

CM Siddaramaiah Urges Deve Gowda to Protect Karnataka's Irrigation Interests

Questions JD(S) stance amid pending projects, calls for non-partisan approach

CM Siddaramaiah criticizes JD(S) for acting as a spokesperson for the Central government.

Calls on former PM Deve Gowda to fight for Karnataka's irrigation interests beyond party politics.

Asks Gowda to push for approval of Mekedatu, Kalasa-Banduri, and Krishna-Bhadra projects.



TPN Correspondent /Karnataka, Feb 17
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday accused former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and his party JD(S) of prioritizing political gains over Karnataka's irrigation interests, even as he welcomed Gowda's recent statement about fighting against injustice to the state. Responding to Gowda's readiness to discuss irrigation issues with him and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah said people were questioning whether Gowda had to "compromise so much" just to secure a Union Minister position for his son, H D Kumaraswamy. "Recently, seven crore Kannadigas, including me, have observed that you and your party are behaving like the spokespersons of the Central government," Siddaramaiah stated. He reminded Gowda of their past cooperation on water disputes, particularly in 2016 when he personally sought Gowda's support to counter a Supreme Court order on Cauvery water release. Siddaramaiah urged Gowda to leverage his

position within the NDA to secure approvals for key irrigation projects pending with the Centre:

- **Mekedatu Project:** Aimed at providing drinking water to Bengaluru and generating 400 MW of electricity. Siddaramaiah emphasized that if Gowda ensured its approval, "the residents of Bengaluru will be forever indebted to you."

- **Kalasa-Banduri Project:** Designed to address drinking water shortages in North Karnataka. While its Detailed Project Report (DPR) was approved in March 2023, forest land acquisition remains stalled due to objections from Goa. Siddaramaiah stressed the need for the Centre's intervention.

- **Krishna-Bhadra Irrigation Project:** Gowda was asked to advocate for swift comple-

tion before initiating new projects. Siddaramaiah accused the Narendra Modi government of treating Karnataka unfairly in tax distribution, disaster relief, drinking water supply, and railway projects. "Kannadigas want to see the statesman Deve Gowda, who always stood for Karnataka's rights. But regrettably, on Sunday's Deve Gowda is behaving like a cheerleader for BJP and Narendra Modi," he remarked. He urged Gowda to go beyond party politics and reclaim his role as a statesman by fighting for Karnataka, Kannadigas, and Karnataka's interests. "Although you may look physically weak, you are mentally strong. Please come forward to protect Karnataka's rights. Our government fully supports your efforts," Siddaramaiah concluded.

Third Deportation Flight Brings More Indian Migrants Back Home



Concerns Raised Over Treatment of Deportees

A special flight carrying 112 deported Indian nationals landed in Amritsar.

Deportees allege shackling during transit, drawing criticism.

Indian government in talks with U.S. over humane treatment of returnees.

TPN Correspondent /New Delhi, Feb 17
A third deportation flight carrying 112 Indian migrants, including 31 Punjabis, arrived at Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport in Amritsar late Sunday night. This follows a series of deportations amid the U.S. administration's crackdown on illegal immigration. Official sources indicated that the flight landed around 11:30 p.m., marking another major repatriation within weeks. Immigration officials, Punjab Police personnel, and representatives from the Ministry of External Affairs were present to oversee the arrivals, while anxious relatives gathered at the airport to receive their loved ones.

Shackles and Controversy

Reports from deportees suggest that several among them were restrained during the flight. Daljit Singh, one of the deportees who arrived earlier, stated, "Our legs were chained, and our hands were also cuffed."

However, sources noted that women were not handcuffed this time. The shackling of deportees has sparked significant criticism in India. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar assured that the government was actively engaging with U.S. officials to ensure humane treatment for deported individuals, emphasizing that immigration laws must be upheld, but dignity must not be compromised.

Criminal Arrests Upon Arrival

In a separate development, two deportees from Rajpura, Patiala, identified as Sandeep Singh and Pradeep Singh, were arrested upon arrival in connection with a 2023 murder case. SSP Nanak Singh confirmed their involvement, stating that both individuals were wanted criminals who had attempted to flee abroad.

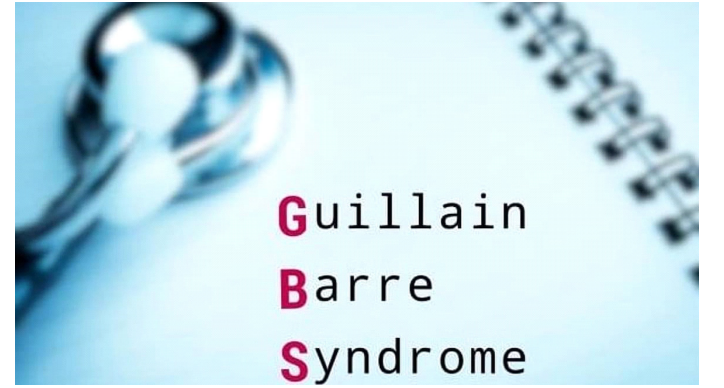
The Scale of Deportations and Future Concerns

The recent deportation is part of an ongoing process, with a previous U.S. military aircraft, the C-17 Globemaster III, repatriating 119 Indians on Saturday night, most of whom were from Punjab and Haryana. A February 5 deportation flight had earlier brought 104 Indians back home. The Indian government has confirmed that 487 more Indian nationals have been identified for deportation from the U.S. in the coming weeks, with numbers expected to rise further.

Bengaluru's White-Topping Roadworks Meet International Standards: DK Shivakumar

TPN Correspondent / Bengaluru, Feb 17

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday conducted an inspection of ongoing white-topping roadworks in the Yeshwantpur and Basavanagudi assembly constituencies. Holding a measuring tape, he assessed the quality and progress of the work, emphasizing that the roads were being constructed as per international standards. Bengaluru's civic body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), is currently white-topping 97 roads spanning 153 km at an estimated cost of ₹1,700 crore. "These roads will have provisions for ducts for power and telecommunication cables. We will not allow road cutting for utility repairs in the future," Shivakumar stated. BBMP has been given a deadline of 11 months to complete the first phase of the project, after which an additional 450 km of roads will be white-topped. "Once completed, Bengaluru will have 1,700 km of white-topped roads," he added. Shivakumar noted that stormwater drain work is also being undertaken in parallel, ensuring better coordination between various agencies. Responding to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's criticism of Bengaluru's tunnel road project as a "painfully expensive idea with little traffic benefit," Shivakumar countered: "If that is the case, why are they building tunnels in Maharashtra? What does the railway minister have to do with tunnel road projects in Bengaluru?" Regarding preparations for Bengaluru's summer water needs, Shivakumar expressed confidence that the Cauvery 5th Stage project would ensure adequate water supply in the coming months.



Karnataka Health Department Ramps Up Diarrhea Surveillance to Prevent GBS

WTPN Correspondent /Bengaluru, Feb 17

Following an Acute Diarrheal Disease (ADD) outbreak in two taluks of Uttara Kannada district, the Karnataka Health Department has ramped up its disease surveillance efforts to prevent a potential outbreak of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).

The move comes after 61 pilgrims, who recently returned from Pandharpur, Maharashtra, fell ill with severe diarrhea and vomiting due to contaminated water from an overhead tank in a community hall. Concerned over the possibility of bacterial infections leading to GBS, Principal Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department, Harsh Gupta, has instructed all district health officers (DHOs) and district disease surveillance officers (DSOs) to intensify ADD monitoring and track reported cases for at least two to four weeks. GBS, a rare autoimmune disorder, has been linked to certain bacterial infections such as Campylobacter jejuni, which can trigger the disease through a process known as molecular mimicry.

"Campylobacter contains ganglioside-like epitopes that stimulate auto-antibodies attacking the peripheral nervous system," explained Dr. Ansar Ahmed, Project Director of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme. He stressed the importance of ensuring access to clean drinking water to mitigate infection risks. Recently, Maharashtra reported 207 cases of GBS, resulting in eight fatalities. In response, Karnataka's health authorities have held multiple meetings to strategize preventive measures and have announced that Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG) therapy, a key treatment for GBS, will be made available free of cost to affected patients. Despite heightened surveillance, officials maintain that there has been no surge in GBS cases in the state. "On average, Karnataka has reported around 15 GBS cases per month over the last six months, which is consistent with previous years," said Gupta. He further clarified that all reported cases in the state were of the non-fulminating type, which progress slowly and are less aggressive. In contrast, the cases in Pune were fulminating, characterized by rapid deterioration and a high mortality rate. Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely to prevent any escalation of cases.

AICC Reshuffle Echoes Rahul Gandhi's 'Social Justice' Pitch

TPN Correspondent /New Delhi, Feb 17

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has undergone a significant reshuffle under the leadership of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, reflecting the party's emphasis on social justice and caste representation. The move aligns with senior leader Rahul Gandhi's ongoing campaign for greater participation and control of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and minorities in the country's power structures. Of the 11 new AICC functionaries appointed as general secretaries or in-charges of different states, the caste composition is as follows:

- Five from OBC communities
- One each from SC, ST, and Muslim communities
- Three upper-caste leaders

This restructuring reinforces the Congress party's stance on ensuring representation for historically marginalized communities while strengthening its state-level leadership. As Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi has been actively advocating for constitutional rights and social justice. He has been seen traveling across the country with a copy of the Constitution, emphasizing the need for:

- Not just representation, but control of institutions by the oppressed communities.
- Equitable distribution of resources to ensure power-sharing beyond tokenism.

The AICC reshuffle is seen as part of the Congress' broader strategy to counter the BJP's outreach to OBCs and Dalits ahead of upcoming state elections. By prioritizing OBC leaders in key organizational roles, the party aims to consolidate its support base among these electorally significant groups. With Kharge at the helm and Rahul Gandhi leading the ideological push, the Congress is reinforcing its commitment to caste representation as a core electoral and governance strategy.

Shivakumar Reaffirms Siddaramaiah's Leadership, Dismisses Speculation

Calls Siddaramaiah the "undisputed leader" of Congress in Karnataka

Asserts there is no confusion regarding leadership within the party

Dismisses reports of a power-sharing agreement

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 17 Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Congress President DK Shivakumar has strongly reaffirmed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's leadership, dismissing speculation about a potential change in government. His statement comes in response to a growing number of Congress leaders advocating for Siddaramaiah to complete a full term, arguing that his leadership is essential for the party's future electoral success.

Speaking to reporters, Shivakumar emphasized that Siddaramaiah remains the party's most senior leader in the state. "Siddaramaiah is our Chief Minister and our leader. We want him for all upcoming elections, including zilla panchayat, taluk panchayat, assembly, and parliament polls," he said.

He also urged party members to refrain from making statements that fuel unnecessary speculation. "The Congress party has twice made him Chief Minister. There is no need for anyone to misuse his name repeatedly. He is doing a decent job, and I do not want him to become fodder for media speculation," he asserted.



Shivakumar reassured that there is no internal confusion regarding leadership and that the Congress high command is fully aware of the situation. "The party is observing everything on a daily basis," he said, responding to questions about growing voices of support for Siddaramaiah within the party. Siddaramaiah, who was sworn in as CM for the second time in May 2023 following Congress' decisive victory in the Karnataka Assembly elections, had previously served as the state's Chief minister from 2013 to 2018. Despite Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's recent warning to party leaders to avoid unnecessary leadership discussions and

focus on governance, several ministers and MLAs have publicly backed Siddaramaiah to complete his full term.

After the Congress' 2023 election win, there was intense competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the Chief Ministerial post. Reports had suggested that a power-sharing deal was reached, under which Shivakumar would take over as CM after two-and-a-half years. However, the Congress leadership has never officially confirmed such an arrangement. With the party preparing for upcoming elections, Congress aims to project a united front while maintaining political stability in Karnataka.

Goa's Former Lawmaker Succumbs After Clash with Autorickshaw Driver in Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 17

Former Goa MLA Lavoo Suryaji Mamledar, who represented the Ponda constituency from 2012 to 2017, passed away in Karnataka's Belagavi on Saturday following a physical altercation with an autorickshaw driver. The 69-year-old collapsed at a hotel moments after being allegedly slapped by the driver. According to police, Mamledar was traveling to Belagavi and had booked a suite at a hotel in Khade Bazar. As his car navigated a narrow curve, it brushed against an autorickshaw, leading to an intense argument with the auto driver, Shakeel Sanadi. The driver allegedly demanded compensation for damages, which Mamledar refused before proceeding to his hotel. However, Sanadi followed him to the hotel and, as per eyewitnesses, slapped Mamledar in the parking area. Moments later, Mamledar collapsed while climbing the stairs to his suite and fell unconscious near the reception. He was immediately rushed to a government hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Belagavi DCP Rohan Jagadeesh confirmed the arrest of Shakeel Sanadi and stated that an investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of Mamledar's death. Authorities are also looking

into whether he had any underlying health conditions that may have contributed to the incident. Meanwhile, Mamledar's daughter, advocate Akshata Mamledar, arrived in Belagavi and filed a formal complaint at the Market Police Station regarding her father's death. Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant assured that the state government is coordinating with authorities in Belagavi for a thorough investigation. In a social media post, he expressed grief, stating, "Deeply anguished by the untimely and tragic passing of Former MLA Shri Lavoo Mamledar. His dedicated service to the state, both as an officer of the Goa Police and later as a legislator, will always be remembered." Goa DGP Alok Kumar also extended his condolences, saying, "The entire police force mourns the loss of our beloved colleague, who will always be remembered for his unwavering commitment, bravery, and selflessness." Mamledar had a distinguished career, having joined Goa Police as a sub-inspector in 1981 and retiring voluntarily as a deputy superintendent in 2007. In 2019, he had filed a police complaint alleging an attempt on his life after a car reportedly tried to hit him during a morning walk in Porvorim.

Bengaluru Police Arrest Serial Knife Attacker After Week-Long Manhunt

Kadamba S, 21, arrested in Hoskote after evading police for a week

Accused in five knife attacks on February 8-9; six prior cases of robbery and assault

Police dismiss rumours of a serial killer, confirm suspect acted alone



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, 17 After a week on the run, Bengaluru police have arrested 21-year-old Kadamba S, accused of a series of random knife attacks in the upscale Indiranagar locality. He was tracked down in Hoskote, about 60 km from the city, and taken into custody at Indiranagar police station. Kadamba, a known history-sheeter, had been involved in at least five random slashings on the night of February 8-9. His victims included two pani puri vendors, a security guard, a delivery

agent, and a 19-year-old youth who refused to give him a ride. The incidents, which occurred between 9:30 pm and 2:30 am, left the victims with injuries on their necks and hands. Kadamba has a criminal record dating back to 2022, with multiple cases of robbery and assault registered against him in Indiranagar and Ulsoor. According to police sources, his father was also a known offender, while his elder brother, Vishnu S, has had six cases of robbery and assault since 2018. Bengaluru Police Commissioner

B Dayanand described the February 8-9 attack spree as a case of an individual "going berserk" in a drunken state. "The accused picked a fight with a local, then went on to attack others randomly, causing bodily injuries with a sharp weapon," he said. The final attack of the night saw Kadamba rob a delivery agent of his scooter and mobile phone around 2:30 am before fleeing the scene. Five FIRs have been registered against him in connection with the attacks. The string of violent attacks sent shockwaves through Indiranagar, with social media groups spreading speculation about a serial killer. "The criminal stops people randomly, engages them in conversation, then slashes or stabs them when they are vulnerable," read one such message. However, police have clarified that Kadamba acted alone and dismissed the serial killer theories. "He is a known mobile phone thief and a habitual offender," said D Devaraj, DCP (Bengaluru East Division). With Kadamba's arrest, Bengaluru police have reassured residents of Indiranagar that the situation is under control.

Injured In Crash, Karnataka Man Given Stitches Under Mobile Flashlight at Hospital

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, 17

In a shocking incident at a government hospital in Ballari, Karnataka, doctors were forced to perform emergency medical procedures using mobile phone flashlights after a sudden power outage left the emergency ward in darkness. The incident, which occurred on February 13, has sparked widespread concern after a video of the event went viral on social media. The patient, who had suffered minor injuries in a road accident, was rushed to the hospital's emergency ward for treatment. However, as the medical staff began administering stitches, a power cut disrupted the procedure. With no immediate backup power available, the doctors had to rely on mobile flashlights to complete the treatment. The blackout lasted for approximately 15 minutes, affecting critical emergency services at the hospital. The lack of an immediate power restoration system led to difficulties in providing uninter-

rupted medical care. Hospital Medical Superintendent Shiva Nayak confirmed the incident, explaining that persistent power fluctuations had been affecting the facility throughout the evening. "On February 13, there were a lot of power fluctuations in the evening, and the automatic power restore system was not functioning properly. It took five minutes to repair, and this video was recorded during that time. The video footage shows medical staff, including doctors and nurses, attending to patients under the dim glow of mobile flashlights. Other patients can also be seen in the emergency ward, awaiting medical attention amid the power disruption. The incident has raised questions about the preparedness of government hospitals in handling emergencies, especially when faced with power failures. Critics have pointed out the need for improved infrastructure and reliable backup systems to prevent such occurrences in the future.

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Third Deportation Flight Brings More Indian Migrants Back Home

Illegal Immigration and the 'Donkey Route' Many deported migrants had attempted to enter the U.S. via dangerous and illegal pathways, commonly known as the 'donkey route'. This human trafficking network involves migrants crossing multiple countries, including perilous border crossings in Latin America.

Factors driving illegal migration include:

- High unemployment and economic hardship in India, especially in Punjab and Haryana.
- Declining job prospects and agrarian distress, forcing many to seek opportunities abroad.
- The lure of stable employment and remittances, leading families to pay Rs 30-40 lakh to human traffickers.

However, these journeys often end in detention, harsh conditions, and eventual deportation, as seen with the recent U.S. crackdown on undocumented immigrants. Political Implications The mass deportations have triggered political debate in India. Opposition parties have accused the government of failing to arrange dignified returns for deportees and criticized the use of U.S. military planes for repatriation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during a joint press conference with Donald Trump in Washington, reaffirmed India's stance on illegal immigration, stating: "We have always maintained that those who enter and live in another country illegally have no legal right to stay."



Rajanna Seeks Clarity on Shivakumar's Role as Karnataka Congress Chief

Rajanna meets Kharge, Venugopal to discuss Shivakumar's future

Suggests appointing a leader from the weaker sections as state president

Expresses willingness to step down as minister if required

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 17 Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna, a close confidant of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, has urged the Congress high command to clarify whether Deputy CM DK Shivakumar will continue as the party's state president. During his visit to New Delhi, Rajanna met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal to discuss the matter. "The party had earlier decided that Shivakumar would remain state president until the Lok Sabha elections. Now that the elections are over, I have asked for clarity on his continuation," Rajanna told reporters. He emphasized that he had no objection if the high command chose to retain Shivakumar but urged them to dispel uncertainty among party workers. Rajanna also proposed that a leader from a weaker section be considered for the post, arguing that such a move would help strengthen Congress' base in Karnataka. Expressing confidence that a new appointment would be made soon, he said, "If the high command asks, I am ready to take up the responsibility and resign as minister under the 'one man, one post' rule." Reiterating his support for Siddaramaiah, Rajanna dismissed any possibility of a leadership change without consulting MLAs. "The party high command will not make a hasty decision on replacing the CM," he asserted. Rajanna also revealed plans for a massive convention to unite weaker sections under the Congress banner. While details regarding the venue and date remain undecided, he confirmed that top central leaders would be invited. When asked if he consulted Shivakumar about the rally, Rajanna replied, "I have informed Kharge. I am confident Shivakumar will attend." Additionally, Rajanna requested the CM to relieve him of his Hassan district in-charge minister role so he could focus on upcoming local body elections in his constituency.

Karnataka HC Permits Tree Removal for Command Hospital & Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 17

The Karnataka High Court has permitted the translocation of eight trees and the removal of 533 trees for the expansion of Command Hospital in Halasuru, with the hospital committing to plant 5,380 saplings as compensatory afforestation. The hospital's project involves constructing a modern, multi-storied 800-bed facility, replacing an old and unsafe structure. The court has mandated compliance with the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act and the conditions set by the Tree Officer. Additionally, the court has granted permission to the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Limited to cut 1,988 trees for Corridor 4 of the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project. The agency must plant 10 saplings for every tree removed or translocated, with afforestation efforts planned at various lake areas, including Harohalli, Vaderahalli, Ramagondanahalli, and



Byrohalli. The Karnataka High Court has permitted the translocation of eight trees and the removal of 533 trees for the expansion of Command Hospital in Halasuru, subject to compensatory afforestation of 5,380 new trees. A division bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Anjaria passed the order while vacating an earlier interim stay on tree removal. The Command Hospital had sought clearance to proceed with its infrastructure project, which includes constructing an 800-bed modern hospital complex at its existing location.

The Union government approved the project on July 12, 2024, with an estimated cost of ₹771.63 crore. The hospital building, currently in a dilapidated and structurally unsafe condition, will be demolished as part of the redevelopment. As part of its environmental responsibility, the hospital informed the court that it had already undertaken compensatory afforestation by planting 5,380 saplings at Air Force Station, Yelahanka, and Air Force Technical College, Jalahalli—both within BBMP limits. The court directed that tree felling be conducted in

compliance with the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, adhering to conditions set by the Tree Officer in a December 26, 2024, memorandum and previous court orders.

In a separate application, the High Court granted permission to Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Limited (K-RIDE) to cut 1,988 trees for Corridor 4 of the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project. The agency must plant ten healthy saplings for each tree removed, totaling 2,805 trees, which includes 2,277 felled and relocated trees and 528 trees previously removed without permission. The translocated trees will be planted around vacant spaces near Harohalli, Vaderahalli, Ramagondanahalli, and Byrohalli lakes to ensure ecological balance.

The High Court's order allows these critical infrastructure projects to move forward while ensuring environmental mitigation measures are in place.

Bengaluru St John's Medical College Hospital Inaugurates Geriatric Centre A Ray of Hope



-New Facility to Enhance Elderly and Palliative Care Services
-Focus on Chronic Care, Training, Community Engagement, and Research

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 17

Bengaluru's St John's Medical College Hospital has launched its geriatric centre, 'A Ray of Hope', to improve healthcare services for the elderly and palliative care patients. The newly inaugurated facility, situated on the hospital's Koramangala campus, is designed to offer chronic care, palliative services, medical training, community outreach programs, and research on aging and geriatrics. The centre was inaugurated on Friday by Karnataka Transport and Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy. The event was attended by Most Rev Victor Henry Thakur, Archbishop of Raipur and Chairman of the St John's Governing Board, and Rev Mar Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop of Thrissur and President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, as guests of honor.

According to a statement by St John's Medical College Hospital, the centre will provide various levels of care, including daycare, short-term, transitional, intermediate, long-term, and hospice care. Patients will have access to general wards, semi-private, and private rooms, ensuring a range of options similar to the hospital's existing facilities. Additionally, plans are underway to establish a telemedicine facility to extend geriatric care services to remote areas. The hospital emphasized that the seven-story standalone centre was developed on land al-

located by the institution and funded through donations. The initiative aims to offer a comprehensive approach to elderly care, integrating medical treatment, caregiver education, and policy-driven research.

With India's elderly population projected to constitute 20% of the total population by 2050, the need for specialized geriatric care is growing. Since 2003-04, St John's Medical College Hospital has been actively providing elderly healthcare services across urban and rural Bengaluru through its Senior Citizen Health Service, community clinics, old-age home support, home healthcare, and caregiver training.

The new centre will also introduce specialized training programs for medical professionals, home nursing aides, and caregivers. Community engagement initiatives will focus on promoting physical activity, mental well-being, and eldercare awareness. Research on aging and geriatrics will be a key component, with the hospital aiming to contribute insights that could help shape elderly care policies in India.

St John's clarified that 'A Ray of Hope' is a healthcare facility and not an old-age home. It is intended for temporary medical care rather than long-term stays. The hospital anticipates that the centre will be fully operational once all necessary infrastructure and resources are in place.

FIR Filed Against Protesters Opposing Metro Fare Hike in Bengaluru



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 17

Bengaluru police have registered an FIR against 16 individuals who participated in a protest against Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) and the state government over the recent hike in Namma Metro fares. The Cottonpet police took Suo motu action against the protesters, citing an unauthorized gathering in front of Kempegowda Metro Station on Friday afternoon. The protest was triggered by BMRCL's decision to revise metro fares for the first time since 2017. The newly implemented fare structure introduced an increase of ₹5 to ₹10 across various distance slabs, drawing strong criticism from daily commuters. Many have raised concerns over the additional financial burden, arguing that the increased fares make public transport less affordable, particularly for students and low-in-

come workers who rely on the metro for their daily commute. According to the complaint filed by Assistant Sub-Inspector Rangappa D, he and a colleague were patrolling Gubbi Thotadappa Road around noon when they noticed members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) demonstrating outside the metro station. The protesters raised slogans against BMRCL and the state government, demanding an immediate rollback of the revised fare structure. Authorities informed the protesters about the Karnataka High Court's March 3, 2022, order, which mandates that all demonstrations and processions be conducted only at Freedom Park. However, despite repeated warnings, the activists allegedly continued their protest in front of the metro station. Upon receiving an alert, senior police officials deployed additional forces from Cottonpet and Upparpet police

- Protest outside Kempegowda Metro Station violated Karnataka High Court's demonstration restrictions.
- Police registered a Suo motu case against 16 individuals for unlawful assembly.
- Public outcry continues over the metro fare hike, with demands for reconsideration.

stations. The protesters were subsequently detained and taken to the CAR headquarters, where their details were recorded before further legal proceedings. The FIR has been filed under multiple provisions of the Karnataka Police Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 189 (unlawful assembly), Section 190 (accountability for collective offenses), and Section 223 (disobedience of public orders). The metro fare hike has sparked a widespread debate across the city, with commuters and activists urging the government to reconsider the increase. Many argue that the revision disproportionately affects daily travelers, making public transport less accessible. Several organizations have also called for discussions with authorities to explore alternative solutions, such as subsidies or fare concessions for frequent travelers.

Farmer Leader Kuruburu Shanthakumar Airlifted to Bengaluru for Treatment



• CM Siddaramaiah Ensures Emergency Medical Transfer
• Shanthakumar Admitted to Manipal Hospital for Further Care

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 17

Farmer leader Kuruburu Shanthakumar, who was seriously injured in a road accident near Patiala, Punjab, has been airlifted to Bengaluru for advanced medical treatment. Acting on the instructions of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Shanthakumar was brought from Patiala via air ambulance and admitted to Manipal Hospital on Sunday. The Chief Minister has extended his wishes for Shanthakumar's speedy recovery. The accident occurred three days ago, leaving Shanthakumar in critical condition. He was initially undergoing treatment at a hospital in Patiala when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah learned about the incident. He promptly directed officials to arrange for an emergency medical transfer to Bengaluru. Following this, Delhi Resident Commis-

sioner Inkongla Jamir maintained constant communication with the Chief Secretary of the Punjab Government and the medical team attending to Shanthakumar in Patiala. Coordination efforts were expedited, and an air ambulance was arranged on Saturday to facilitate his transfer. Shanthakumar was flown to Bengaluru on Sunday, accompanied by two assistants and a team of doctors. Upon arrival, he was immediately admitted to Manipal Hospital, where he is receiving specialized medical care.

The state government has assured that all necessary medical assistance will be provided for his recovery. Speaking on the matter, CM Siddaramaiah emphasized that his administration took swift action to ensure Shanthakumar received the best possible treatment. He reiterated the government's commitment

to supporting farmers and their leaders in times of crisis. The incident has drawn concern from the farming community, with many extending their prayers for Shanthakumar's well-being. Doctors at Manipal Hospital are closely monitoring his condition, and further updates on his health are awaited. Meanwhile, officials have stated that every effort is being made to ensure he receives the best medical attention. This development highlights the Karnataka government's proactive response in handling emergencies involving key figures in the state. The state administration's quick coordination with Punjab authorities and medical teams played a crucial role in facilitating Shanthakumar's transfer. As the farmer leader continues his treatment in Bengaluru, supporters remain hopeful for his swift recovery.

JD(S) Plans Massive Convention Amid Political Realignment

TPN Correspondent |
Karnataka, Feb 17

JD(S) national president H.D. Deve Gowda announced that the party is planning to hold a massive convention in May, similar to the one organized by Congress in Hassan. The event aims to strengthen the party's position in Karnataka and outline future political strategies. The convention is expected to bring together key leaders, party workers, and supporters to discuss the party's vision and roadmap for upcoming elections.

A preliminary meeting, to be chaired by Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, will take place in Bengaluru on March 6 to discuss the modalities of the convention. "We have not yet decided where to organize the convention. Some are suggesting it should be held in Mandya, Mysuru, or Tumakuru," Deve Gowda stated.

The party is carefully evaluating these options, as these regions hold significant political relevance for JD(S) and have historically been strongholds of the party. Sources indicate that the convention is likely to mark a significant internal development, with the expected announcement of Youth JD(S) head Nikhil Kumaraswamy as the state unit president.

"Preparations for internal elections at taluk and district levels to elect office-bearers are ongoing. After that, the party president will be elected. Nikhil Kumaraswamy is likely to be named as the state unit president, and an of-



ficial announcement will be made at the convention," a senior JD(S) leader confirmed.

This convention is being seen as a key move by JD(S) to solidify its organizational structure and energize its cadre ahead of upcoming electoral battles. With the Congress and BJP actively engaging in political maneuvers, JD(S) is looking to re-establish its influence and regain lost ground in Karnataka politics.

Political analysts believe that the elevation of Nikhil Kumaraswamy could signal a generational shift in JD(S), ensuring continuity in leadership while also appealing to younger voters. As JD(S) prepares for this crucial gathering, the party leadership is expected to focus on key issues such as rural development, farmer welfare, and regional representation, which have been central to its political agenda. The convention will likely set the stage for JD(S)'s next phase of political engagement in Karnataka's evolving political landscape.

Siddaramaiah a 'Vote-Catcher,' say Supporters Amid Leadership Talk



TPN Correspondent |
Karnataka, Feb 17

Supporters of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have reiterated his significance to the Congress, asserting that he is essential for the party's success in the next election. This comes despite Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's warning against public discussions on leadership matters.

Senior Congress leaders openly backed Siddaramaiah, arguing that his popularity and leadership were crucial for the party. "It is everybody's opinion that Siddaramaiah should continue as CM and lead Congress into the next election. He is a vote-catcher," said Basavaraj

Rayareddi, the CM's economic adviser.

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi insisted that the party needed Siddaramaiah until new leadership was ready. Social Welfare Minister Dr. HC Mahadevappa described him as a "mass leader," questioning why any party would sideline such a figure. Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna compared Siddaramaiah's role in Congress to that of BS Yediyurappa in the BJP and HD Deve Gowda in JD(S). "Every party has its key figures. Congress' strength is Siddaramaiah and his leadership," Rajanna stated. Despite growing support for Siddaramaiah, Karnataka Congress working

- Ministers and lawmakers highlight his leadership and mass appeal
- Calls for him to lead the party in the next election grow louder
- Congress high command warns against public statements on leadership

President GC Chandrashekhara disapproved of leaders making public statements. He reminded them about the fate of the 'G-23' leaders who had questioned the party's decisions.

"There is a stable CM and a strong KPCC president. Both Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar are indispensable. But making public statements won't change anything," Chandrashekhara said, emphasizing that the party's high command remained strong.

With internal discussions continuing, Congress faces the challenge of managing leadership ambitions while maintaining party unity ahead of the next election.

BJP Slams Karnataka Govt's Decision to Shut Down Public Universities

- BJP criticizes Congress-led government for shutting down universities
- Claims decision will force students to pursue education in other states
- Warns of statewide protests if closures proceed

TPN Correspondent |
Karnataka, Feb 17

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has strongly criticized the Karnataka government's decision to shut down public universities, branding it 'University Closure Bhagya' in a jibe at the Congress party's flagship welfare schemes. Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, R Ashoka, lashed out at the government, alleging that it prioritized

other establishments over education. "This government will not close down bars, but universities," he remarked. Ashoka warned that the move would drive students to pursue higher education in other states, adding that the Congress government had already halted schemes like 'Kisan Samman' and 'Vidyanidhi'.

He further alleged that the shutdown was a deliberate strategy to curb graduates and eventually discontinue the 'Yuva Nidhi' scheme.

Raising concerns over the budgetary decisions, Ashoka questioned Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, stating, "When the CM presented a Rs 4 lakh crore budget, was an allocation of Rs 342 crore not made towards the development of universities?" Former Higher Education Minister Dr. C. N. Ashwath Narayan echoed Ashoka's sentiments, criticizing the Congress government for not

strengthening educational institutions. "When BJP established new universities, we did not create new posts but allowed officers to be shuffled between institutions," he explained. Narayan emphasized that BJP's university expansion plans had factored in financial feasibility, including seeking assistance from the central government.

He demanded that Congress release a white paper explaining the rationale behind the closures. Issuing a stern warning, Narayan said that BJP would launch statewide protests if the government proceeded with its plan to shut down universities. He alleged that the Congress government's move was politically motivated, targeting institutions established during the BJP's tenure. With the controversy escalating, political observers anticipate a heated debate over the fate of Karnataka's public universities.

Political Tensions Rise in Karnataka Over Leadership and Power Struggle

TPN Correspondent |
Karnataka, Feb 17

The ongoing political power struggle in Karnataka has intensified as Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar hit back at statements made by ministers close to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The issue has created ripples in the state Congress, especially in the race for the Chief Minister and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) positions.

Speaking in Bengaluru, D.K. Shivakumar reaffirmed Siddaramaiah's leadership but also sent a subtle message about the current political scenario. "Siddaramaiah is our leader. We need him for all elections, be it Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, Assembly, or Parliament. He is the leader of the Congress. The party has made him Chief Minister twice.

There is no need to misuse his name every morning," he stated. The statement comes in response to remarks made by Minister Satish Jarkiholi, who had earlier asserted that Siddaramaiah should remain as the full-time Chief Minister, further escalating tensions.

Several other ministers in Siddaramaiah's inner circle, including Dr. G. Parameshwar, K.N. Rajanna, H.C. Mahadevappa, and Jarkiholi, have been vocal in their support for Siddaramaiah's continued tenure.

Shivakumar's response is being seen as an attempt to counter those pushing for Siddaramaiah's complete authority while also preventing a rift within the Congress party.

Observers suggest that Shivakumar strategically avoided any statements that could be used against him by political opponents,



ensuring he remains a key contender in Karnataka's leadership discussions.

Adding to the intrigue, senior Congress leader B.K. Hariprasad has hinted at the role of the party high command in determining the leadership dynamics. "All decisions and ambitions lie with the high command," he remarked, signaling that future developments depend on Congress's central leadership. Meanwhile, in a show of strength, D.K. Shivakumar organized a party-joining event where former MP L.R. Shivaramgowda, his son Manjegovda, Brijesh Kalappa, and L.S. Chethan Gowda officially joined the Congress.

This move is being seen as a step toward solidifying Shivakumar's influence within the party.

Adding to the political fervor, slogans of "D.K. Shivakumar as the next Chief Minister" echoed in Bengaluru as Shivakumar made city rounds, inspecting roadworks.

His supporters, emboldened by his growing influence, have started rallying behind him as a potential future CM. With these latest developments, the Karnataka Congress finds itself in a delicate balancing act between Siddaramaiah's existing leadership and Shivakumar's rising influence.

How the party high command navigates this internal competition will shape the future of Karnataka politics.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah Criticizes Central Government Over Irrigation Projects

TPN Correspondent |
Karnataka, Feb 17

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has responded to former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's statement urging a non-partisan approach to the state's irrigation issues. In a media release, Siddaramaiah emphasized the continued neglect by the central government in addressing Karnataka's water disputes and called for Deve Gowda to advocate for the state's interests.

"This is my personal opinion, and I would like to remind elder Deve Gowda that I have always acted as a Kannadiga first, not just as a politician, on issues of land, water, and language. I hope you recall how, during the Cauvery crisis in September 2016, I sought your guidance and led you to an all-party meeting," said Siddaramaiah. He criticized Deve Gowda and his party for allegedly acting in favour of the central government, questioning whether such compromises were necessary to secure a ministerial position for his son. Siddaramaiah also accused the BJP-led central government of sacrificing Karnataka's interests in irrigation matters. The Kalasa Nale project in the Mahadayi basin, costing Rs. 995.30 crore was approved in March 2023. However, the process of acquiring 26,925 hectares of forest land required for this project has been stalled due to objections from the state of Goa. The matter is currently under review by the National Board for Wildlife (NBW) and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). Siddaramaiah urged the central government to expedite approvals following the Supreme Court's clarification that the state government can seek approval from the Centre for this project. Regarding the Krishna Water Dispute, the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal awarded Karnataka 173 TMC of water in

2010. The third phase of the Krishna Upper River Project, which will irrigate seven districts in North Karnataka, is ready for implementation at a cost of Rs. 51,148 crores. However, the central government has refused to publish the tribunal's verdict in the Gazette, citing objections from respondent states pending in the Supreme Court. Siddaramaiah stressed the need for early implementation and for the project to be declared a national project. The Bhadra Upper River Project, if declared a national project, will benefit drought-prone areas in Chikkamagaluru, Chitradurga, Tumkur, and Davangere. The Public Investment Committee has already approved the proposal, but the central government is yet to act on it. Similarly, the Mekedatu project, designed to supply drinking water to Bengaluru and generate 400 MW of electricity, is awaiting the Centre's approval. Siddaramaiah urged that its implementation would be a significant benefit to Bengaluru residents. Siddaramaiah assured support for Deve Gowda's proposal to link the Krishna and Cauvery rivers but emphasized prioritizing the completion of pending irrigation projects first. He also criticized the central government for its alleged discrimination against Karnataka in tax distribution, disaster relief, drinking water, and railway projects. He reminded Deve Gowda of his past advocacy for Karnataka's interests and urged him to return to that role. However, he lamented that the current Deve Gowda and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were acting as "cheerleaders" rather than protectors of Karnataka's interests. Siddaramaiah's remarks reflect growing tensions between Karnataka's leadership and the central government, highlighting the state's ongoing struggles for fair treatment in irrigation and infrastructure development.

Saraswati Iyer Travels Across India Without Spending a Single Rupee

BENGALURU: Saraswati Iyer, a solo traveler from Madurai, Tamil Nadu, has taken the internet by storm with her inspiring journey across India without spending a single rupee. The 35-year-old has shared her incredible travel experience on social media, encouraging others to pursue their travel dreams regardless of financial constraints. Saraswati, who previously worked at a policy bazaar, decided to quit her job two years ago and embarked on a journey with just two sarees, a small tent, a power bank, and no money. She traveled on foot to various remote places, often relying on food and accommodation provided by strangers she met along the way. Her journey has been documented through her Instagram and YouTube channels, where she shares her experiences under the names "Safe Ladki" and "Travel with Iyer." Saraswati explained how she utilized religious places and ashrams to find shelter and food during her travels. She believes that a solo travel journey does not require luxury or excessive finances, but rather the courage to start. Her inspiring videos have motivated many women to explore the world beyond their daily responsibilities and routines. While initially traveling on a zero-budget, Saraswati's travel vlogs have now garnered attention, with several trav-



el companies sponsoring her journeys. She provides valuable tips on how to travel on a budget, sharing how she has managed to get free food and accommodation during her trips. Saraswati's journey proves that with

careful planning and a brave heart, anyone can explore the world without spending money and without luxury. Her story is a testament to the power of determination and the spirit of adventure.

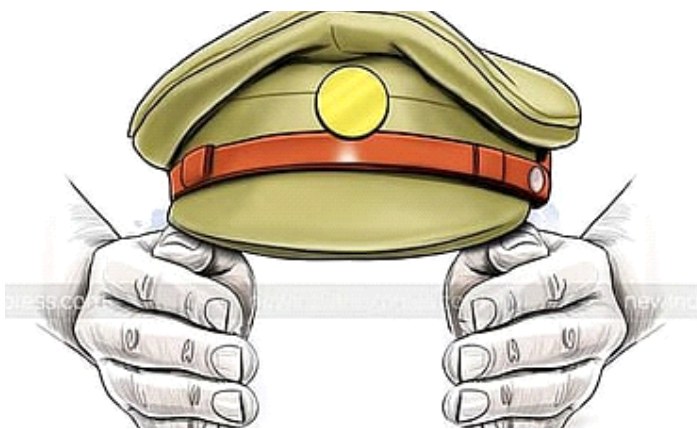
Lost After Olympic Defeat, Lovlina Borgohain Finds True Meaning of Success After Meeting Guru Ravi Shankar



After her disappointing loss at the 2024 Olympics, Lovlina Borgohain, the Olympic champion, shared an emotional moment when she spoke about finding the true meaning of success. She revealed how her meeting with Guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar had a profound impact on her, offering clarity and peace. Lovlina, who had been struggling to come to terms with her defeat, opened up during the 10th International Women's Conference, where she reflected on her journey toward

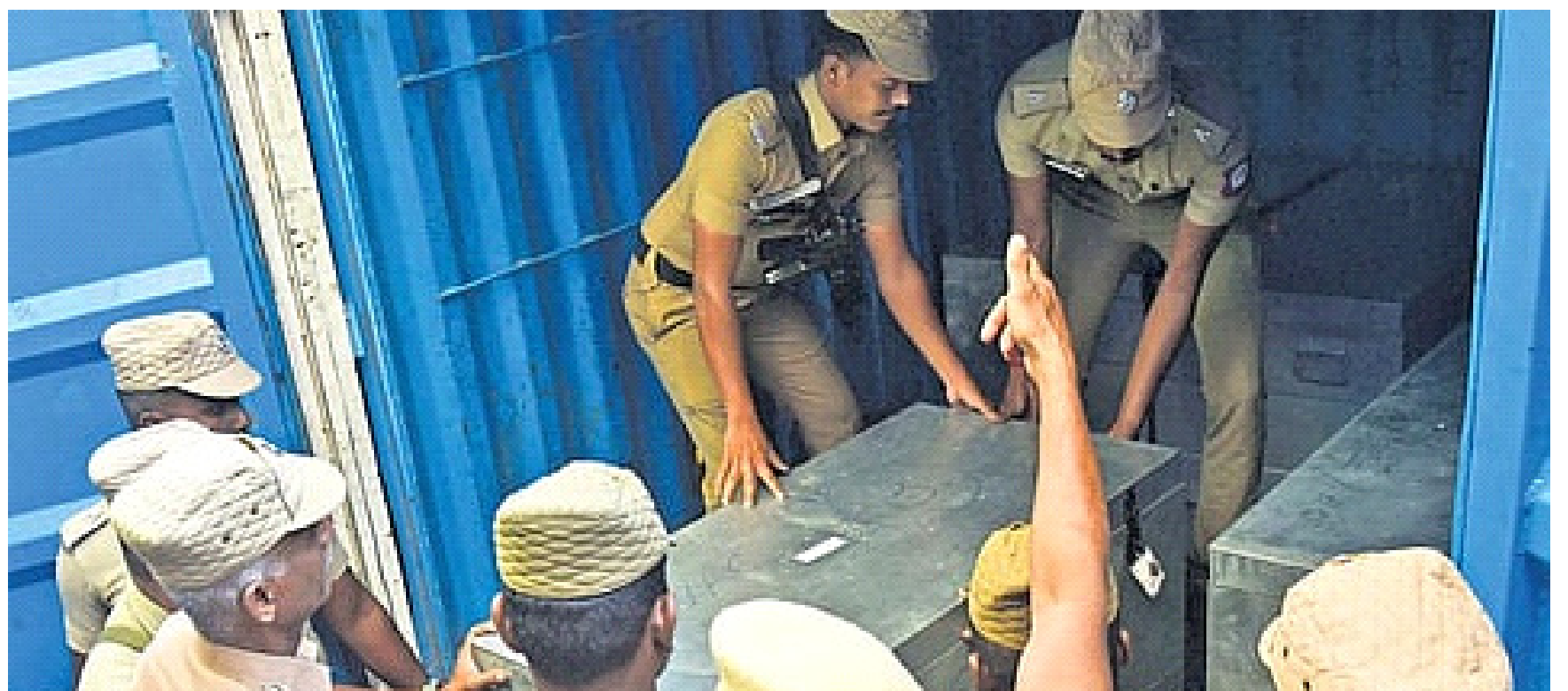
success and self-discovery. She explained that after the Olympics loss, she felt lost and directionless, but Guru Ravi Shankar's guidance helped her understand that true success goes beyond mere victories and achievements. In her interaction with the spiritual leader, she discovered that true success is about inner peace, learning from failures, and personal growth. It was through this meeting that Lovlina was able to realign her focus and find renewed strength.

Social Media Post Helps Bangalore Police Nab 9-Year Fugitive, Mohammed Farooq



BENGALURU: In a remarkable turn of events, social media posts and an online food order played a pivotal role in helping Bangalore police arrest 35-year-old notorious gangster, Mohammed Farooq, who had been on the run for nine years. Farooq, a history-sheeter, was involved in seven criminal cases, including attempted murder, and had evaded arrest since committing his first crime in 2012. The breakthrough came when a photograph of Farooq standing in front of the Vidhana Soudha was shared on Instagram. Informants alerted the police, leading to further investigation. It was discovered that Farooq had a hidden Instagram account under his son's name. Tracing the IP address and cross-referencing mobile numbers, the police pinpointed his location on Kanakapura Road, Dodda Kallasandra. The crucial lead came when Farooq had ordered food online, which revealed his exact residential address. Acting swiftly, the police arrested him while he was picking up his child from school. Farooq had been living with his wife and child in an expensive apartment, far removed from his criminal past. After ceasing all illegal activities in 2016, he worked as a car dealer. Fearing arrest, Farooq had avoided attending his father's funeral. Farooq's capture marks the end of his nine-year-long evasion from justice, with social media playing an unlikely but crucial role in bringing him to justice.

Bengaluru Court Hands Over Seized Valuables to Tamil Nadu Government in DA Case Involving Jayalalithaa



BENGALURU: A Bengaluru court on Saturday handed over over 27 kg of valuable items, including gold jewellery, luxury watches, and other assets, to the Tamil Nadu government, following the completion of valuation and documentation procedures in connection with the Disproportionate Assets (DA) case against former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa. The valuables, seized during the investigation, include a small gold replica of Jayalalithaa, a gold pen, gold sword, and several gold watches. The process began on Friday morning, where documentation and valuation were carried out in the presence of City Civil and Sessions Court Judge H.A. Mohan, along with officials from the Tamil Nadu government and law enforcement. After completing the valuation on Saturday, 1,606 items, including gold jewellery, dia-

monds, emeralds, rubies, and silver articles, were officially handed over to Tamil Nadu representatives. At around 2:30 pm, under tight police security, six trunks containing the valuables were transported in a private logistics vehicle to Tamil Nadu. The convoy, which was escorted by two Tamil Nadu police vans and two cars, had 25 police personnel from Tamil Nadu ensuring security, with Karnataka police providing assistance until the convoy crossed the state border. During a press conference, Special Public Prosecutor Kiran S. Javali stated that the Tamil Nadu government would decide whether to auction the items or deposit them with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). In addition to the valuables, a luxury bus seized during the investigation has been ordered to be auctioned. The court also authorized the seizure of prop-

erties registered under six companies, covering a total area of 1,526 acres across multiple districts in Tamil Nadu. These properties will either be auctioned or converted into government land. Additionally, Rs 2,20,384 in old currency notes found in the treasury boxes and Fixed Deposit receipts amounting to Rs 10 crore have also been transferred to Tamil Nadu authorities. The court recommended that the seized lands be either used for public purposes, such as providing housing for the homeless or sold in public auctions to generate funds for infrastructure development, primary education, and healthcare in rural Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, the Karnataka government has been directed to reimburse Rs 13 crore, including Rs 5 crore spent on case-related expenses.

Kasturi Nagar Residents Lead Revival of Channasandra Lake in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: Residents of Kasturi Nagar in CV Raman Nagar have taken matters into their own hands to revive the Banaswadi-Channasandra (B Channasandra) Lake, located in the Bengaluru East Taluk. The initiative, supported by an NGO, aims to restore 6.19 acres of the lake, which had suffered from severe encroachment and neglect. Originally spanning 19.17 acres as per Forest Department records, the lake has seen its size drastically reduced due to encroachment, garbage dumping, and even illegal burning of waste. Residents recalled how the lake area was once used as a dumping ground for construction debris, plastic waste, and even bodies in some instances. The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) began developing the Kasturi Nagar Layout in 1989, which took over about 6.35 acres of the lake. Additionally, 4 acres had been previously occupied by the Railway Department. "We had been approaching the BBMP and BDA for help, but nothing was done. After discovering that the lake's Record of Rights, Tenancy, and Crops



(RTC) was under the Forest Department, we received a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for rejuvenation," explained Abhijith MS, a member of the Kasturi Nagar Lake Rescue Team. With the NOC granted by the Deputy Conservator of Forest (Urban) Ravindra, the residents, alongside the NGO, began clearing silt, constructing inlet and outlet chan-

nels, and setting up a 1,000-foot-long fence around the lake's buffer zone. Despite the challenges, the residents managed to raise approximately Rs 6.5 lakh through community contributions for the project. Additionally, with support from the NGO 'Hands-On' and CSR funding, around Rs 40 lakh has been allocated for the lake's restoration. Murugan Munirathnam, Vice President of Kasturi Nagar Welfare Association, stated that BBMP and BDA had been passing the responsibility back and forth for years, but after confirming the lake's ownership under the Forest Department, they escalated the matter to Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, who has promised a visit. The restoration project also includes plans to plant 6,000 saplings and establish a Miyawaki forest around the lake, further enhancing its ecological value. The efforts of the residents have sparked hope for the revival of a once-neglected water body, contributing to both environmental conservation and community-driven change.

Man Found Dead in His House in Chennai's Virugambakkam After Two Days

A 56-year-old man, S. Rajagopalan, was found dead at his residence in Ramalinga Nagar, Virugambakkam, after being unaccounted for more than two days. The discovery was made when neighbors noticed a foul smell emanating from his house and observed that the door was locked for an unusually long time. Rajagopalan, who worked as a film editor, had been living alone after his mother, Uma, passed away a few years ago. His sister resides in Pallavaram. According to a senior official from the Virugambakkam Police, the neighbors informed the authorities when they became concerned about the situation. Upon arrival, police officers found the house locked and Rajagopalan's body inside, in a state of decomposition with his clothes torn. The police have sent the body to the K.K. Nagar Government Hospital for postmortem. Investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of death, and officials are considering various possibilities. Authorities have not yet confirmed whether foul play was involved, but an autopsy will provide more clarity. The tragic incident has shocked the local community, and further details are awaited as the police continue their investigation.

For Manipur to Have a Real Shot at Peace, BJP Must Let President's Rule Stay

The imposition of President's Rule in Manipur has been met with mixed reactions, signaling a critical juncture for the state's future. While the Kuki-Zo-Hmar community welcomed the declaration, viewing it as a much-needed reprieve, the Meitei community, through civil society group COCOMI, has strongly opposed it, calling it "undemocratic" and "unjustified."

The ongoing conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities has left Manipur in turmoil since May 2023, resulting in over 250 deaths and 60,000 displacements. Violent clashes, along with shocking images of brutality, have scarred the state. The resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, triggered by a no-confidence vote, led to the imposition of President's Rule, which has temporarily suspended the state assembly.

For Manipur to heal, President's Rule must remain in place long enough for neutral governance. The central paramilitary forces, alongside a politically neutral administration, can restore stability free from interference. However, the BJP's challenge lies in determining whether this is a genuine effort to address the violence or merely a political stopgap. The decision to prolong President's Rule will have a significant impact on the state's



peace prospects.

The Kuki community, which has faced severe displacement, demands a separate administration, and the creation of buffer zones between the hills and valley for protection. They remain concerned about the growing threat of Meitei youth militia groups, such as the Arambai Tenggol, who have looted weapons during the conflict. On the other hand, some Meitei residents privately welcome President's Rule, as it could curb extortion by underground el-

ements. Despite this, the Meitei community feels that the imposition aligns with the agenda of Kuki separatists, adding to their suspicions of a military-driven governance plan. The window for dialogue between the warring communities is now open. With massive security forces in place, President's Rule offers a chance for talks. However, the true success depends on how the BJP in Delhi handles this delicate situation, balancing the region's needs with its political priorities.



In AAP's Provenance Lies the Reason for Its Defeat

The Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) defeat in the Delhi assembly elections is being seen by many as a setback for the dream of alternative politics. However, what exactly was this "alternative politics" that AAP promised? A closer look at the party's origins and actions reveals that its defeat may not be surprising.

AAP emerged from the India Against Corruption (IAC) movement, which, despite its anti-corruption rhetoric, often used Hindu nationalist symbols and sentiments to gather support. Arvind Kejriwal's leadership in the movement, alongside figures like Baba Ramdev and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, already hinted at the party's soft Hindutva leanings. This communal undertone was overlooked at the time, but it became evident as AAP made questionable moves, such as supporting the abrogation of Article 370 and making statements against Muslims during the pandemic.

AAP's governance in Delhi faced significant challenges, especially with the BJP-led central government blocking the state government's initiatives through the office of the lieutenant governor (LG). This stalemate led some voters to shift support towards the BJP, believing that it was the only party capable of breaking the deadlock. AAP's promise of good governance and public services like education, water, and electricity was overshadowed by the inability to address larger issues.

Furthermore, AAP's engagement with "strategic communalism" became apparent during the election campaigns. The party adopted policies against Muslims, such as refusing admission to Rohingya and Bangladeshi children in Delhi schools. These actions blurred the line between AAP and BJP's tactics of using communal politics to garner Hindu votes.

AAP's promise of an alternative to traditional politics was undermined by its gradual shift towards the same divisive rhetoric and politics that it had once opposed. Though the party continued to promote "clean governance," its embrace of communal issues and lack of clarity on its ideological stance suggested that it was not the true alternative it claimed to be.

Government Response to Delhi Stampede: LG's U-Turn and Vaishnav's Delay in Acknowledging Deaths



The official response to the deadly stampede at New Delhi railway station, which resulted in at least 18 deaths and numerous injuries, has been marred by confusion, lack of clarity, and deflection. The tragedy, which unfolded on the night of February 15, prompted a series of conflicting statements from Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, Delhi's Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena, and the Northern Railways.

Chronology of Events

Initial reports of the stampede began circulating around 11:30 pm, with Vaishnav calling it a "sudden rush" in his first post on X (formerly Twitter). In this early communication, he downplayed the situation, claiming that the rush had been controlled with special trains to manage the crowd. Within minutes, Vaishnav posted again to state that four special trains had been deployed, and the situation was under control.

Shortly after Vaishnav's posts, the Delhi LG was the first official to acknowledge the deaths, initially confirming that lives had been lost in a stampede. However, just 30 minutes later, the LG edited his post to remove any mention of the stampede or casualties, offering a vague statement about an "unfortunate incident." This editing raised concerns of a potential cover-up.

It wasn't until around 1:00 am, after a condolence message from Prime Minis-

ter Modi, that Vaishnav issued a more formal acknowledgment of the stampede and the loss of lives, expressing condolences for the tragedy.

Railway's Mismanagement and Contradictory Statements

The Northern Railways' response further compounded the confusion. On the night of the incident, the Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of Northern Railways dismissed reports of a stampede, claiming it was a "rumour." However, the next day, the CPRO released another statement attributing the tragedy to a passenger slipping on the stairs of the foot-over bridge, causing a chain reaction that led to the stampede. The confusion surrounding the stampede's cause, coupled with the delayed and inconsistent responses, triggered strong criticism from opposition parties. Congress demanded Vaishnav's resignation, accusing him of failing to take responsibility for the incident and of minimizing the tragedy by calling it a "minor incident." The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) also criticized the government for attempting to whitewash the incident and hide its severity.

Opposition's Outcry

Opposition leaders, including Supriya Shrinete from Congress and Sanjay Singh from AAP, condemned the Union government's response, demanding account-

ability for the deaths. The response of the railway ministry, especially the denial and the delay in acknowledging the scale of the tragedy, led to accusations of a cover-up, with critics arguing that the government's first instinct was to protect itself rather than show empathy for the victims.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav expressed outrage at the repeated mismanagement, pointing out that the poor continue to suffer the most from the failures of the system. He called for accountability, questioning who would be held responsible for the deaths.

Broader Context of Stampede Tragedies

This tragic incident comes just weeks after another deadly stampede during the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, which claimed at least 30 lives. The recurrence of such tragedies raises questions about the government's preparedness and its failure to manage large crowds safely.

In summary, the official response to the Delhi stampede has been marked by indecision, conflicting statements, and deflection of responsibility. The initial efforts to downplay the scale of the disaster, followed by contradictory explanations, have left the public and opposition parties accusing the government of attempting to cover up the truth rather than addressing the tragedy with transparency and accountability.



'Inaccessible' After BJP Complaints Over Modi-Trump Cartoon

The Tamil media group Vikatan has reportedly faced issues with its website becoming inaccessible, just hours after a cartoon published in its digital magazine sparked controversy within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The cartoon, which was published on February 10, depicted Prime Minister Narendra Modi shackled next to former US President Donald Trump, a visual commentary on the mistreatment of Indian deportees by US authorities.

The Controversial Cartoon

The cartoon quickly became a point of contention after being criticized by BJP supporters, particularly Tamil Nadu BJP president K. Annamalai. The cartoon's portrayal of Modi in shackles alongside Trump appeared to upset BJP members, prompting Annamalai to lodge a formal complaint with the central government. The Tamil Nadu BJP's strong objections led to widespread discussion, and the digital publication faced backlash on social media. As a result, several users on the platform X (formerly Twitter) reported being unable to access the Vikatan website, leading to suspicions that the site may have been blocked.

Vikatan's Response

Vikatan denied receiving any official communication from the Union government regarding the website's alleged blockage. In an official statement, the media group acknowledged the widespread reports from users stating they couldn't access the site, but emphasized that no formal notice had been issued by the central government. The group also reassured that it would continue to uphold the principles of free speech and freedom of expression, values that have been central to its operation for nearly a century. "We are still trying to ascertain the reasons behind the blocking of our website and are in the process of taking up this matter with the ministry," said Vikatan in their statement.

Political Reactions

The situation drew immediate political reactions, with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin condemning the alleged blocking of the website. In a post on X, Stalin described the action as an example of the "fascist nature" of the BJP and expressed his concerns over the impact on democracy. He called for the immediate restoration of access to the website, stressing that blocking media outlets for expressing opinions was harmful to democratic values.

Free Speech Concerns

The issue has reignited concerns about the state of free speech and media freedom in India, especially in light of previous instances where media outlets and content critical of the government faced repercussions. The blocking of Vikatan's website, whether government-directed or otherwise, has raised questions about the government's response to dissenting voices and the implications of such actions on the broader media landscape.

PM Modi Meets President Murmu After 'Productive' US and France Visit

- Talks focus on diplomacy, governance.
- Govt formation in Delhi underway.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday evening at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, following his return from a "productive visit" to the United States and France. The meeting comes ahead of the anticipated government formation in Delhi.

The President's office shared pictures of the meeting between the two leaders on the social media platform X. A post from the President House's official handle stated, "Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan."

Modi's visit to the US and France was hailed as success-

ful by the Indian government, with discussions focusing on strengthening bilateral relations, economic ties, and various global challenges. The visit was seen as a significant diplomatic step for India, enhancing its strategic partnerships with two key Western nations.

This meeting between the Prime Minister and the President holds particular importance as the Indian government is set to undergo a transition, with the formation of the new administration in Delhi expected soon. While specifics of the discussion have not been made public, such meetings are often routine, focusing on matters of national and international importance.



The photos shared by Rashtrapati Bhavan depicted a cordial exchange, with both leaders seen engaged in conversation. Prime Minister Modi's return and the subsequent meeting with the President underscore the importance of continued governance as the country prepares for new develop-

ments on the political front. This interaction between Modi and Murmu continues a series of regular engagements between the country's top political leaders, underscoring the collaborative nature of India's political system as it works to address both domestic and international concerns.

Prashant Kishor's Meeting with Vijay Sparks Speculation of Political Alliance



TPN Correspondent | Tamilnadu

A recent meeting between political strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor and actor-turned-politician Vijay in Chennai has set Tamil Nadu's political circles abuzz, leading to speculation about a potential collaboration. With assembly elections approaching in 2026, questions are now being raised about whether this was a casual meeting or the beginning of a strategic alliance between Kishor and Vijay's party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK).

Kishor, who has advised multiple political parties through his Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), recently launched his own party, Jan Suraaj Party (JSP). However, JSP faced a setback in the 2024 Bihar bypolls, with three out of four candidates losing their deposits. This has raised doubts about Kishor's political future, prompting speculation that he may return to his consultancy roots after his party's underwhelming performance. The meeting with Vijay, who has a massive fanbase in Tamil Nadu, adds fuel to the idea that Kishor could be preparing to work with the TVK to reshape the state's political dynamics.

Vijay, having launched TVK, is positioning himself as a serious political figure, mirroring the political journeys of cinema icons like M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and N.T. Rama Rao (NTR). His mass appeal could make the TVK a significant force in Tamil Nadu's politics, traditionally dominated by the DMK and AIADMK. However, whether Vijay's popularity can be translated into electoral success remains uncertain.

There is also speculation about a potential alliance between the TVK and the AIADMK, which has been struggling since the death of its leader J. Jayalalithaa. An alliance could potentially challenge the ruling DMK, with the BJP possibly joining as a third ally. However, for such a coalition to succeed, the AIADMK would need to offer the TVK substantial space within the partnership, which could be a point of contention.

As Tamil Nadu prepares for the next election, the Kishor-Vijay meeting marks a significant moment in the state's shifting political landscape.

India pledges collective action at Indian Ocean Conference in Oman



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called on countries across the Indian Ocean to collaborate and coordinate policies to ensure regional security and stability, particularly amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Speaking at the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat, Jaishankar emphasized the importance of mutual cooperation to navigate the region's challenges and uncertainties.

Jaishankar highlighted India's pivotal role in addressing var-

ious regional issues, including stabilizing economies under stress, responding to emergencies, and fostering connectivity across the Indian Ocean. His keynote address underscored the need for a united approach among nations in the region to secure stability and overcome economic and political challenges. "We seek stability and security as the baseline... They will be easier reached when we look out for each other, supplement our strengths and coordinate our policies," Jaishankar said, describing the cooperation as a "coordinated flotilla" for navigating the future. He stressed that, in to-

day's volatile era, nations must come together to achieve their collective goals.

The conference, which is supported by the foreign ministries of India and Oman, was attended by foreign ministers from several countries, including Iran, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. Representatives from China and the UK also participated. The event is occurring amid significant geopolitical shifts, spurred by the policies of the Donald Trump administration in the US and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Jaishankar also discussed the region's resource constraints and the challenges countries face in meeting their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He alluded to the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its assertive policies in the South China Sea, which have contributed to financial pressures and regional instability. Highlighting the importance of transparency and collaboration in tackling these challenges, Jaishankar reinforced that a coordinated effort will be key to overcoming the obstacles facing the Indian Ocean countries in the coming years.

Nitish Announces Ex Gratia For Delhi Station Stampede, Lalu Says Faltu Hai Kumbh



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed deep sorrow over the tragic stampede that occurred at the New Delhi Railway Station on Saturday night, which claimed 18 lives, including 14 women and four minors, and left many others injured. In a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Nitish Kumar announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the families of the deceased who hailed from Bihar. The injured will receive compensation of Rs 50,000 for minor injuries and Rs 2.5 lakh for those seriously hurt.

The stampede occurred at a crowded New Delhi railway station, with several individuals still unaccounted for. Bihar officials are awaiting confirmation of the exact number of people from the state affected by the tragedy. Earlier, the Indian Railways had also announced compensation for the victims' families, with Rs 10 lakh for the deceased, and varying amounts for the injured.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary also expressed his condolences, criticizing the central government's handling of the situation. He pointed out the "inadequate arrangements" by the railway authorities, which he believed contributed to the disaster. Choudhary suggested that Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw should take responsibility and resign for the incident. RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, who served as the Union Railway Minister, also blamed the railway's mismanagement for the stampede. He described the incident as "unfortunate" and demanded that the railway minister be held accountable. "The Railway Minister should take responsibility for this," he stated, adding that the mismanagement led to unnecessary loss of life.

Agreement reached on 38 of 54 recommendations: Himanta on Assam Accord

TPN Correspondent | Assam

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Sunday that the state government, in collaboration with the All Assam Students Union (AASU), has reached an agreement to implement 38 out of the 54 recommendations made by the high-level committee on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. The Clause 6 provisions aim to provide greater protection to the indigenous people of Assam.

Sarma, speaking in Guwahati following a meeting with AASU representatives, explained that 52 of the committee's 54 recommendations fall under the purview of the Assam government. Of these, 38 recommendations will be implemented on a time-bound basis, as part



of the upcoming state budget and through future legislations and ordinances. He expressed hope that discussions in March and April will lead to an agreement on the remaining 14 recommendations.

Among the key recommendations being implemented is the mandatory inclusion of the As-

samese language as a subject in all schools in the Brahmaputra Valley. Similarly, Assamese and Bodo will be taught in all schools in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Additionally, all schools will be required to teach Assam's history and geography up to Class 8. These steps are seen as crucial to preserving the state's culture

and heritage. In another significant move, the state government will identify blocks in Assam where only individuals who have lived there for at least three generations or since 1951 will be allowed to purchase land. However, this restriction will not apply to urban areas, ensuring flexibility in land transactions in cities.

The Chief Minister also revealed that the state government has requested the central government to hold tripartite talks to address recommendations that fall outside the state's jurisdiction. This development marks a significant step towards fulfilling the promises made under the Assam Accord and ensuring greater protection and rights for the indigenous people of the state.



Trump Team To Meet Russian, Ukrainian Negotiators, Hold Talks On Ending War

- US team heads to Saudi for Ukraine talks.
- Trump, Putin agree to ceasefire talks.
- Kyiv, EU wary of sudden negotiations.

TPN Correspondent | Washington

A senior delegation from US President Donald Trump's administration will soon begin discussions in Saudi Arabia with Russian and Ukrainian negotiators to seek an end to the ongoing war in Ukraine, US officials confirmed on Saturday. The team will include Secretary of State Marco Rubio, White House National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, and Trump's Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff.

This diplomatic move follows Trump's recent announcement that he had held his first conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin since returning to office. The two leaders agreed to initiate talks aimed at negotiating a ceasefire in Ukraine. While details re-

garding the timing of the talks remain scarce, Rubio's planned visit to Saudi Arabia as part of his Middle East tour is expected to play a pivotal role in these discussions.

Rubio had a telephone conversation earlier with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, during which he reiterated President Trump's commitment to resolving the conflict in Ukraine. Rubio's trip to Israel, which marked the start of his Middle East tour, was part of broader efforts to engage with regional leaders on the Ukraine situation.

Steve Witkoff, a former property developer with a history of involvement in international negotiations, has been deeply involved in efforts to negotiate prisoner

exchanges, including the recent deal that facilitated a phone call between Trump and Putin. Witkoff's role underscores the Trump administration's focused approach to seeking resolution through direct negotiations.

In a social media post earlier this week, Trump emphasized that Rubio, Waltz, Witkoff, and CIA Director John Ratcliffe had been assigned to work swiftly on a deal with Russia to halt the war. However, this sudden shift in diplomatic strategy has taken Kyiv and its European allies by surprise. Both Ukraine and its Western supporters fear being sidelined in the discussions concerning the future of Ukraine after what has been the most significant land invasion in Europe since World War II.

Amid 'Deep State' Charges, US Cuts Bangladesh "Political Landscape" Funds



TPN Correspondent | Washington

In a bid to reduce US taxpayer spending, the Donald Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has cancelled several overseas funding projects, including a controversial \$29 million initiative aimed at "strengthening the political landscape" in Bangladesh. The funding, which had been allocated to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was intended to support political party capacity-building and foster better relationships between political parties and their constituents in Bangladesh.

The program, known as the Strengthening Political Landscape (SPL) project, also worked to reduce political violence and promote peaceful conflict resolution. According to Democracy International (DI), the program aimed to support political activists, citizens, and students in developing leadership skills and advocating for inclusive policies.

This funding cancellation comes just days after President Trump dismissed claims of US involvement in the political turmoil that led to the ousting of Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Speaking alongside Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump denied any role of the US in the 2024 regime change in Bangladesh, stating that the issue had long been managed by India.

Trump's remarks come amid growing tensions between Bangladesh and the US, following Hasina's ouster in August after massive protests, and the subsequent rise of an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. The interim government has faced criticism for failing to protect religious minorities, especially Hindus, from attacks by radical Islamist elements. In addition to the cancellation of the SPL project, DOGE also slashed other foreign aid funding, including \$22 million intended for "voter turnout" initiatives in India and \$39 million allocated for "fiscal federalism" and "biodiversity conservation" programs in Nepal. These cuts are part of DOGE's broader efforts to reduce unnecessary government spending, which the administration says will benefit US taxpayers.

Muhsin Hendricks, World's First Openly Gay Imam, Shot Dead in South Africa



TPN Correspondent | South Africa

Muhsin Hendricks, renowned as the world's first openly gay imam, was tragically shot and killed near the southern city of Gqeberha, South Africa, on Saturday. The imam, who dedicated his life to creating a safe haven for marginalized Muslims, particularly queer individuals, was targeted while in a car with another person. According to South African police, a vehicle suddenly blocked their path, and two assailants with covered faces exited and began firing multiple shots at the vehicle.

Hendricks, who was seated in the back of the car, was fatally shot. The driver managed to escape, and authorities later confirmed the authenticity of a video circulating on social media, which appeared to show the targeted attack. The police have not disclosed a clear motive for the murder, and the investigation is ongoing. They have urged anyone with information to come forward to assist with the case. Hendricks, who was a prominent figure in various LGBTQ advocacy groups, came out as gay in 1996 and later founded the Al-Ghurbaah mosque in Wynberg, near Cape Town. The mosque was known for offering a sanctuary where queer Muslims and marginalized women could practice Islam in a safe and inclusive environment. Hendricks was also featured in the 2022 documentary "The Radical," which chronicled his work and the challenges he faced as an openly gay religious leader.

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) condemned the murder, calling it a possible hate crime. ILGA World's executive director, Julia Ehrh, expressed deep shock over the killing, urging South African authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident. South Africa, despite its progressive stance on LGBTQ rights, continues to grapple with high levels of violence, as evidenced by its staggering murder rate of approximately 28,000 in the past year. Hendricks had previously spoken of the threats he faced but maintained that the need to live authentically outweighed the fear of death. His death marks a tragic loss for the LGBTQ Muslim community and the broader fight for equality and acceptance.

Ex-Mauritius PM Pravind Jugnauth Arrested In Money-Laundering Case

TPN Correspondent | Port Louis

Pravind Jugnauth, the former Prime Minister of Mauritius, was arrested on Sunday in connection with a money-laundering investigation, marking a significant development in the ongoing probe into financial crimes on the island. Jugnauth, along with his wife Kobita Jugnauth, was initially detained on Saturday and questioned for several hours before his formal arrest in the early hours of Sunday.

Pravind Jugnauth, 63, who served as Prime Minister from 2017 to 2024, denied the allegations against him. His lawyer, Raouf Gulbul, stated that the ex-leader had provided his version of events and would appear before a judge later on Sunday. Kobita Jugnauth was released after questioning.

As part of the investigation, police conducted raids on the homes of other suspects, including a local leisure company employee and a real estate executive.



In these raids, law enforcement officials seized various items, including luxury watches, stacks of cash, and documents bearing the Jugnauth family's name. These findings have raised suspicions about the scale of the money-laundering operation.

The Financial Crimes Commission had earlier issued a notice to prevent the Jugnauths and two other suspects

from leaving the country, citing their involvement in a money-laundering case.

Pravind Jugnauth is a member of a political dynasty that has dominated Mauritius since its independence from Britain in 1968. His leadership was marked by significant achievements, including a historic deal with Britain over the Chagos Islands, which had been a long-standing territorial dispute. Jugnauth's government oversaw Mauritius regaining sovereignty over the islands, although the UK and US continue to operate a military base there under a lease agreement.

The arrest comes after Jugnauth's party suffered a crushing defeat in the November elections, which saw his rival Navin Ramgoolam return to power as Prime Minister. Ramgoolam's government has reopened negotiations on the Chagos Islands issue, aiming to renegotiate the terms of the UK-US military base lease.

UAE Expands Visa-On-Arrival Facility For Indians From 6 More Countries

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has expanded its visa-on-arrival program for Indian passport holders by including those with valid visas, residence permits, or Green Cards from six additional countries. This move will allow more Indian nationals to benefit from the visa-on-arrival facilities at UAE entry points, facilitating smoother travel for both tourism and business.

Under the new regulations, Indian nationals holding valid documentation from Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are now eligible for the visa-on-arrival facility. Previously, this privilege was

limited to Indian citizens with valid visas or residence permits from the United States, European Union member states, and the United Kingdom. The decision aims to streamline travel between India and the UAE, reflecting the strengthening of ties between the two nations.

To qualify for the visa-on-arrival program, Indian nationals must fulfill certain criteria, including holding a valid ordinary passport with at least six months' validity from the date of arrival. In addition, they must possess a valid visa, residence permit, or Green Card from any of the newly eligible countries. Once these conditions are met, travellers will pay the visa fee upon ar-

rival at UAE immigration checkpoints. The UAE has introduced three visa categories under the program, each with a nominal fee. The 4-day visa is priced at Dh100 (approximately Rs 2,270), while a 14-day extension costs Dh250 (approximately Rs 5,670). There is also a 60-day visa, which is also priced at Dh250.

Major General Suhail Saeed Al Khailli, Director General of the UAE's Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security (ICP), stated that this move aligns with the long-term strategic partnership between the UAE and India. The initiative seeks to facilitate travel for Indian citizens, enhancing opportunities for tourism, residency, and employment in the UAE.

Mcap of 8 of top-10 valued firms tumbles Rs 2 lakh crore; Reliance biggest laggard



The combined market valuation of eight out of the ten most valuable domestic firms saw a significant drop of Rs 2 lakh crore last week, largely due to a bearish trend in the broader stock market. Leading this decline was Reliance Industries, which saw the biggest hit, alongside other major companies such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India (SBI), Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, and ITC.

Equity benchmark indices, including Sensex and Nifty, continued their downward trajectory for the eighth consecutive day on Friday. Over the past eight trading days, the BSE Sensex plummeted by 2,644.6 points, or 3.36%, while the Nifty shed 810 points, or 3.41%.

Reliance Industries experienced a sharp drop in its market capitalization (mcap), losing Rs 67,526.54 crore to settle at Rs 16,46,822.12 crore. Similarly, TCS saw a decline of Rs 34,950.72 crore in its valuation, bringing its mcap down to Rs 14,22,903.37 crore. HDFC

Bank also suffered a loss of Rs 28,382.23 crore, reducing its mcap to Rs 12,96,708.35 crore. ITC's valuation shrank by Rs 25,429.75 crore to Rs 5,13,699.85 crore.

In addition, Infosys' mcap fell by Rs 19,287.32 crore to Rs 7,70,786.76 crore, and State Bank of India's valuation dropped by Rs 13,431.55 crore to Rs 6,44,357.57 crore. Hindustan Unilever saw its mcap reduce by Rs 10,714.14 crore, closing at Rs 5,44,647 crore, while Bajaj Finance's mcap dipped by Rs 4,230.4 crore to Rs 5,20,082.42 crore.

On the flip side, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were among the few gainers. Bharti Airtel's mcap surged by Rs 22,426.2 crore to Rs 9,78,631.54 crore, while ICICI Bank's valuation rose by Rs 1,182.57 crore to Rs 8,88,815.13 crore.

Despite the losses, Reliance Industries retained its position as the most valuable firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, SBI, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, and ITC.



Depreciating rupee may impact softened inflation in Q4 2024-25

A depreciating rupee could pose a significant risk to India's overall inflation, particularly by increasing the prices of imported goods, according to a report by financial services firm Centrum Broking. The rupee is currently trading near its all-time low, which typically makes imports more expensive and could contribute to higher inflationary pressures.

However, the report notes that steady progress in Rabi sowing and the softening of food prices are expected to help lower inflation in the fourth quarter of 2024-25. India's retail inflation stood at 4.3% in January, marking a five-month low and staying comfortably within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) target range of 2-6%. This decline in inflation is largely attributed to a drop in food prices, particularly fresh produce, which has helped ease inflationary concerns.

The Centrum report highlights that with food inflation in check, the food basket is projected to play a significant role in keeping overall inflation lower in the

near term. The decline in inflation is also seen as a key factor that may give the RBI more room to focus on fostering economic growth. The central bank has maintained a neutral stance on interest rates, with any future rate cuts being dependent on incoming macroeconomic data.

Food inflation had been a major concern in India, particularly due to rising prices of vegetables, fruits, and oils. This trend seems to have eased, providing relief to policymakers who are working toward bringing retail inflation down to a sustainable 4%.

The RBI had kept the repo rate elevated at 6.5% for nearly five years to control inflation but recently reduced it by 25 basis points to support growth and consumption. Looking ahead, Centrum forecasts that inflation will average 4.8% in 2024-25, with the possibility of another 25 basis points rate cut. However, the firm cautions that the depreciating rupee must be monitored closely, as it could offset some of the gains made in controlling inflation.

Indian Steel Industry at Risk of Dumping Due to US Tariffs: JSPL Chairman



The Indian steel industry must be vigilant as countries exporting steel to the US may redirect shipments to India following the imposition of tariffs by the US, according to Naveen Jindal, Chairman of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL). Speaking at the Global Business Summit (GBS) on Saturday, Jindal warned that the tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump on steel and aluminum imports could lead to a surge in unfair exports to India due to the country's large domestic demand.

"Countries sending shipments to the US may dump their products in India because of the massive demand in our market," Jindal cautioned, adding that the Indian steel industry would need to be protected from such unfair trade practices.

To address the issue, the Indian Steel Association has already filed an application with the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), which is currently reviewing

the matter. Indian steel producers have long raised concerns over the dumping of steel products from certain countries, which has negatively affected their competitiveness in the domestic market.

Jindal expressed optimism that a positive decision would be reached soon to safeguard the interests of the Indian steel industry. Official data indicates a concerning trend: India's steel exports have fallen by 28.9% to 3.99 million tonnes in the April-January period of FY25, compared to 5.61 million tonnes during the same period last year. Meanwhile, steel imports into India have surged by over 20%, reaching 8.29 million tonnes during the same period.

The steel industry's struggles come amid the US imposing a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports. India, which remains a net importer of steel, faces the risk of foreign steel flooding its market, putting additional pressure on local manufacturers.

Nifty Smallcap 100 Enters Bear Market Amid US Tariff Concerns

The Indian stock market witnessed significant turbulence on Friday, with the Nifty Smallcap 100 index officially entering a 'bear' market phase after it plunged around 22% from its peak of 19,716.20. The index closed nearly 4% lower, settling at 15,373.70. This decline was part of a broader market sell-off that also affected midcap stocks, as the Nifty Midcap 150 index dropped by almost 2.5%, closing at 18,325.40, according to NSE data.

Pharmaceutical stocks bore the brunt of the market sell-off on Thursday, largely due to growing concerns over potential reciprocal tariffs from the US. Stocks like Natco Pharma and Laurus Labs, which are part of the Nifty Smallcap 100 index, witnessed substantial declines, both falling over 9%. Other stocks within the same index, including IFCI, Glenmark Pharma, Finolex Cables, HFCL, BEML, and Apar Industries, also saw steep declines, losing over 7% on Friday.

The broader market sell-off came amid news of potential changes in US trade policy under President Donald Trump. On Thursday evening, Trump signed an order directing the US Trade Representative and the Commerce Secretary to devise new country-specific tariffs aimed at rebalancing trade relations. According to Howard Lutnick, Trump's nominee for Commerce Secretary, these changes may be implemented by April 1, 2025.

In addition to these country-specific tariffs, Trump also indicated that additional import



taxes could be imposed on goods such as cars, semiconductors, and pharmaceuticals, deepening concerns in the Indian market. The pharmaceutical sector, in particular, could be hit hard by such policies, as the US is a major market for Indian pharmaceutical exports.

In a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump noted that India has some of the highest tariffs globally, but reassured that both leaders are committed to strengthening bilateral ties and improving trade policies between the two nations. This potential shift in trade dynamics added to the market's volatility, as investors grew increasingly cautious about the economic impact of rising tariffs.

With the Nifty Smallcap 100 index entering a bear market, and concerns mounting over the impact of US tariff policies, investors are closely monitoring developments for any signs of stabilization in the Indian stock market.

The “Happiness Factory: Parents In South Korea Are Locking Themselves

In a unique experiment in Gangwon Province, South Korea, parents are voluntarily participating in a confinement experience designed to help them understand the social isolation and anxiety that their children are facing. The experiment, known as the “Happiness Factory,” involves parents being shut into small rooms for three days with no access to TVs, phones, laptops, or even any form of communication. Their only connection to the outside world is a small feeding hole through which their meals are passed.



tense pressure from school or society.

The purpose of this intense and somewhat extreme experience is to give parents a first-hand insight into what their children, many of whom are “reclusive youths,” experience daily. These youths, often referred to as “hikikomori” in Japan and South Korea, spend most of their time alone in their rooms, avoiding social interaction and engagement with the outside world. The isolation is usually due to a range of factors, including anxiety, depression, and in-

Parents who join the program hope to better understand the emotional and psychological toll their children endure when they withdraw from the outside world. The isolation is often a cry for help or a reaction to intense social pressures, yet many parents struggle to relate to their children’s feelings and struggles. By voluntarily experiencing confinement, parents aim to gain empathy and create better strategies for supporting their children in overcoming their social anxiety and withdrawal.

The “Happiness Factory” is not just about the isolation experience itself; it’s also a form of therapy and education for parents, who engage in group discussions afterward. Through these conversations, parents share insights and emotional struggles, learning how to create more open and supportive environments for their children. The ultimate goal of this experiment is to equip parents with the tools to help their reclusive children reintegrate into society in a healthy, supportive way, allowing for better communication and understanding within families.

Youtuber Gets Stuck On Mobile Tower After Climbing It To Boost Channel Views

A YouTuber from Uttar Pradesh, identified as Nileshwar, found himself stranded and needing rescue after attempting a daring stunt for online fame. Nileshwar, who runs the YouTube channel Nileshwar22, climbed a mobile tower in Tigri village, Greater Noida, in an attempt to attract views. His channel, which has around 8,900 subscribers, aimed to boost its popularity through the risky stunt, which was being recorded by his partner.



As Nileshwar climbed the tower, their activity started to attract attention, and soon, a large crowd gathered beneath the structure. However, when his partner noticed the growing crowd, he fled the scene, leaving Nileshwar stuck at the top of the tower. The situation quickly escalated, and local authorities were called in to help. A five-hour rescue operation ensued, with the police working tirelessly to bring Nileshwar down safely.

The incident highlights the growing trend of YouTubers and online personalities taking dangerous risks for the sake of gaining more views and followers. The police have since issued a warning against engaging in such perilous activities, urging individuals to avoid putting their lives at risk for online fame.

This incident is not isolated. Recently, a similar stunt took place in Pune, where a woman dangled from a tall building, holding onto the hand of a man lying on the roof. Both were arrested after the stunt, with the person filming the video still on the run.

In another case, a YouTuber from Kerala, Sanju Techy, tried a risky stunt inspired by a Malayalam film. He transformed his car into a makeshift swimming pool by lining it with a tarpaulin sheet and filling it with water. The stunt caused a traffic jam when the water seeped into the vehicle’s seats and engine, and authorities were forced to intervene. Sanju and his friends were fined for violating traffic rules, and the car’s registration was suspended, along with the driver’s license. These incidents serve as a stark reminder of the dangers of prioritizing online fame over personal safety.

Instagram Tests “Dislike” Button for Comments

Instagram, owned by Meta, is currently testing a controversial new feature that allows users to “dislike” comments. Several users have reported seeing a downward arrow next to the usual like heart in the comments section of posts, including Feed posts and Reels. However, Instagram has not officially confirmed the feature’s broader rollout or provided details on when it might become available to all users.



The new “dislike” button gives users the ability to express disagreement with certain comments, functioning similarly to the downvote feature found on platforms like Reddit. This change could allow people to signal whether they agree or disagree with opinions shared in the comment sections, potentially adding a new layer of interaction to Instagram’s platform.

Despite its potential to offer users more ways to interact with content, the feature has faced significant backlash. Many people are concerned that the dislike button could lead to in-

creased negativity, bullying, and toxicity within comment sections. Critics argue that it could open the door to a more hostile environment, as users may misuse the feature to downvote comments in a vindictive or hurtful manner. Some users have even shared screenshots of their comments sections with the newly added down arrow, expressing their discontent with the button’s presence.

its benefits in promoting more nuanced discussions or highlighting comments people strongly disagree with, its potential for encouraging online hostility has many worried. Instagram’s move to test the dislike button has reignited debates about how social media platforms can balance user expression with maintaining a positive and supportive environment. For now, it remains unclear whether the feature will be fully rolled out or scrapped due to user feedback.

While the feature may have

** Apple Vision Pro Set for New Features, Including Apple Intelligence and Guest Mode**

Apple is preparing to enhance its Vision Pro headset with several new features, including the addition of Apple Intelligence, an updated guest mode, and a spatial content app. These upgrades are expected to be rolled out as part of a software update, with the possibility of a beta version for developers being available as soon as this week, according to a report by Bloomberg News on Saturday.



The Vision Pro, which costs around \$3,500, has already attracted attention for its innovative design and capabilities. The upcoming software update is poised to expand its functionality even further, offering users more personalized experiences and new features to interact with the headset.

One of the major additions is the integration of Apple Intelligence, which will likely bring advanced AI-driven features to the device. Apple has been focusing heavily on AI and machine learning in its product lineup, and the Vision Pro headset will now benefit from

this expertise, making the device more intuitive and responsive to users’ needs. Additionally, the update will introduce an updated guest mode, which will allow users to share their Vision Pro headset with others without compromising their personal settings or data. This feature could make the device more accessible to multiple users in households or shared environments.

Another exciting feature coming with the update is the spatial content app, which will likely expand the range of immersive experiences available on the Vision Pro. The app

could open new possibilities for entertainment, productivity, and other activities, taking full advantage of the headset’s immersive display and advanced technology.

These new features will likely be part of an ongoing effort by Apple to improve the Vision Pro headset and solidify its position in the growing augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) market. With the software update expected soon, developers will have the opportunity to explore these new tools and help refine them ahead of the wider rollout to consumers.

Chennai Influencer Gives A Tour Of Etihad’s Ultra-Luxurious The Residence

When it comes to luxury in the skies, Etihad Airways is redefining what it means to fly in style. Recently, a Chennai couple with their child shared their lavish experience aboard the airline’s Airbus A380, booking “The Residence” suite, which offers an exclusive, private flying experience. With ticket prices ranging from Rs 3-4 lakh, this service is considered to be one of the most opulent ways to travel.

Content creator Keerthi documented the entire journey on Instagram, providing a rare glimpse into the extravagant services offered by Etihad. According to Keerthi, the luxury experience began even before they boarded the flight. Passengers who book The Residence are granted access to Etihad’s exclusive First Class Lounge at Abu Dhabi International Airport, which is a far cry from your typical airport experience. The lounge

offers a host of premium services, including a la carte gourmet dining, spotless shower suites, a dedicated children’s play area, and private cabins for families.

Once aboard, The Residence delivers an unmatched level of comfort and privacy. With features akin to a private jet, the suite includes a spacious living area, a separate bedroom, and a private bathroom with a shower. Passengers enjoy personalized service from a dedicated butler, ensuring every need is met, from meals to special requests. The cabin’s sophisticated design combines comfort with elegance, allowing families to travel in absolute luxury.

For those seeking the ultimate flying experience, Etihad’s The Residence is the epitome of lavish air travel. Whether you’re enjoying world-class



dining in the lounge or relaxing in your own private suite, the experience offers a level of

exclusivity and comfort that is unparalleled in commercial aviation.

IPL 2025: KKR vs RCB to Kick Off Tournament on March 22; Full Schedule Released



Match	Date	Time	Venue	Team 1	Team 2
1	22-Mar-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2	23-Mar-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
3	24-Mar-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
4	25-Mar-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
5	26-Mar-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
6	27-Mar-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
7	28-Mar-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
8	29-Mar-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
9	30-Mar-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
10	31-Mar-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
11	01-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
12	02-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
13	03-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
14	04-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
15	05-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
16	06-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
17	07-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
18	08-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
19	09-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
20	10-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
21	11-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
22	12-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
23	13-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
24	14-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
25	15-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
26	16-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
27	17-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
28	18-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
29	19-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
30	20-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
31	21-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
32	22-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
33	23-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
34	24-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
35	25-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
36	26-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
37	27-Apr-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
38	28-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
39	29-Apr-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
40	30-Apr-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
41	01-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
42	02-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
43	03-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
44	04-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
45	05-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
46	06-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
47	07-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
48	08-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
49	09-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
50	10-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
51	11-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
52	12-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
53	13-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
54	14-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
55	15-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
56	16-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
57	17-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
58	18-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
59	19-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
60	20-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
61	21-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
62	22-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
63	23-May-25	19:30	Chennai Super Kings	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
64	24-May-25	19:30	Wankhede Stadium	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
65	25-May-25	19:30	Eden Gardens	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore

The highly anticipated IPL 2025 season is set to begin on March 22, with defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) taking on Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at their home ground, Eden Gardens. This match will mark the opening of a thrilling ten-team tournament that will span 65 days, with 74 matches to be held across 13 venues.

The schedule was officially announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) through broadcasters JioHotstar. After a break following the Champions Trophy, which ends on March 9, the IPL action will resume.

The opening weekend includes several exciting fixtures. On March 23, Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), who

were the runners-up in IPL 2024, will host 2008 champions Rajasthan Royals (RR) at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. The same evening, Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will take on Mumbai Indians (MI) in a much-anticipated clash at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. These two teams, both with five IPL titles each, will also meet in Mumbai on April 20 for the reverse fixture.

Other key matches include Delhi Capitals (DC) facing Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Visakhapatnam on March 24 and Gujarat Titans (GT) opening their campaign against Punjab Kings (PBKS) in Ahmedabad on March 25.

Notably, KKR is also scheduled to host Qualifier 2 on May 23 and the IPL 2025 final on May 25, while Hyderabad will host Qualifier 1 and the Eliminator on May 20 and 21, respectively.

New captain announcements for several teams have also been made, with RCB naming Rajat Patidar as their new leader, and Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant appointed as captains for PBKS and LSG, respectively. However, KKR and DC are yet to announce their captains.

The full IPL 2025 schedule promises a thrilling cricketing season for fans across the globe.

Delhi Dribblers End Mumbai Titans' Winning Streak in Thrilling Showdown



In a nail-biting InBL Pro U25 clash at the Thyagraj Indoor Stadium, the Delhi Dribblers handed the Mumbai Titans their first loss in four games, defeating them 88-84 in a thrilling contest. The Dribblers dominated the first half, putting up a staggering 59 points, but the Titans mounted a fierce comeback in the second half, setting up a dramatic finish.

Lachlan Barker once again led the charge for the Dribblers, scoring 25 points, while Daniel Poelsma played a pivotal role with 23 points, including several crucial three-pointers. Newcomer Piyush Meena made his debut for the Dribblers, adding to the team's depth.

The Dribblers were off to a strong start, with early baskets from Barker and James Montgomery, and an energetic offense that helped them establish an early lead. The Titans, led by Aaron Verghese Blessen's strong drives to the basket, kept pace, but the Dribblers capitalized on turnovers to maintain their edge. Barker hit a clutch four-point play toward the end of the first quarter, extending the lead to eight.

In the second quarter, the Dribblers' offense continued to roll. With the Titans' attack stalling, Poelsma knocked down several three-pointers, pushing the lead to 15 points. By halftime, the Dribblers had an impressive

25-point advantage, heading into the break with a commanding lead.

The Titans came out strong after halftime, intensifying their defense. Lokendra and Dalph Panopio led the charge with fast breaks and perimeter shooting, while Montgomery fought hard in the paint. The Titans exploded for 42 points in the third quarter, trimming the Dribblers' lead to just 11 points heading into the final quarter.

The fourth quarter saw the Titans continue their surge, with Kitto hitting a deep three and Durell McDonald converting a three-point play. The Dribblers struggled offensively, allowing the Titans to close the gap to just two points.

As the game reached its climax, the Titans, led by Judd and McDonald, tied the game. However, Barker and Pratyanshu Tomar responded with key shots to maintain a slim lead. With 18 seconds left, Barker sank crucial free throws to give the Dribblers a four-point lead. Montgomery then sealed the win with a powerful two-handed dunk, ensuring the Dribblers' victory.

The Dribblers' 88-84 win was a dramatic and hard-fought contest, marking a memorable end to the Titans' three-game winning streak.

FIH Hockey Pro League: India Captain Salima Tete Praises Team's Resilience Against England



India women's team captain Salima Tete praised her team's performance against England in the FIH Hockey Pro League, despite their narrow loss in the shootout. The match ended in a tense 2-2 draw, with both teams battling fiercely. India showed great resilience, holding their nerve to force the game into the shootout. However, England kept their composure during the shootout and managed to win the bonus point.

Tete expressed her satisfaction with how her team played, emphasizing their determination and resilience on the field. Although the loss in the shootout was disappointing, the captain acknowledged the positive aspects of her team's performance, highlighting their ability to stay strong under pressure. The match at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium on Sunday was an exciting contest, showcasing the competitive spirit of both teams.

Yashasvi Jaiswal Ruled Out of Mumbai's Ranji Trophy Semi-Final Against Vidarbha

Mumbai's preparations for the upcoming Ranji Trophy semi-final against Vidarbha have taken a significant blow with opener Yashasvi Jaiswal being ruled out due to a right ankle injury. Jaiswal sustained the injury during training over the weekend, just days before the semi-final clash, which is set to begin on Monday in Nagpur.

Initially part of India's Champions Trophy 2025 squad, Jaiswal was later replaced by spinner Varun Chakaravathy and was retained as a non-travelling reserve. However, following his injury, Jaiswal is expected to return home, and there will be no replacement named for him in Mumbai's semi-final squad.

Despite Jaiswal's absence, Mumbai's squad still boasts a wealth of experience with players like Ajinkya Rahane, Suryakumar Ya-

dav, Shivam Dube, and Shardul Thakur. Among them, Shivam Dube is also a non-travelling reserve for India's Champions Trophy squad and could potentially be called up if required.

Jaiswal, a regular member of India's Test squad, had recently made his ODI debut against England in Nagpur, stepping in for Virat Kohli, who was sidelined due to a knee injury. He scored 15 runs in that match. Jaiswal has only played one Ranji Trophy match this season, where he scored 4 and 26 in Mumbai's group-stage loss to Jammu and Kashmir.

This semi-final clash against Vidarbha is a rematch of last season's final. Vidarbha have been in exceptional form, winning seven out of their eight matches this season. They head into the semi-final on the back of a dom-



inant 198-run victory over Tamil Nadu in the quarter-finals. Mumbai will now look to rely on their experienced squad to carry them through to the final, despite Jaiswal's absence.

Tejas Dhingra Defends National Championship Title at NEC Show Jumping 2024-25



Tejas Dhingra of Beeya's Riding Facility successfully retained his National Championship title at the National Equestrian Championship (Show Jumping) 2024-25. The prestigious event took place at the Modi Equestrian Academy in Meerut on Sunday.

Dhingra, the reigning champion, triumphed with

an impressive 16 points in the Championship Tour, securing the top spot. He finished ahead of the joint runners-up, Amar Sarin of Tarc Equestrian Centre and Ashray Butta of EGC Stables, who shared second place. This victory marks another significant achievement in Dhingra's show jumping career.



Movie Review: "MAX" (Streaming on ZEE5)



Released on February 15, 2025, MAX is a Kannada action thriller starring Sudeepa and directed by Vijay Karthikeyaa. The movie, now streaming on ZEE5, revolves around a tough police officer named Max, who confronts political corruption and crime in a troubled region. The film follows Max as he navigates through a complex scenario involving powerful political families and their rebellious children, leading to a murder mystery that challenges the law enforcement system. While Sudeepa delivers a strong performance, the film's character development feels lacking, particularly in the antagonist roles. Varalaxmi Sarathkumar's introduction is intriguing, but her character

loses impact as the story progresses. The film's narrative closely resembles Karthi's Kaithi, which may evoke a sense of familiarity for some viewers. Despite impressive cinematography by Shekhar Chandra and a solid background score by Ajaneesh Loknath, the screenplay fails to fully capitalize on its potential. The film could have been more gripping with stronger villain arcs and sharper pacing. Ultimately, MAX remains an average action thriller, with its shortcomings preventing it from reaching its true potential. Rating: 2.75/5

Nicole Kidman Talks About Her Motivation to Work with Female Directors



Hollywood icon Nicole Kidman has shared her inspiration behind collaborating with female directors, including Sofia Coppola, Halina Reijn, and Lulu Wang. Reflecting on her career choices, Kidman expressed that she feels deeply connected to women's stories, as a "mother, daughter, wife, producer, and actress." She feels that her personal experiences allow her to understand and portray women's emotions authentically, which makes her gravitate toward working with talented female filmmakers. In an interview, Kidman explained, "I feel in tune with women's stories, obviously, I am a woman, and I can speak as a mother, daughter, wife, producer, actress; in short, I can move in different spaces and use a well of emotions and experiences to express my voice." She spoke highly of her collaborations with renowned directors, praising their unique perspectives, such as Susanne Bier, Lulu Wang, and Mimi Cave, the young director of Holland. Kidman also mentioned her upcoming project, Scarpetta, where she will work with the accomplished Franco-Swedish director Charlotte Brandstrom. While she remains committed to telling stories that resonate with her emotionally, she emphasized that she will not limit herself to only female-led narratives. Her primary focus will always be on the emotional impact and connection she feels with the story. As a fearless actress, she remains dedicated to embracing roles that challenge and inspire her.

Nandamuri Balakrishna's "Dakko Maharaj" to Stream on Netflix from February 21

Nandamuri Balakrishna's latest blockbuster, Dakko Maharaj, is set to stream on Netflix from February 21. The film, directed by Bobby Kolli and produced by Sitara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, was released in theatres on January 12 and quickly became a major hit. The movie garnered significant box office success with record-breaking collections from the first show itself, marking Balakrishna's fourth consecutive hit. The film features Balakrishna

na alongside Pragya Jaiswal, while Shraddha Srinath, Chandini Chowdary, Urvashi Rautela, and Bobby Deol play key roles. The music for the film was composed by Thaman. Balakrishna, who is currently busy shooting for the highly anticipated Akhanda 2 under Boyapati Srinu's direction, continues to maintain a strong presence in the industry. Fans of the actor and the film can now enjoy Dakko Maharaj on Netflix starting this week.



Ed Sheeran Ends India Tour with Electrifying Delhi-NCR Concert



British music sensation Ed Sheeran wrapped up his Mathematics Tour to India with an electrifying performance in Delhi-NCR on Saturday, leaving thousands of fans ecstatic. Performing at the Leisure Valley Ground, Sheeran, armed with just his guitar and a loop station, showcased why he's one of the world's most captivating live performers. Opening the evening, Indian singer-actor Lisa Mishra set the stage with her energetic performance,

getting the crowd hyped for the main act. After a short wait, Sheeran appeared wearing a 'Delhi' T-shirt, greeted by loud cheers. He began with 'Castle on the Hill', before addressing the audience, sharing how he wished to perform across various cities in India, unlike his previous tours which were confined to Mumbai. Sheeran's tour, which began in Pune on January 30, took him to Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Shillong before concluding in

Delhi. He shared his joy of exploring Delhi, mentioning his sight-seeing adventures in Old Delhi and expressing his gratitude for the warm welcome. During his performance, he demonstrated his impressive loop station skills, layering beats, harmonies, and guitar riffs in real time. Promising to return soon, Sheeran left his fans eagerly awaiting his next visit to India.

Kareena Kapoor Requests Paparazzi to Avoid Clicking Pictures of Kids at Randhir Kapoor's Birthday Bash

At Randhir Kapoor's recent birthday celebration, Kareena Kapoor made a special request to the paparazzi to refrain from clicking pictures of her children. The actress, who has always been protective of her family's privacy, reiterated her stance on keeping her kids out of the limelight. This came as she made her appearance at

the event, where she was seen in a stunning ensemble, maintaining her usual grace. Kareena, who was last seen in Singham Again, is a staunch advocate of her children's privacy. Her call for no pictures of her kids further reinforces her commitment to safeguarding their personal space.



Katrina Kaif Praises Vicky Kaushal's Stellar Performance in Chhaava

As Vicky Kaushal's historical action film Chhaava hit theaters, his wife, Katrina Kaif, took to Instagram to share her admiration for his performance. Posting a poster of the film, she described the experience as "what a cinematic experience" and praised the film's

portrayal of the glory of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, directed by Laxman Utekar. She specifically highlighted the powerful impact of the final 40 minutes, admitting that she spent the morning wanting to re-watch the film. Katrina continued to shower love

on her husband, calling his performance "outstanding." She expressed awe at the intensity and transformation Vicky brings to every character, referring to him as a "chameleon" for his effortless portrayal of different roles. "Every time you come on screen,

every shot, the intensity you bring on screen, you are a chameleon," she wrote, proudly celebrating Vicky's talent. In Chhaava, Vicky Kaushal plays the role of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, while Rashmika Mandanna stars as Maharani Yesubai.

