which spans 2.1 kilometers, is a vital railway link connecting mainland India to Pamban Island. This new infrastructure project, worth Rs 550 crore, replaces the old Pamban Bridge, which had become unusable due to severe corrosion.

The new bridge, which took six years to complete, is expected to significantly enhance connectivity between the island and the rest of Tamil Nadu. It will play a crucial role in improving transportation and the economic development of the region by facilitating faster and more reliable rail services. The upgraded infrastructure is seen as a major step toward boosting tourism and trade in the area.

The inauguration ceremony is expected to be a significant event, lasting for about three hours, and will be attended

by various dignitaries. The new Pamban Bridge is equipped with modern features designed to ensure safety and durability, and it is anticipated to reduce travel time between Rameswaram and the mainland.

The bridge is also a part of the Indian government's broader initiative to improve transportation infrastructure across the country, especially in regions that have been historically underdeveloped. The project showcases the government's commitment to improving connectivity and promoting regional growth.

Rameswaram, a popular pilgrimage destination, will benefit from the new bridge, which will make it more accessible to tourists and devotees. The old Pamban Bridge, built during British rule in the 19th century, had long been an iconic structure but was rendered obsolete due to corrosion and wear over time. The new bridge, however, promises to serve as a modern marvel, reinforcing the region's position as a key link in India's transportation network.

Akhilesh Yadav Urges Extension of Maha Kumbh Amid Overwhelming Crowds



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav has called on the Uttar Pradesh government to extend the duration of the Maha Kumbh, citing the immense number of devotees still hoping to attend the spiritual gathering. Yadav pointed out that in previous years, the Maha Kumbh and Kumbh Mela lasted for 75 days, while this year's schedule is notably shorter.

"Even now, many people want to go to Maha Kumbh but cannot. In such a situation, the government should extend the time limit of Maha Kumbh," Yadav said.

Reports and visuals on social media have highlighted the heavy congestion on roads and trains, with massive crowds making their way to the Maha Kumbh. Earlier this week, roads leading to the event saw severe traffic jams that stretched for miles. The Prayagraj Sangam railway station had to temporarily shut down due to the overwhelming influx of people.

Yadav also accused the state government of hiding the true number of casualties caused by a stampede at the Maha Kumbh last month, adding to the concerns surrounding the gathering.

The Maha Kumbh, the world's largest spiritual gathering, commenced on January 13 and is scheduled to conclude on February 26, coinciding with Maha Shivaratri. As of Friday evening, state government reports show that over 50 crore people have participated in the holy dip at the Sangam, which is more than the combined population of Russia and the United States.

With large crowds continuing to make their way to the event, Yadav's plea for an extension underscores the challenges faced by both the attendees and the authorities in managing the largest religious congregation in the world.

Kiren Rijju Confirms Statehood Restoration for J&K in Due Course

TPN Correspondent | Srinagar

Union Minister Kiren Rijju stated on Saturday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have made it clear that Jammu and Kashmir will regain its statehood in due course, though he refrained from giving a specific timeline. Rijju, who oversees the parliamentary affairs and minority affairs portfolios, said the central government has always indicated that statehood will be restored and that the powers and functions in the region will be clearly defined.

"The Prime Minister and Home Minister have made clear indications in the past that statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir in due course of time," Rijju told reporters, adding that the specific timeline for the restoration of statehood or the division of powers between the lieutenant governor and the elected chief minister was not for him to comment on at this moment.

Rijju, who represents Arunachal West in the Lok Sabha, was in Kashmir for the Union Budget-related events and emphasized that his visit was focused solely on financial matters. "At this time, Jammu and Kashmir is a Union Territory, with the lieutenant governor serving as the administrative head. However, we have a functioning and



elected government," he added, highlighting the recent election victory.

On the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Rijju assured that the legislation aims to bring transparency to the management of properties for the benefit of Muslims, emphasizing that no one would be able to seize the properties. He also noted that several political leaders, including Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, have supported the bill, as have several Muslim MPs.



Law says everyone innocent until proven guilty: J&K CM Criticizes Dismissals

TPN Correspondent | Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah raised concerns on Saturday over the dismissal of government employees accused of terror links by the Lt Governor, questioning the legal process behind such actions. He highlighted that the law presumes innocence until proven guilty and emphasized that dismissals without clear proof or a fair hearing could undermine this principle.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha invoked Article 311 (2) (c) of the Constitution on Saturday to terminate the services of three government employees after investigations by law enforcement and intelligence agencies allegedly linked them to terror activities. This follows a series of similar dismissals over the past few years, bringing the total number of government employees dismissed on similar grounds to over 70.

While reacting to the latest dismissals, Abdullah raised concerns about

the lack of a fair trial, pointing out that every accused individual is entitled to a hearing and an opportunity to prove their innocence. "If there is proof against them and they are given an opportunity to clear the allegations but fail, then such steps could be justified," Abdullah said. He also emphasized that the law presumes all accused are innocent until proven guilty.

Furthermore, Abdullah responded to questions regarding Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's remarks about the government choosing Amritsar as the landing site for Indian deportees from the United States. Abdullah stated that Mann, as the CM of Punjab, had a vested interest in the issue and would naturally express his concerns regarding such decisions.

The ongoing issue of dismissals based on terror links has sparked significant debate, with critics calling for more transparency and fairness in the process, particularly regarding the protection of employees' rights.



Fadnavis and Shinde Hold Separate Kumbh Mela Review Meetings in Nashik

TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

Two days after skipping a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis regarding the Kumbh Mela in 2027, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde visited Nashik on Friday to hold a separate review meeting for the event. His actions have sparked rumors about a potential rift within the ruling alliance, raising questions about the coordination between the Shiv Sena and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Shinde, however, quickly addressed the speculations, asserting that his decision to hold a separate review meeting was due to his visit to Nashik for a party rally. He emphasized that there was no conflict or tension between the alliance partners and sought to quell the rumors.

During his visit, Shinde also commented on the issue of the guardian minister's post for Nashik and Raigad districts, revealing that the matter would be resolved soon.

Punjab CM Criticizes Centre's Deportation Flights to Amritsar, Calls It a Conspiracy

TPN Correspondent | Punjab

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann has vehemently opposed the Centre's decision to land deportation flights carrying Indians back from the US at Amritsar airport, accusing the BJP-led Union government of orchestrating a conspiracy to tarnish Punjab's image.

Addressing the media, Mann strongly criticized the government's actions, claiming that despite Punjab's vital contributions to the country as the "food bowl" and "sword arm," the Cen-

tre is attempting to defame the state. He questioned the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for choosing Amritsar airport as the destination for deportation flights, given that several other airports across the country were available.

"I have already raised this issue with the MEA and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), but I haven't received a satisfactory response," Mann said. He highlighted that a deportation flight had landed a few days ago and expressed concerns over the arrival of two more flights carrying deported



individuals to Amritsar without clear justification.

Mann further accused the BJP of targeting Punjabis unfairly, stating, "The Prime Minister and his party dislike Punjabis, despite the fact that more than 90% of those martyred, jailed, or exiled during India's freedom struggle were from Punjab." He went on to suggest that the Centre's actions are part of a broader smear campaign against the people of Punjab, noting that the state has consistently been at the forefront of the nation's struggles and contributions.

PM Modi's Meeting with Trump Called a "Masterclass" by US Media

- US media calls Modi-Trump meeting a "masterclass."
- Modi secures key trade and defense deals.
- CNN praises Modi's negotiation skills.

TPN Correspondent | Washington

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States has drawn widespread praise from the American media, especially for the way he handled his meeting with US President Donald Trump. Journalists have described Modi's approach as a "masterclass" in diplomacy, setting an example for world leaders on how to navigate high-stakes negotiations.

PM Modi, one of the first world leaders to engage with Trump in a bilateral meeting, arrived in Washington on the



same day that Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on US allies and competitors, a move that had already caused tensions. Despite the timing, Modi was able to turn what could have been a difficult situation into an opportunity for strengthening bilateral ties. President Trump, who had pre-

viously criticized India for its tariffs, took a different tone during the meeting, calling Modi a "great leader" and expressing excitement about future trade deals between India and the United States. "We're going to make some wonderful trade deals for India and the US," Trump said. By the end of

their discussions, the two countries secured key agreements covering a wide range of areas, including trade, energy, defense, security, manufacturing, and technology. This outcome, despite the tariff tensions, was seen as a diplomatic win for Modi and a demonstration of effective leadership.

US and Ukraine Signal Urgency for Peace Deal Amid Ongoing War with Russia



TPN Correspondent | Ukraine

At the Munich Security Conference on February 14, US Vice President JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky emphasized the pressing need for a peace deal with Russia, as the war between Ukraine and Russia approaches its third year.

During a meeting at the conference, Vance reaffirmed Washington's commitment to securing a "lasting peace," stressing that the goal was to prevent future conflict in Eastern Europe. "We want to achieve a durable, lasting peace, not the kind of peace that's going to have Eastern Europe in conflict just a couple of years down the road," Vance stated as he wrapped up discussions with Zelensky.

Vance also indicated that more talks would follow in the coming weeks and months, focused on how peace could be reached. This comes as US President Donald Trump made headlines with his own announcement of plans for a truce with Russian President Vladimir Putin. While Trump's stance added uncertainty, Zelensky remained committed to seeking peace, expressing optimism that their meeting was "our first meeting, not last." Zelensky also emphasized the urgency of peace talks, stating, "We are ready to move as quickly as possible towards a real and guaranteed peace," and mentioned that a US envoy would visit Kyiv soon.

In an interview, Zelensky also underscored Ukraine's dependence on US support, stating, "We will have low, low chance to survive without support of the United States." Despite concerns about Trump's recent moves, Zelensky reassured that Trump had shared his personal number with him during past conversations.



Protests In New York As 'Transgender', 'Queer' Scrubbed From Rights Website

TPN Correspondent | New York

The National Park Service (NPS) has removed references to transgender and queer individuals from its website dedicated to the Stonewall National Monument, a key site in the LGBTQ rights movement. The monument, located at the historic Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, commemorates the 1969 Stonewall riots, which were pivotal in the fight for LGBTQ rights.

The website, which previously included the acronym "LGBTQ" (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer), now only uses "LGB," erasing mentions of transgender and non-binary individuals who do not identify strictly as male or female. This change has sparked protests in New York City, with hundreds of activists gathering to express their outrage. Slogans like "Silence = Death" and "There's no Stonewall without the T" were displayed during the demonstration, calling for the recognition of transgender people's vital contributions to the movement.

The controversy comes amid broader political shifts, as President Donald Trump has advocated for a return to a binary definition of gender. This stance has been reflected in various executive orders, such as one that restricts gender recognition to male and female, excluding non-binary and transgender individuals.



Donald Trump Fires 'Disease Detectives' As Bird Flu Fears Rise

TPN Correspondent | Washington

In a significant move that has raised concerns within the public health community, the Trump administration dismissed nearly half of the elite Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) program officers, widely known as "disease detectives." The decision, which affects about 30 officers from two graduating classes, comes at a time when fears of a potential bird flu pandemic are growing, as well as growing concerns over future health crises.

The cuts, as part of the broader downsizing efforts by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, are particularly controversial because the affected individuals had been integral to the CDC's ability to respond to outbreaks. The EIS program, established in 1951, has been a critical part of the CDC's efforts in investigating and containing health threats such as Ebola and Covid-19. Former officers, who have helped eliminate smallpox globally, have expressed deep concern over the cuts.

"I'm so angry," said a senior epidemiologist from the CDC, who supervises several of the dismissed employees. "We're on the verge of potentially another pandemic and we're firing the people who have probably more expertise than anyone else in the country collectively." The decision affects the class of 2024 and leaves the class of 2023 in uncertain status, though some officers remain protected due to their hiring through different mechanisms under the US Public Health Service.

With approximately 1,300 CDC employees dismissed in total, the EIS program's elimination is seen as a direct threat to national health security. Experts like infectious disease physician Amesh Adalja have voiced strong opposition to this move, emphasizing the program's importance to the nation's health infrastructure.



Yunus and Musk in talks for Starlink satellite service in Bangladesh

TPN Correspondent | Bangladesh

Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Professor Muhammad Yunus, revealed on Friday that he has held discussions with Tesla CEO Elon Musk about the possibility of launching Starlink satellite internet services in Bangladesh.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Yunus shared details of his meeting with Musk, stating, "Had great meeting with Mr @elonmusk. We agreed to work together. Hoping to launch Starlink in Bangladesh soon together with him."

The conversation took place following a video call on Thursday, where Yunus and Musk explored potential collaborations, specifically to introduce Starlink, a satellite internet service developed by Musk's company SpaceX. The service, which aims to provide high-speed internet access in underserved areas, could significantly improve connectivity in Bangladesh, where internet access remains a challenge in rural and remote areas.

Yunus also extended an invitation to Musk to visit Bangladesh for the potential launch of the service. Musk responded positively to the invitation, underscoring the importance of the initiative for Bangladesh's development.

The collaboration is expected to play a pivotal role in enhancing internet accessibility across Bangladesh, offering a solution to the country's digital infrastructure challenges. If successful, the Starlink service would help bridge the connectivity gap, providing high-speed internet to more people and businesses, contributing to the country's growth.

Hamas Releases 3 Israeli Hostages In Exchange For 369 Palestinian Prisoners

TPN Correspondent | Hamas

On Saturday, Hamas released three Israeli hostages—Israeli-Argentine Yair Horn, Israeli-American Sagui Dekel-Chen, and Israeli-Russian Sasha Troufanov—following successful mediation efforts by Egyptian and Qatari officials. The hostages had been seized by Hamas militants during an attack on October 7, 2023. The release, part of a broader prisoner swap agreement, saw 369 Palestinian prisoners freed in exchange for the Israeli captives. The hostages were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza's southern city of Khan Yunis before being transported to

Israeli forces. The Israeli military confirmed that the freed hostages have returned to Israel and are reportedly in good health. The hostages were seen holding gift bags and certificates marking the end of their captivity.

This release is part of ongoing efforts to maintain a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. However, tensions remain high in the region. The Israeli military has been accused of obstructing aid shipments to Gaza, worsening the already dire humanitarian crisis. Hamas has warned that it may suspend further hostage releases if Israel does not meet its aid obligations.



India's Merchandise Exports Projected to Reach \$446.5 Billion in FY25



India's total merchandise exports for the financial year 2024-25 are expected to reach \$446.5 billion, marking a 2.2% increase from the previous fiscal year, according to the Export-Import Bank of India. In the fourth quarter of FY25, goods exports are forecasted to hit \$124.8 billion, reflecting a 3.64% year-on-year growth. The positive growth trend is anticipated to continue into the first quarter of FY26, although challenges such as trade policy uncertainty and geopolitical tensions remain risks to the outlook.

The bank attributes the projected growth to several favorable factors. A strong agricultural harvest, recovery in manufacturing activity, and improving demand prospects from trading partners are expected to support the growth in India's exports. The government and industry stakeholders are optimistic that these factors will contribute to a resilient export performance despite the challenges posed by global economic uncertainties.

Non-oil exports are projected to reach \$382 billion for FY25, contributing significantly to the overall

export growth. Meanwhile, non-oil and non-gems and jewellery exports are expected to total \$350 billion, further highlighting the diversification of India's export base. The outlook reflects continued resilience in sectors like agriculture, textiles, and engineering goods, which have shown robust performance in recent quarters.

However, the Export-Import Bank of India also cautioned that factors such as geopolitical tensions, global trade disruptions, and policy shifts in major economies could impact export growth in the upcoming year. Despite these risks, the overall export trajectory remains positive, supported by strong fundamentals in key sectors.

As India continues to expand its presence in global markets, the focus on diversification and strengthening trade relations with partners will be crucial in sustaining export growth and mitigating external risks. The government and industry leaders are expected to continue efforts to boost competitiveness and navigate challenges in the global trade landscape.



India cuts customs duty on bourbon whiskey to 50%

India has reduced the import duty on bourbon whiskey to 50% in a move seen as a step toward strengthening trade relations with the United States. The decision, which was officially notified on February 13, comes just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level talks with US President Donald Trump.

This reduction in customs duty on bourbon whiskey is part of India's broader efforts to negotiate a significant trade deal with the US. The move is expected to benefit American distillers, particularly those producing bourbon whiskey, a product that has seen growing demand in India. In the 2023-24 financial year, India imported bourbon whiskey worth \$2.5 million, indicating a rising consumer preference for the popular American spirit.

The duty cut is seen as a gesture of goodwill in anticipation of ongoing trade discussions aimed at resolving trade imbalances and addressing various trade barriers between the two nations. India's decision to lower the tax

on imported bourbon aligns with its broader trade agenda to boost economic ties with the US, which is one of India's largest trading partners.

The move also comes at a time when India and the US are working towards improving their trade relationship, with both sides keen on addressing concerns related to tariffs, market access, and intellectual property rights. As both nations continue to explore opportunities for deeper economic cooperation, this reduction in import duty signals India's willingness to engage in meaningful trade discussions.

Experts believe that the duty reduction on bourbon whiskey will not only benefit American exporters but also provide Indian consumers with greater access to premium international products. The decision is expected to contribute to the growing demand for global beverages in India, a market that is increasingly becoming an important destination for foreign goods.

India's Forex Reserves Grow for Third Consecutive Week, Adding \$7.65 Billion



India's foreign exchange reserves have increased for the third consecutive week, following a period of nearly four months of decline. As of the week ending February 7, the reserves rose by \$7.65 billion, reaching a total of \$638.261 billion, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This marks a significant rebound after a prolonged downward trend that saw reserves drop in 15 of the previous 16 weeks, hitting an 11-month low.

The decline in India's forex reserves began after they peaked at an all-time high of \$704.89 billion in September. As of now, reserves are approximately 10% lower than their peak. The decrease in reserves is widely attributed to the RBI's interventions aimed at curbing a sharp depreciation of the Indian Rupee. The Rupee is currently near its historic low against the US dollar, prompting the central bank to take action to stabilize the currency.

The latest RBI data reveals that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), which make up the largest portion of the country's forex reserves, stand at \$544.106 billion. Additionally, gold reserves are valued at \$72.208 billion.

India's forex reserves are considered sufficient to cover approximately 11 months of projected imports. In 2023, India's foreign exchange reserves increased by around \$58 billion, a contrast to the \$71 billion decline in 2022. In 2024, reserves have grown by just over \$20 billion.

Foreign exchange reserves are crucial for a nation's economic stability, as they provide a buffer against external shocks, such as currency volatility or global market fluctuations. The RBI frequently manages liquidity by buying or selling foreign currencies, including dollars, to prevent excessive fluctuations in the exchange rate. The strategic purchase of dollars strengthens the Rupee, while selling dollars helps mitigate depreciation pressures.

Gold and Silver Prices Soar Amid Heavy Buying, Silver Hits Rs 1 Lakh Mark

Gold prices surged to a new all-time high of Rs 89,400 per 10 grams on Friday, witnessing a sharp increase of Rs 1,300, driven by heavy buying from jewellers and retailers. This rise follows a closing price of Rs 88,100 per 10 grams the previous day, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.5% purity also saw a similar climb, increasing by Rs 1,300 to hit Rs 89,000 per 10 grams, compared to its previous close of Rs 87,700 per 10 grams. The relentless demand from the retail sector, particularly due to festival-related purchases and a favorable sentiment in the global market, has contributed to this steep price hike.

In addition to gold, silver prices also witnessed a significant rally, rising by Rs 2,000 to touch Rs 1 lakh per kilogram. The metal had closed at Rs 98,000 per kilogram on Thursday. This sharp rise marks silver's highest price in four months, and it comes as



a result of a combination of factors including investor interest and heightened buying activity in the retail market.

Futures trading on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) also showed an upward trend for gold. Gold contracts for April delivery rose by Rs 184, bringing the price to Rs 85,993 per 10 grams, reflecting market optimism and expectations of continued demand. Experts believe that the upward momentum in gold and silver prices could persist due to factors such as geopolitical tensions, inflation fears, and a weaker dollar, all of which tend to drive investor interest toward safe-haven assets like precious metals.

As demand for both gold and silver remains high, particularly in the jewellery sector, consumers and investors are keeping a close watch on price fluctuations in the coming weeks.

FM Sitharaman Calls for SOP to Handle International Arbitration Cases

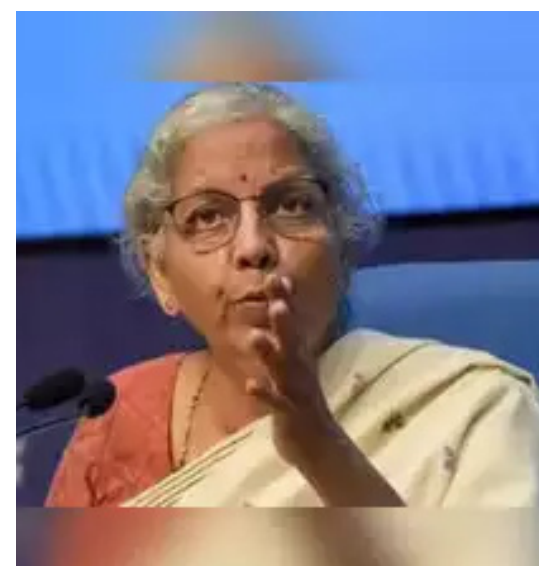
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday emphasized the need for a structured approach to handle international arbitration cases arising under bilateral investment treaties (BITs). She highlighted the absence of a formal standard operating procedure (SOP) in India for dealing with such cases and stressed the importance of establishing one at an early stage to effectively manage the growing number of disputes.

Sitharaman, addressing a gathering, pointed out that the increasing number of international arbitration cases related to BITs requires a more organized and timely response. At present, India lacks a well-defined official mechanism to handle these cases, which could lead to delays and inefficiencies in managing disputes between investors and the state. The need for an SOP has become more urgent as India continues to engage in BITs with multiple countries, facilitating foreign investment

but also increasing the possibility of legal disputes.

She suggested that having a well-organized SOP would help streamline the process of addressing arbitration cases, ensuring transparency and consistency in the handling of such matters. It would also contribute to building investor confidence in India's legal and regulatory framework, which is crucial for sustaining foreign investment and fostering economic growth. Sitharaman's call for a structured mechanism comes amid growing concern about the rise in disputes related to investment protection agreements. India has been involved in several international arbitration cases in recent years, and the lack of a clear process to handle such disputes has raised concerns among legal experts and foreign investors.

By implementing a standard procedure, the government could improve its responsiveness to international arbitration



claims, reduce legal risks, and provide more clarity to investors. Sitharaman's statement underscores the government's commitment to improving the investment climate in India by ensuring fair and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms.

Swiggy Breaks Valentine's Day Sales Records With 581 Chocolate Orders Per Minute

This Valentine's Day, Swiggy Instamart experienced a remarkable surge in orders as people flocked to the platform to celebrate love, despite rising costs. The platform recorded impressive sales, with chocolates and roses being the top choices for customers looking to express their affection.

Swiggy's co-founder Phani Kishan shared data revealing that during peak hours, the platform saw a staggering 581 orders of chocolates and 324 orders of roses per minute. He humorously compared the rush to a "bull run" in the stock market, emphasizing the overwhelming demand. This spike in orders mirrored the record-breaking sales witnessed by Swiggy Instamart during New Year's Eve, highlighting a consistent trend of high demand during significant celebrations.

Kishan further detailed the day's sales, sharing that in just 24 orders, 174 chocolates were delivered, amounting to Rs 29,844 in total. By 10:53 AM



on Valentine's Day, Swiggy Instamart had already delivered twice as many chocolates as it did on the same day last year. The platform also reported a five-fold increase in orders compared to a typical Friday. Sharing the data on X, Kishan wrote, "Someone in Delhi is taking 'Tohfa sabke liye' very, very seriously. Love (and chocolates) are in the air." The surge in orders was particularly noticeable in cities like Ludhiana, Rajkot, and Kanpur, which saw higher-than-usual demand, while Bhubaneswar and Mangaluru were among the busiest.

In addition to chocolates and roses, chips, soft drinks, and grapes were in high demand. In some locations, grapes ran out of stock due to the overwhelming orders. Interestingly, cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad also experienced heightened demand for items such as ice, reflecting a celebratory spirit across the country.

Valentine's Day proved to be a record-breaking day for Swiggy Instamart, with customers indulging in sweet surprises to make the occasion even more special.

NASA Shares Stunning Aerial View of Mount Everest from Space



Astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) have captured a breathtaking image of Mount Everest, providing a unique aerial view of the world's highest peak and its surrounding glaciers. Unlike the traditional ground-level perspective, this photo showcases the iconic mountain from orbit, blending seamlessly with the landscape around it.

NASA posted the image on its official website, offering a rare perspective of Everest, which rises to an elevation of 29,028 feet (8,848 meters). The view is strikingly different from what one might expect from the ground, where the mountain's sheer size dominates the horizon. From space, however, the

peak appears as part of a larger landscape, nestled near a V-shaped valley with multiple glaciers surrounding it. The photo, taken during the STS-80 mission on November 30, 1996, aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia, provides a fascinating aerial look at Everest and its glaciers. NASA's caption reads, "This view from the space shuttle Columbia shows Mount Everest, along with many glaciers. Mount Everest is to the left of the V-shaped valley." The image was part of the shuttle's final flight of the year, which also involved the deployment and retrieval of two research spacecraft.

Astronauts on the ISS regularly capture stunning images

of Earth, documenting some of the planet's most recognizable landmarks, including the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Egypt. These photographs not only offer a new perspective but also serve as invaluable tools for scientists to analyze natural landscapes from a fresh angle.

NASA continues to share these awe-inspiring views, showcasing the beauty of Earth from space. In addition, the agency is closely monitoring asteroid 2025 CR, which will pass Earth safely at a distance of 3.09 million miles. The asteroid, measuring 93 feet across, is being tracked by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Zepto Delivering Skoda Kylaq In 10 Minutes? Here's The Truth

A recent claim circulating on social media suggested that Zepto, the quick-commerce platform, had partnered with Skoda India to deliver cars to customers within 10 minutes. The post, shared by a user on X (formerly Twitter), read: "Big news! Skoda and Zepto are partnering to deliver cars in just 10 minutes." However, PTI Fact Check has debunked the claim, finding it to be false.

Zepto clarified that the campaign was not about delivering full-scale vehicles but was focused on generating interest in Skoda Kushaq test drives. The campaign, which launched in early February, was designed to create curiosity around Skoda's latest offerings, particularly the Kushaq, and was not related to any 10-minute car delivery service.

To investigate the claim, the PTI Fact Check Desk traced the viral image using Google Lens and found that several social media users had shared the same post, which led to confusion. A closer look at Zepto's official Instagram account revealed a post from February 4, which included a teaser about a collaboration with Skoda India.



The caption stated, "Humare pass mixer hai, phone hai, tablet hai, aur abb...Coming soon on 8th Feb!" This post was shared by both Zepto and Skoda India, teasing an upcoming announcement but not about car deliveries. Zepto's partnership with Skoda was aimed at promoting the test-driving experience, not facilitating quick car deliveries.

The post created curiosity, leading to a misunderstanding about the nature of the campaign.

Thus, the viral claim of Zepto offering 10-minute car deliveries is not true. Instead, the focus was on a promotional campaign designed to generate buzz around Skoda's test drives, not vehicle deliveries.

Is Gurugram Vendor Using Body Scrub Powder for Coffee? Viral Video Sparks Debate

A viral video showing a Gurugram street vendor seemingly using body scrub powder to make coffee has left social media users divided. The video, shared by content creator Himanshu Jatana, shows the vendor at a roadside juice stall, which also sells cold coffee. During his visit, Jatana noticed a jar labeled as body scrub but containing what appeared to be coffee powder.

The video has gained nearly 1.5 million views, with many users sharing their opinions in the comments. While some believed the vendor was merely using the body scrub container as a storage jar for coffee powder, others humorously joked about consuming body scrub. One user quipped, "Coffee is cheaper than that body scrub," while another added, "It's an inner gut scrub. Healthy and healing." However, some users attempted to explain the situation more logically, suggesting that the vendor was simply reusing the body scrub container, which likely held coffee powder. "The scrub from that brand is more expensive



than the coffee itself," one user explained, asserting that the vendor wouldn't use it for coffee due to the high cost and that the scrub likely only contained waste coffee. Despite the explanations, the incident has raised questions about hygiene and safety, with some commenters expressing concern over the potential risks of using a body scrub container for food items. "This

probably has silicon beads and harmful effects," one person cautioned.

The video has stirred both humor and skepticism, with viewers debating whether the vendor's actions were harmless or concerning. As the debate continues, the clip has sparked a larger conversation about food safety, hygiene, and the creative ways vendors store ingredients.

AI-Powered Virtual Boyfriends Make Entrepreneur Yao Runhao a Billionaire in China

In China, a dating simulation game called *Love and Deepspace* has taken the digital world by storm, revolutionizing the concept of romantic relationships. The game, which features AI-powered virtual boyfriends, has grown immensely popular, allowing users to interact with their ideal partners without the frustrations typically associated with real-life relationships.

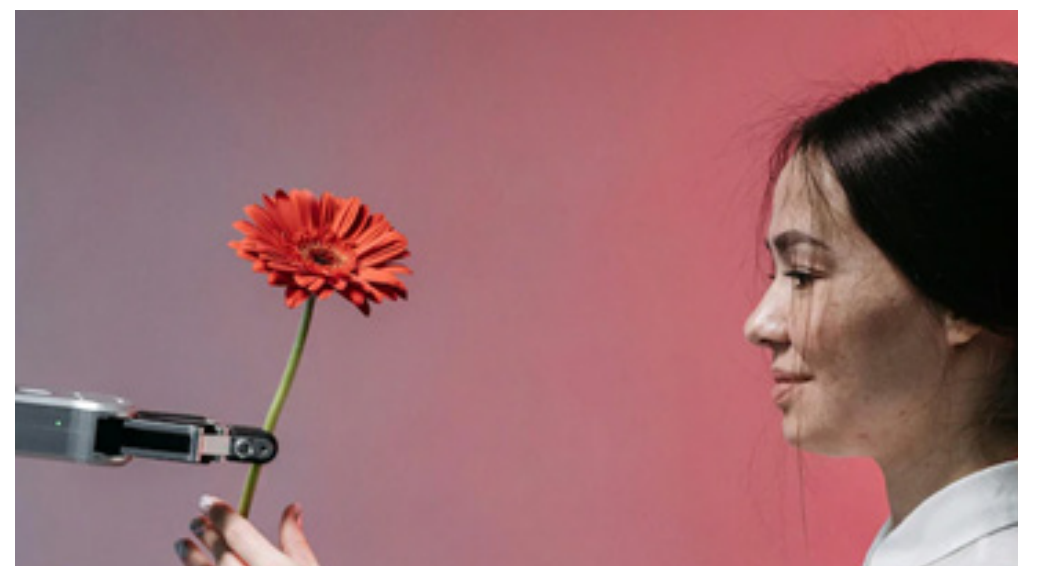
The game's success has turned its creator, Yao Runhao, into a billionaire. *Love and Deepspace*, launched in January 2024 by Paper Games, allows players to engage with AI-driven male characters who are designed to

be attentive, responsive, and supportive, providing the perfect solution to common relationship woes. Users, such as 32-year-old Alicia Wang, a Shanghai-based editor, have fallen for the game's virtual characters like Zayne, a 27-year-old surgeon, who always answers texts promptly, listens attentively, and maintains a calm demeanor. The catch? Zayne is entirely fictional, residing only in the digital realm.

The game's appeal lies in its ability to provide an idealized version of companionship, one that removes common relationship challenges such as delayed replies, missed calls, or

indifference. According to reports, there are now over six million active monthly players, with the game available in multiple languages, including Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean.

Yao Runhao, the mastermind behind this innovation, has seen his net worth soar to an estimated \$1.3 billion, primarily due to his majority stake in Paper Games. The success of *Love and Deepspace* highlights the growing demand for virtual relationships, driven by the convenience and perfection these AI boyfriends provide, without the complications of real-life human connections.



Gulveer Singh Breaks National 3000m Indoor Record, Aims for Worlds Qualification



Indian distance runner Gulveer Singh started 2025 with a bang, breaking the national 3000m indoor record at the 2025 BU David Hemery Valentine Invitational in Boston. The 26-year-old, who won bronze in the 10,000m at the Hangzhou Asian Games, clocked 7:38.26 seconds, surpassing Surender Singh's 2008 record of 7:49.47. Gulveer's impressive performance has boosted his confidence, and he is now targeting the automatic qualification mark of 27:00.00 in the men's 10,000m for the 2025 World Athletics Championships in Japan. He has also set national records in both the 5000m and 10,000m outdoor events. Gulveer is currently training in Colorado Springs under coach Scott Simmons as he prepares for future challenges.

SWOT Analysis: Australia and South Africa Favoured to Reach Semis in Group B



Australia and South Africa are the favourites to progress to the Champions Trophy semifinals from Group B, although they will face stiff competition from England and Afghanistan. Australia boasts a strong batting line-up with stars like Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell, but will miss key pacers like Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc. England's powerful batting squad, led by Jos Buttler

and Joe Root, faces challenges against spin. South Africa, with a balanced attack and a strong top order, aims to overcome past failures and add an ICC trophy to their collection. Afghanistan's experienced spinners and knowledge of subcontinent conditions could cause upsets, despite their lack of recent ODI match practice.

Gukesh Finishes Last at Freestyle Chess Grand Slam, Loses to Firouzja



World champion D Gukesh ended his campaign at the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam in disappointing fashion, finishing last after a loss to Iranian-French grandmaster Alireza Firouzja in the seventh-place playoff match. Despite a drawn battle on

the first day, Gukesh lost in just 30 moves after a mid-game mistake cost him his queen, allowing Firouzja to secure victory. Gukesh concluded the tournament in Weissenhaus without a single win. Vincent Keymer emerged as the surprise winner, defeat-

ing Fabiano Caruana. Magnus Carlsen took third place, while Hikaru Nakamura finished fifth. The event's success signals growing interest in Chess 960 and Freestyle Chess, despite FIDE's reluctance to endorse these formats.

Gujarat Stallions Defeat Hyderabad Falcons 84-73 in InBL Pro U25



The Gujarat Stallions delivered an impressive performance to defeat the Hyderabad Falcons

84-73 at the Thyagraj Indoor Stadium in the InBL Pro U25. From the outset, the Stallions asserted dominance, allowing the Falcons to lead for less than a minute. Trendon Hankerson led the charge with 21 points, while Jock Perry, named MVP of the game, posted a double-double with 17 points and 14 rebounds.

The Stallions established a 30-15 lead in the first quarter, with Perry's buzzer-beating three-pointer setting the tone. The Falcons responded in the second quarter, cutting the deficit to five, but Gujarat's offence led by Hankerson and Perry remained strong. In the third quarter, Perry's timely shots and Nate Roberts' alley-oop helped keep the Falcons at bay. Despite a late surge from Hyderabad, Gujarat held their ground with strong defence and rebounding, sealing the victory with crucial contributions from Hankerson and Roberts.

Punjab FC Concede Late Goal, Lose 1-2 to Chennaiyin FC in ISL



Punjab FC suffered a 1-2 defeat against Chennaiyin FC after conceding a late goal in an In-

dian Super League match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The match saw an early penalty for

Chennaiyin, with Wilmar Jordan Gil converting in the 25th minute. Punjab responded in the second half with Luka Majcen scoring the equalizer in the 48th minute. However, despite creating multiple chances, including three set up by substitute Muhammad Suhail, Punjab failed to capitalize. Chennaiyin struck in the 84th minute through Daniel Chima Chukwu, with a precise assist from Lukas Brambilla. Despite late pressure from Punjab, including two crucial saves by Chennaiyin goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz and a goal-line clearance, the visitors held on for the win. Punjab remains ninth on the table with 24 points from 20 matches, while Chennaiyin sits one place below with the same points from 21 matches.

India Triumph 3-2 Over England in FIH Women's Pro League Opener

The Indian women's hockey team kicked off their FIH Women's Pro League campaign with a thrilling 3-2 victory over England at Kalinga Stadium on Saturday. India took an early lead in the 6th minute through Vaishnavi Vitthal Phallke's deflection from a penalty corner. England equalized in the 12th minute when Darcy Bourne capitalized on a rebound. India regained the lead in the 25th minute, with Deepika converting a penalty corner on her 50th international appearance. The match saw intense action, with England mounting pressure in the final quarter. They equalized in the 58th minute through Fiona Crackles. However, India responded quickly, and in the 59th minute, Vice Captain Navneet Kaur netted the decisive winner. Two of India's goals came from penalty corners, reflecting an improvement in this area. The victory gave India a perfect start, earning them three crucial points.



Major League Cricket: Head, Miller, Cummins Not Retained Ahead of Season 3 Draft

Several star players have been released ahead of the Major League Cricket (MLC) season 3 draft, including Australia's Travis Head and Pat Cummins, and South Africa's Kagiso Rabada and David Miller, as reported by ESPNcricinfo. Defending champions Washington Freedom retained 15 players, the most by any team, but let go of Head, their joint-highest run-scorer last season with 336 runs. The team also released bowlers Ake-

al Hosein and Andrew Tye. San Francisco Unicorns kept key players like Finn Allen and Jake Fraser-McGurk but released Cummins, Matt Henry, and Josh Inglis. Other teams like Seattle Orcas, LA Knight Riders, MI New York, and Texas Super Kings also made significant changes, with notable players such as Quinton de Kock, Shakib Al Hasan, and Tim David not retained. The season 3 draft will take place on February 19.





Rajkummar Rao's Maalik Gangster Drama to Release on June 20, 2025



Rajkummar Rao's upcoming action-packed gangster drama *Maalik* is set to release in theatres on June 20, 2025. The official announcement was made by Tips Films on Instagram, promising an intense performance from Rajkummar as he portrays *Maalik*, a ruthless gangster. Directed by Pulkit, known for his work in thrillers and dramas, the film is currently in post-production. Rajkummar had earlier teased his look for the film on Instagram, sharing his excitement about the project. His last release, *Stree 2*, was a box office hit, and fans are eagerly anticipating *Maalik*.

'Thandell' Nears ₹100 Crore Mark with Massive Box Office Success



The film *Thandell*, starring Akkineni Naga Chaitanya and directed by Chandu Mondeti, is making waves at the box office. Released on February 7, the movie has garnered a lot of positive reviews and is steadily heading towards the ₹100 crore milestone. In just eight days, the film has already raked in ₹95.20 crore, with expectations that it will soon cross the ₹100 crore mark. Produced by big Tollywood produc-

er Allu Aravind and presented by Bunny Vas, the movie's music by Rockstar Devi Sri Prasad has been a huge hit, elevating the film further. The chemistry between Sai Pallavi and Chaitanya has resonated deeply with audiences, particularly in their roles as Bujjitalu and Raju. The emotional core of the film, especially in the Pakistan episode, has added depth to the narrative, making it a huge success.

Mega Hero Sai Dharam Tej to Play Guest Role in Vishwambhara



The highly anticipated film *Vishwambhara*, starring Megastar Chiranjeevi and directed by young filmmaker Vashisth, is creating a buzz with the latest update that another mega hero, Sai Dharam Tej, will appear in a guest role. The film, produced by UV Creations, is a socio-fantasy story, and Sai Dharam Tej will shoot for his part over three days. He began filming on the first day, marking his

contribution to the project. This film adds to the list of mega family members who have appeared in Chiranjeevi's films, including stars like Allu Arjun. While the shoot is almost complete, with just two songs and minor patchwork left, the film's significant CGI work may delay its release. The movie, initially slated for a May release, may now come out later.

John Abraham's The Diplomat Trailer: A Mission to Save "Bharat Ki Beti"

The trailer for John Abraham's upcoming film *The Diplomat* reveals him portraying the real-life Indian diplomat, JP Singh. The film centers on a high-stakes mission involving a woman, Uzma Ahmeed, seeking refuge at the Indian Embassy after a dangerous journey from Pakistan. As John's character investigates, tensions rise over her true identity and the humanitarian angle of her case. The trailer hints at suspense, twists, and emotional depth, with strong performances from John and Revathi. Directed by Shivam Nair, the film releases on March 7, 2025. John's last project was *Vedaa*.



Kangana Ranaut Opens Cafe in Himachal's Manali on Valentine's Day



Bollywood actress and Member of Parliament, Kangana Ranaut, has launched a café named 'The Mountain Story' in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, on Valentine's Day. Sharing the news on social media, Kangana described the café as the realization of a childhood dream. She expressed her gratitude to everyone who supported her in making this

dream a reality. The café, set amidst the serene beauty of the Himalayas, aims to offer a peaceful and unique experience for visitors. Fans and netizens congratulated Kangana, with many wishing her success. Kangana's tweet resonated with those who admired her journey from Bollywood to entrepreneurship in the tranquil hills of Him-

Rashmika Mandanna Resumes Shoot for Sikandar, Shares Excitement About Actor's Chaotic Life



Rashmika Mandanna has returned to the sets of her much-awaited film *Sikandar*, starring Salman Khan in the lead role. The actress took to her Instagram stories on Friday to share a glimpse of her night shoot, expressing her excitement about diving back into the "chaotic life of an actor." She shared a picture making a heart gesture for the camera, captioning it, "PS - *Sikandar* night shoot. I guess finally we are back to this chaotic life of an actor."

• *Sikandar**, directed by AR Muru-

gadoss, marks Salman Khan's return to the big screen after his appearance in *Tiger 3*. The film reunites him with producer Sajid Nadiadwala, following their successful collaboration on *Kick* (2014).

In addition to *Sikandar*, Rashmika's latest release, *Chhaava*, has been creating a buzz. The film, based on Shivaji Sawant's Marathi novel *Chhava*, sees her portraying Maharani Yesubai alongside Vicky Kaushal as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj.