




**Weather Forecast**

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

# WRONG DIALOGUES @ WRONG TIME



- Political Parties Chanting for BCs
- Congress' Self-Goal with BC Census
- TPCC Chief's Comments on BC CM
- Will Revanth Reddy be the CM Candidate in the Upcoming Elections?
- Real Estate Crisis and Revanth's Struggles
- Growing Gap Between Congress High Command and Revanth
- Rahul Gandhi Serious About the Mistakes in BC Census
- Decision to Conduct a Second BC Census

**TPN | Kishore Katta Central Desk, Feb 18**  
Politics in Telangana is revolving around BCs (Backward Classes). Congress has scored a self-goal with the BC Census, and TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud's comments have worsened the situation. While stating that Revanth Reddy would be the CM for the next five years, he also commented that a BC CM would come from Congress. This has led to doubts about whether Revanth Reddy will be the CM candidate for the upcoming elections. On the other hand, after Revanth's controversial actions in Hyderabad, the real estate market suffered a major setback, which he tried to cover up by introducing plans for Future City and Skill University. However, despite his efforts, the real estate

boom hasn't picked up again. If Revanth doesn't come back to power in the next term, investors are worried about future rules, and investments in the Hyderabad real estate sector have significantly decreased. While all this was unfolding, the Congress Party's BC Census was criticized. The BC community organizations expressed dissatisfaction with the census process, calling it full of flaws. The opposition parties quickly took advantage of the situation, starting their own political games around BCs. This forced Congress leaders into a defensive position. Even the Congress High Command showed dissatisfaction with the outcome of the BC census, prompting CM Revanth to decide on a second census. This further fueled the opposition's aggression.

Meanwhile, TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud's comments about a BC CM have backfired. The opposition trapped him with his own words, making Revanth Reddy's position more difficult. Revanth had previously appointed Mahesh as TPCC Chief, and now the Congress party has differing opinions on his remarks. Another major concern is the growing gap between Revanth Reddy and the Congress High Command. There are rumors that Rahul Gandhi is displeased with Revanth's actions. The cabinet expansion was supposed to happen already, but due to dissatisfaction with Revanth's list, it has been delayed. Furthermore, Rahul became angry after Revanth

**2 PAGE**



## Ration Card Rollout Begins in Telangana

**TPN, Correspondent Hyderabad, Feb 18** : In a significant move, the Telangana government has decided to issue new ration cards immediately to all eligible beneficiaries. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has directed officials to expedite the process without delay, ensuring that new cards reach those in need at the earliest.

As part of the initiative, the CM has instructed district officials to make immediate arrangements for the distribution of new ration cards in districts where the MLC election code is not in effect. He has also emphasized the need to create awareness among beneficiaries to prevent unnecessary reapplications.

On Monday, CM Revanth Reddy reviewed various designs related to the new ration cards and instructed officials to ensure a smooth distribution

**CM Revanth Directs Officials to Expedite Distribution**

**Over 6.68 Lakh Families Identified as Beneficiaries**

**No Need to Reapply for Prajapalan & Prajavani Applicants**

**Mee-Seva Centers Witness Heavy Rush for Applications**

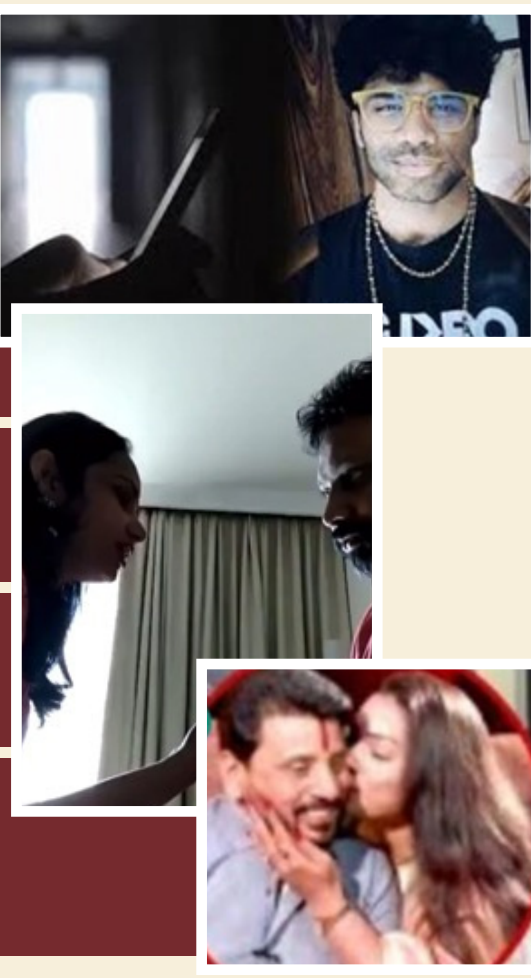
The government has been actively working on finalizing the list of eligible beneficiaries based on applications received so far. Additionally, fresh applications are still being accepted, leading to a surge in activity at Mee-Seva centers across the state.

In recent days, large crowds have been observed at Mee-Seva centers, as many individuals who applied during the Prajapalan and Prajavani programs are reapplying, fearing their names were omitted from the list. The CM has assured that applications submitted through these programs have already been processed, and there is no need for applicants to reapply. Authorities have been instructed to disseminate this information effectively to avoid confusion among the public.

**2 PAGE**

# NO CENSOR... NO CONTROL... FULL ADULT CONTENT ON MEDIA

- Lack of Media Censorship
- Social Media vs. Traditional Media
- Ethical Crisis in Journalism
- The Need for Stricter Regulations
- Media's Descent into Controversy
- Mainstream Media's Obsession with Sensationalism



## SC to Hear Defection Case Today

- Court to Decide on Disqualification of Defected MLAs
- BRS Seeks Action Against Defected MLAs
- Supreme Court Takes Up MLAs' Defection Case
- Court Questions Delay in Speaker's Decision



**TPN, Correspondent Hyderabad, Feb 18** : The Supreme Court will hear a high-profile case today regarding BRS MLAs who defected to the Congress party after winning on the BRS ticket. This case has sent shockwaves through Telangana politics, with the BRS party filing a petition in the High Court against the 10 MLAs who switched allegiance to the ruling Congress party.

The controversy centers around the decision to disqualify the MLAs, which the Telangana Assembly Speaker had been expected to address. The BRS party has approached the Supreme Court after the Speaker failed to take any action on the matter.

**2 PAGE**



## CM Directs Efficient Water Use in Telangana

- CM's Call for Vigilance in Water Management
- Efficient Water Use to Prevent Shortages
- Monitoring Water Reserves to Safeguard Agriculture
- Key Guidelines for Irrigation and Drinking Water Supply
- CM Directs Action to Prevent Crop Damage

**2 PAGE**

### FASTag Usage on the Rise

New FASTag Penalties Begin Today

Double Toll Fee for Blacklisted Vehicles



**5 PAGE**

### High Court Issues Notices to Telangana Govt



**5 PAGE**

1st Page Cont..

## WRONG DIALOGUES @ WRONG TIME

sourced funds for the Skill University from Adani without proper approval. This incident appears to have widened the gap between them. Recently, Rahul Gandhi planned to visit Hanmakonda and speak to the people, but the trip was unexpectedly canceled, and Revanth was not informed about the changes, which caused unrest within the party. At the same time, some party members went to Delhi to complain about the BC Census being flawed and full of errors. Rahul Gandhi reportedly questioned why the census wasn't conducted properly despite 13 lakh people participating in the survey. He instructed that details be gathered about those who did not participate in the survey. This has brought the issue back to square one. Before further discontent grows among the public over BC slogans, ration cards, and farmer welfare programs, Congress is facing difficulties in orga-

nizing local elections. Due to the second census, local body elections have been indefinitely postponed. These developments indicate a growing divide between Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy. Normally, the CM would have been informed about such changes in advance, but it seems the information about Rahul's canceled visit to Warangal never reached Revanth. This is causing internal agitation within the party. It is clear that despite Revanth Reddy's popularity and his aggressive decisions that brought Congress closer to power, his strained relationship with the Delhi leadership is a major obstacle in his path. Even if he tries to push forward, he lacks support from the high command, leaving him stuck in local issues. The Telangana government, already struggling with financial issues, is now also facing internal conflicts and a lack of support from the leadership.

## CM Directs Efficient Water Use in Telangana

**TPN , Correspondent Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has directed officials to ensure there are no disruptions in irrigation and drinking water supplies. During a review meeting, the CM instructed officials to release water for crops as per the planned schedule under various irrigation projects in the state.

He emphasized the need to take necessary precautions to prevent crops from drying out, particularly by assessing potential challenges arising from rising temperatures. CM Revanth Reddy urged the irrigation department to remain vigilant for the next three months, closely monitoring field conditions to

address any issues promptly.

The Chief Minister reviewed the current water reserves and irrigation water release for crops with Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, Principal Secretary Shanti Kumari, and other senior officials. He inquired about water usage in major projects such as Srisailam, Nagarjunasagar, and SRSP, stressing the importance of utilizing available water efficiently.

Revanth Reddy also instructed district collectors to implement special measures to avoid any shortages in irrigation and drinking water supplies, ensuring smooth management of these vital resources across the state.

## Ration Card Rollout Begins in Telangana

The Telangana government has identified 6.68 lakh poor families across the state as eligible for new ration cards. A total of 11,65,052 individuals from these families have been included in the beneficiary list, which has been sent to district representatives. To address any concerns or objections, village and basti meetings were conducted from January 20 to 24.

The formal issuance of new ration cards began on January 26, and with the CM's latest directive, the distribution process is expected to gain further momentum. This move aims to provide essential food security to economically disadvantaged families and ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive their ration cards without unnecessary delays.

## SC to Hear Defection Case Today

In a previous hearing, the Supreme Court bench questioned the government about the delay in making a decision on the disqualification of the defected MLAs. The bench warned that if the government did not provide a clear timeline, it would make a decision itself. The Speaker's lawyer responded that the decision would be taken at the "right

time," prompting a stern question from the bench about whether this meant waiting until the end of the MLAs' term.

Today's hearing is crucial, as the Supreme Court's ruling will determine the fate of the defected MLAs. All eyes are on the court as the political future of these MLAs hangs in the balance.

## Political Leaders Honor KCR on Birthday

- Revanth, Jagan Send Birthday Cheers
- KTR's Emotional Tribute to KCR
- BRS Celebrates KCR's Milestone

**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** Former Telangana Chief Minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K. Chandrashekar Rao, known as KCR, received heartfelt birthday greetings from various political figures. Telangana's current Chief Minister, A. Revanth Reddy, took to social media to wish KCR, stating, "Heartly greetings to the Gajwel constituency legislators and former Chief Minister Sri Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhara Rao on his birthday. May God



grant him complete health and long life as he is constantly engaged in public service and contributes to the development of the state."

Echoing these sentiments, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy also extended his best wishes, hoping for KCR's

health and a successful tenure in public service. Jagan wished KCR a full hundred years in public service, expressing his hope that he would complete all his planned tasks. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan also wished KCR good health and longevity in serving the public.

The day was filled with emotional tributes, particularly from KCR's son, K.T. Rama Rao (KTR), who posted a moving message on social media. KTR described his father's dedication to Telangana's statehood, saying, "Every father says that his children are his heroes. My father is not the only one.. I am lucky to be a Telangana hero. Having a dream.. He went out for it with boundless commitment. Facing critics, he proudly showed them how it can be fulfilled. My goal is to be someone you can proudly call your son."

BRS supporters celebrated KCR's birthday across Telangana with pujas and community service initiatives.

## Revanth Allocates Double Bedroom Houses

- Indiramma Scheme Targets Landless Beneficiaries

**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** The Revanth-led Telangana government has embarked on a significant housing initiative by starting the allocation of double bedroom houses, previously constructed but not distributed by the BRS government, to those on the L-2 list under the Indiramma House Scheme. This list comprises people without their own land.

The Indiramma House Scheme categorizes beneficiaries into three groups: L-1 for those with land (21.93 lakh people), L-2 for those without land (19.96 lakh), and L-3 for those with existing homes. The L-1 group will receive Rs. 5 lakh in installments for house construction, while the L-2 group is slated to get both land and financial assistance next financial year. Currently, the government is focusing on providing double bedroom houses to approximately 80,000 from the L-2 list.



Under the previous BRS administration, 2.36 lakh double bedroom houses were sanctioned over a decade, with 1.58 lakh completed and 1.36 lakh distributed. The remaining houses are now being addressed, with ongoing talks with contractors to complete stalled projects. Many constructions were halted due to unpaid bills, and the Housing Board is now offering incentives like sand subsidies to restart these projects.

This strategic move by the Revanth government not only aims to fulfill the housing needs of the landless but also to efficiently utilize the existing housing infrastructure left by the previous regime.

## Ramzan Relaxation for Telangana's Muslim Employees

**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** In a considerate move, the Telangana government has announced that Muslim government employees and teachers can leave their workplaces an hour early during the holy month of Ramzan. This relaxation applies from March 2 to March 31, 2025, allowing employees to depart at 4 pm instead of the usual time.

The directive, issued by Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, extends this benefit to all Muslim employees, including those on contract, outsourcing, and in the board and government sectors, provided there are no emergencies requiring their presence.

The start of Ramzan will be officially determined by the Central Route-e-Hilal Committee or Chandra Darshan Committee of Sadar Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Decan, based on the sighting of the crescent moon. As Hyderabad gears up for Ramzan, local businesses and mosques are making preparations to accommodate the spiritual and communal activities during this period.

This announcement by the Telangana government highlights a gesture of goodwill towards its Muslim employees, ensuring they can partake in the observances of this sacred month while managing their professional responsibilities.

## Bandi Sanjay Calls for Rejected BC List for Muslims

**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar has ignited a controversy with his remarks on former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's religion and the Congress government's stance on reservations.

During the closing ceremony of the Swadeshi Mela in Karimnagar, Bandi Sanjay questioned how Rajiv Gandhi could be considered a Hindu, claiming that his father, Feroze Jehangir Khan, had Parsi roots. He further alleged that the Gandhi family lacked a fixed caste, religion, or national identity, while praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "pure Indian" with global recognition.



In addition to his comments on Rajiv Gandhi's religion, Bandi Sanjay criticized the Congress government for including

Muslims in the Backward Classes (BC) category. He claimed that this would unfairly reduce the reservation share for other BCs, asserting that 10% of the proposed 42% BC reservation would be allocated to Muslims, which he described as an injustice.

The Minister also called for the implementation of laws against religious conversions and "love jihad" in Telangana, similar to those in Maharashtra. He further stated that if the state government submits a list that includes Muslims in the BC category, it will not be approved by the Centre. However, he assured that a revised list excluding Muslims would be accepted.

## NO CENSOR... NO CONTROL... FULL ADULT CONTENT ON MEDIA

**TPN | Kishore Katta  
Central Desk, Feb 18**

The increasing spread of explicit and sensational content across social media platforms has sparked concerns over media ethics and censorship. With little to no regulation, digital platforms are becoming breeding grounds for inappropriate content, overshadowing the primary role of journalism. Traditionally regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy, the media was expected to act as a watchdog and voice public concerns. However, with the rise of digital platforms, mainstream media has shifted its focus from responsible journalism to chasing sensational content.

The demand for adult-themed debates and scandalous reports has overshadowed meaningful discourse. Conversations between individuals are being twisted into controversy, leading to explicit videos being uploaded across various channels. YouTube, once considered an alternative for independent voices, has now become a battleground for sensationalism, bypassing traditional journalism with unchecked content. The increasing competition for views and revenue has resulted in unethical practices, including the invasion of celebrities' personal lives for TRPs. A recent case involving Lavanya is a prime example of the

media's reckless approach. Despite the case being unrelated to Shekhar Basha, several channels dragged him into their reports for the sake of increasing viewership. Lavanya was subjected to repeated interviews, and her call records were exposed on live television. Similarly, the social media frenzy surrounding Duvvada and Madhuri's relationship highlights the exploitation of personal affairs for online engagement. The controversy, which started with Duvvada's issues with his wife Vani, was amplified by YouTube channels through interviews and exaggerated narratives. The relentless focus on their relationship was aimed purely at boosting channel traffic. Jana Sena leader Kiran Roy-al's leaked phone call further demonstrates how media outlets fabricate stories without verification. YouTube thumbnails have become more obscene than the content itself, with exaggerated imagery de-

signed to mislead viewers. Despite these alarming trends, state I&PR departments remain passive, failing to take necessary action against misleading and inappropriate media practices. With thousands of YouTube channels emerging across Telugu states, concerns over media guidelines have intensified. While platform policies exist, enforcement remains weak. Governments have introduced laws regarding social media regulation, but their ineffective implementation has allowed unchecked content to thrive. Experts warn that if this trend continues, the media's role in society could become even more damaging in the future. The urgent need for stricter guidelines and active enforcement is evident. Without proper regulation, the credibility of journalism will continue to erode, leading to a media landscape dominated by sensationalism and unethical practices.

# KTR Calls Being Born to KCR a Blessing on His 71<sup>st</sup> Birthday

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : As former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) celebrates his 71st birthday, his son and BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) expressed heartfelt admiration for his father's leadership in the Telangana movement. In a special message, KTR said, "Being born in KCR's womb is a blessing from my previous birth."

KTR praised KCR for his pivotal role in leading the movement that ultimately resulted in the creation of Telangana. He highlighted



how KCR faced immense challenges, with no

media support or external backing during the early and late stages of the movement. Despite these obstacles, KTR emphasized that his father, a true hero to the Telangana nation, persisted in the face of adversity, even risking his life to bring the dream of a separate state to fruition.

KTR's message reflects the deep respect and gratitude he holds for his father's sacrifices and leadership, acknowledging KCR's indomitable spirit in achieving Telangana's statehood.

## BC Chief Minister for Telangana Soon, Says Congress Leader

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : A key Congress leader, AICC OBC Section National President Ajay Singh Yadav, has clarified that a BC (Backward Classes) person will soon become the Chief Minister of Telangana. However, he confirmed that there will be no immediate change in the CM position, and for now, Revanth Reddy will continue in the role for the next four years.

Speaking to the media, Yadav emphasized that the caste census conducted in Telangana would serve as an eye-opener for other states and act as a game changer. He criticized the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of upper castes, who, despite constituting just 1 percent of the population, control 40 percent of the country's wealth and industries.

Yadav also advocated for the inclusion of



the BC reservation Bill in the 9th Schedule and announced that in the upcoming Telangana local elections, 46 percent of reservations would be allotted to BCs, with 10 percent for minorities. He further defended the Congress party's commitment to standing by the weaker sections, highlighting their support for OBCs since the Mandal Commission in 1993.

## Minister Seethakka Disappointed by Poor Turnout



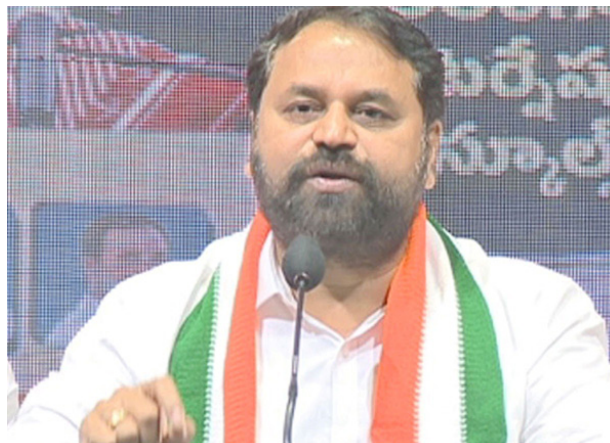
TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : A recent Congress MLC meeting held under the chairmanship of Minister Seethakka in Bhainsa town, Nirmal district, witnessed a disappointing response. The event, aimed at engaging with the public, saw very few attendees, leading the minister to express impatience.

The meeting, which was meant to rally support for the party, had empty chairs, with only a handful of participants, including MLC candidate Alfors Narender Reddy, MLA Vedma Bojja, former MLAs Venugopal Chari, Vitthal Reddy, Narayana Rao Patel, and a couple of graduates. It was reported that several of the attendees were staff members of Alfors Educational Institutions, further adding to the minister's frustration.

Seethakka's visible anger reflected the party's concerns about the lack of public engagement, raising questions about the Congress party's outreach and organizational strength in the region.

## This Drama Is for MLC Elections: Addanki Dayakar



TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : Congress leader Addanki Dayakar has accused BJP leaders Billa and Rendak of orchestrating a political drama aimed at gaining an advantage in the MLC elections. Dayakar criticized Rahul Gandhi for engaging in caste and religion-based politics, likening him to a follower of Paramanandaiah. He claimed that the drama was merely a tactic for electoral gain and stated that these efforts were ultimately futile for the state's development.

Dayakar also criticized BJP ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay, labeling them as ineffective and accusing them of divisive politics. He expressed his disdain for Kishan Reddy's actions and dismissed his attempts to discredit Chief Minister KCR. Further, Dayakar pointed out that the Nehru family, which sacrificed greatly for the country, should not be insulted, referencing their critical role in India's foundation.

The Congress leader concluded by accusing the BJP of attempting to create divisions among various castes and religions, emphasizing the party's ongoing efforts to undermine the unity of the nation.

## Future CM from BCs, Goud Declares

TPN Correspondent

Hyderabad, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud made a significant statement regarding the future of leadership in Telangana, asserting that Revanth Reddy will continue as the Chief Minister for the next five years. Speaking at a press conference held at Gandhi Bhavan with AICC OBC wing president Ajay Singh, Goud expressed strong support for Revanth Reddy's leadership while hinting at a future shift in the state's political landscape.



Goud emphasized that there is a strong possibility of a BC (Backward Classes) leader becoming the Chief Minister of Telangana in the near future. He highlighted that Rahul Gandhi is committed to empowering BCs and that a BC leader would eventually lead the state, with Congress playing a key role in making this happen.

The TPCC president stated that future elections would focus on BCs, and the upcoming cabinet expansion would prioritize their representation. Goud's comments are seen as a bold move to bolster the Congress party's support among BC communities in Telangana, signaling a shift toward greater BC representation in the state's leadership.

## Harish Rao Recalls Emotional Moment with KCR

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : Siddipet MLA and former minister Harish Rao shared an emotional moment while reflecting on BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao's (KCR) determination



during the Telangana statehood movement. Speaking on the occasion of KCR's 71st birthday celebrations, Harish Rao recalled a particularly moving moment when KCR began his fast for the creation of Telangana.

Rao stated, "When I saw KCR starting his fast, tears welled up in my eyes. He had been fasting for 11 days, and his body was weakening, yet his determination remained unwavering." He went on to describe how, despite Central Home Minister P. Chidambaram's plea to end the fast, KCR remained firm, stating he would end the fast only when the Central Government initiated the process for Telangana's formation.

Harish Rao praised KCR's resilience, calling him the driving force behind the movement. "KCR risked his life and gave us the slogan 'If KCR is right, Telangana will come,'" he said, acknowledging KCR's pivotal role in achieving statehood for Telangana.

As BRS ranks across the state celebrate KCR's birthday, Harish Rao's comments highlighted the emotional and historic significance of the Telangana movement.

## Boora Narsaiah Goud Criticizes Revanth Reddy's Remarks on PM Modi

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : State BJP leader and former minister Boora Narsaiah Goud made sensational comments about Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of speaking with caste pride. Speaking to the media on Monday, Goud suggested that if Revanth Reddy were to face Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he would be "green," implying that the CM would get angry.

Goud criticized Revanth Reddy's recent statement, where the CM described Modi as an "upper caste" person and a "legally converted BC." In response, Boora Narsaiah Goud stated that Modi was not a "converted Gandhi" and would not be affected by such remarks.

The exchange highlights ongoing tensions between the BJP and Congress in Telangana, with leaders from both sides making strong accusations and counter-statements.



## BJP Always Stands by Teachers: MP Etala Rajendra



TPN , Correspondent

Miryalaguda, Feb 18 : In Miryalaguda, MP Etala Rajendra participated in the MLC election campaign, appealing to teachers and lecturers for their support. He criticized the opposition, stating that both parties lack the courage to field candidates and instead focus on offering concessions to companies

that employ people. Etala praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for respecting teachers, drawing a contrast with the past leadership, which he claimed insulted national icons like Abdul Kalam.

Etala emphasized that the BJP has consistently supported teachers, citing the party's stance against the

controversial 317 GO and its efforts to address issues faced by educators. He accused Chief Minister KCR of ignoring the plight of teachers, with several facing financial hardships, including pending dues, retirement benefits, and unaddressed grievances. Etala also highlighted the delayed fee reimbursements and stressed that teachers and private college owners were suffering.

The MP concluded by asserting that the BJP's commitment to teachers and good governance has strengthened its position, urging the electorate to support the party in the upcoming elections.

## Sabita Reddy KCR Lives in People's Hearts



TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : On the occasion of KCR's birthday, former minister Sabita Indra Reddy planted saplings at the Chandana Cheruvu embankment in the newly established Mirpet Municipal Corporation playground. During the event, she expressed her unwavering support for KCR, stating, "You can tear KCR flexi and banners, but you can't remove KCR from the hearts of the people."

Sabita Indra Reddy prayed for KCR's long life, wishing him a hundred years, and hoped that the Chief Minister would be re-elected with the people's blessings. She criticized the Congress government, accusing them of using petty politics to divert attention from real issues, particularly with the destruction of KCR's birthday flexi banners. She emphasized that, unlike the opposition, her party had never resorted to tearing down banners of any leader in the past ten years.

Reddy expressed her anger at the criticism of KCR, who led the Telangana movement for 14 years, and questioned the Congress's actions, saying it was shameful for them to accuse KCR of not fulfilling promises. She praised KCR for his leadership in bringing Telangana to fruition and acknowledged his efforts in uniting all sectors of the state.

BRS leaders Arkala Kamesh Reddy, Siddala Lavanya, and others attended the event in support.



# High Court Issues Notices to Telangana Govt

Court Orders Halt on Construction

Petitioner Challenges Caste-Based Land Allotment

Government Seeks Time for Response

HC Adjourns Hearing to Next Week



ty buildings in Hyderabad. In a significant decision, the court has ordered the government to halt any construction on these lands until further notice.

Court issued notices to the Telangana government, instructing it to refrain from proceeding with any construction on the disputed land. The government's legal representative sought additional time to file a counter-response. Acknowledging this request, the court adjourned the hearing to next week.

A petition was filed challenging the state's decision to allocate government land to certain caste-based communities, including Balija, Kapu, Velama, and Kamma. The petitioner argued that granting land worth crores to specific caste groups was unjust and requested the court to annul the government order (GO).

This ruling has sparked discussions about the legality and fairness of caste-based land allotments, with many closely watching the government's next move.

Taking up the case, the High

TPN , Correspondent  
Hyderabad , Feb 18 : The Telangana High Court has issued

a major directive to the state government regarding the allotment of land for communi-

# High Court Issues Notices to Telangana Govt

Court Orders Halt on Construction

Petitioner Challenges Caste-Based Land Allotment

Government Seeks Time for Response

HC Adjourns Hearing to Next Week

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : The Telangana High Court has issued a major directive to the state government regarding the allotment of land for community buildings in Hyderabad. In a significant decision, the court has ordered the government to halt any construction on these lands until further notice.



A petition was filed challenging the state's decision to allocate government land to certain caste-based communities, including Balija, Kapu, Velama, and Kamma. The petitioner argued that granting land worth crores to specific caste groups was unjust and requested the court to annul the government order (GO).

to refrain from proceeding with any construction on the disputed land. The government's legal representative sought additional time to file a counter-response. Acknowledging this request, the court adjourned the hearing to next week.

This ruling has sparked discussions about the legality and fairness of caste-based land allotments, with many closely watching the government's next move.

Taking up the case, the High Court issued notices to the Telangana government, instructing it

# Minister Ponnam Attends Youth Congress Training Program

TPN , Correspondent  
Hyderabad , Feb 18 : Minister Ponnam Prabhakar recently attended the Telangana Youth Congress training program, Soniyamma Kutiram Yuvakranti Baniyadi Training Camp, as the chief guest. In his address, he congratulated and extended best wishes to the newly elected Youth Congress members.



ceiving opportunities despite hard work, noting the importance of patience, restraint, and credibility within the Congress. He pointed to his and other leaders' journeys, including Mahesh Kumar Goud's rise to state party president after years of dedication.

Recalling his long tenure in Congress, Prabhakar shared his experiences, stating that he served as the student union president in 1987, the district NSUI president in 1999, and later, the state NSUI president

for 26 years. He emphasized his commitment to the Congress Party despite facing setbacks, including the party's

defeats in 2014 and 2018. Prabhakar spoke about the challenges of not always re-

He urged Youth Congress leaders to remain connected with the grassroots and stay committed to the party's core values. Prabhakar emphasized that when opportunities arise, success will follow for those who have worked diligently over the years.

# High-End Party Busted at Jubilee Hills Pub

Jubilee Hills Pub Party: 1 Test Positive for Drugs

Drug Bust at Hyderabad Pub: 20 Identified

TGANB Nabs 20 Drug Suspects at Jubilee Hills Pub

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : A high-end party was busted at a pub in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, by the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TGANB) and Hyderabad Police on Sunday night. During the operation, officials identified 20 individuals suspected of being involved in drug consumption.



Out of the 20 potential drug consumers, one individual tested positive for the use of multiple substances, including marijuana and cocaine, through on-the-spot drug tests. The authorities conducted advanced drug testing, with 14 individuals undergoing further screening. Among them, one confirmed the use of illicit substances.

enabled authorities to perform accurate, on-the-spot testing, ensuring swift and precise results.

The TGANB emphasized that anyone with information regarding drug use or trafficking can contact their toll-free number, 1908, to report any suspicious activity. This operation highlights the ongoing efforts by authorities to curb drug abuse and trafficking in Hyderabad.

The operation was carried out using state-of-the-art technology, including modern drug detection kits, rapid-result urine and saliva test kits, and narcotics detection dogs. These tools

The authorities are continuing to investigate the incident, and further action will be taken based on the findings of the ongoing inquiry.

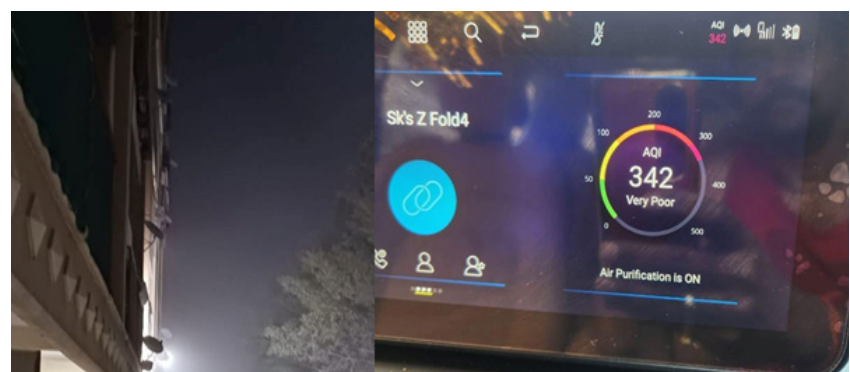
# GHMC Standing Committee Election Nomination Deadline Ends

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : The deadline for filing nominations for the GHMC Standing Committee Election has concluded. Nominations were accepted from the 10th of February until 3 pm today, with a total of 17 nominations submitted. Of these, 7 were from the Congress Party, 8 from AIMIM, and 2 from BRS.

BJP corporators have opted out of this election. The Returning Officer has officially listed the candidates from all parties who filed nominations and will conduct a "scooty" on the nominations in the presence of the Commissioner tomorrow. Following this review, the final list will be announced, and candidates will have until the 21st to withdraw their nominations.

If the two nominations filed by BRS are withdrawn, the Standing Committee election could proceed without opposition. However, if the BRS members choose to remain, the election will take place on the 25th of February.



# Severe Air Pollution in Miyapur Due to Negligent Construction Practices

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : The air quality in Miyapur has recently reached alarming levels, with readings hitting 342. The primary cause has been linked to the construction activities by two builders, Sia Builders and Primark Constructions, on Naren Gardens Street. Residents in the area have raised concerns about the lack of basic safety measures by the construction companies, with dust and debris spreading uncontrollably to nearby apartments.

ly, is suffering from respiratory issues due to the high pollution levels. Despite objections from residents, construction continues unabated, with no steps taken to reduce dust emissions. The pollution has been further exacerbated by the apparent negligence of both the Telangana Pollution Control Board (PCB) and GHMC officials.

Locals have criticized officials for turning a blind eye, with some alleging that bribery is influencing the lack of action. Residents are calling for immediate intervention to address this crisis.

The local community, including children, women, and the elder-

# MLC Pochampally Clarifies in Farmhouse Cockfight Case

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : BRS MLC Pochampally Srinivas Reddy has issued a statement regarding his involvement in the recent farmhouse cockfighting case, where the police are investigating an illegal event. In an official explanation given to Moinsabad police, accompanied by his lawyer, Pochampally clarified that the farmhouse in question belongs to him and was leased to Varra Ramesh Kumar Reddy in 2023.



The MLC further stated that the lease agreement also involved another individual, Bhupathi Raju Shiva Kumar Varma, a businessman from Andhra Pradesh, who is known by the alias Gabbar Singh. Pochampally strongly emphasized that he

had no personal involvement with the cockfighting event that took place on his leased property.

To substantiate his claims, Pochampally handed over the official lease documents to the police. He reiterated that he was

not connected to the illegal activity and assured that the lease arrangement with the involved parties was purely a business transaction.

This clarification comes amidst ongoing investigations into the incident, where several people were reportedly found engaged in illegal cockfighting activities. The police have not made any further comments on the matter as the investigation continues.

Pochampally's statement aims to distance himself from any criminal activities at the leased farmhouse while cooperating with law enforcement in their efforts to resolve the case.

# Telangana to Bangalore Travelers: 10% Discount on Tickets



TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 18 : Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) has announced a 10% discount on tickets for passengers traveling between Telangana and Bangalore. The discount applies to all services on the Bangalore route, both inbound and outbound.

RTC MD VC Sajjanar shared that the discount will result in savings of Rs. 100 to Rs. 160 per passenger. He encouraged travelers to visit the official TSRTC website, [http://tgrtcbus.in](http://tgrtcbus.in) for advance ticket reservations. This discount is expected to benefit many passengers traveling on this popular route.

## Woman Allegedly Beaten by TG Police Officer Over Complaint in Nizamabad



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** In a shocking incident from Telangana's Nizamabad district, a woman was reportedly beaten by a police officer when she attempted to file a complaint about her stolen purse. Boyi Bhagya, from Dupally village in Renjal mandal, was attending the Jankampet Brahmotsavam fair with her family when her purse, containing Rs 300 and house keys, went missing.

In a video confession, Bhagya shared that she initially approached the on-duty police at the fair and later went to the Bodhan Rural police station to register her complaint. There, the police showed her a purse but she denied ownership. Outside the station, Bhagya met a woman who claimed to have witnessed the theft, but later retracted her statement when taken to the police.

In response to the situation, Circle Inspector Vijay Kumar allegedly beat Bhagya with a baton, leaving bruises. On February 14, Bhagya filed a formal complaint against the CI at the Yedapally Police Station. The Yedapally SHO confirmed the complaint has been forwarded to the Bodhan ACP for investigation.

## TG Suspends SI After Bribery Arrest, ACB Conducts Search on Electricity Board Official



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** In a major crackdown on corruption, the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested a sub-inspector, P. Venu Gopal Goud, and his driver, K. Beerappa, on February 11 for accepting a bribe of Rs 30,000. The sub-inspector, posted at Dharur police station in Vikarabad district, allegedly demanded the amount from a farmer through his driver to grant station bail and remove the name of his son from a case. Following the farmer's complaint, the ACB successfully trapped Beerappa while accepting the bribe.

On February 16, Telangana's Inspector General of Police (IG) Satyanarayana issued suspension orders for Goud, pending further legal proceedings. The suspended sub-inspector and his driver were produced before the court following their arrest.

In another related development, the ACB also conducted raids on the properties of an assistant divisional engineer (ADE) of the Telangana Southern Power Distribution Company, Satish Kumar. Kumar was arrested on February 14 for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 50,000. The ACB's investigation led to the discovery of several illegally acquired assets, including land, residential and commercial buildings, gold ornaments, and cash. The searches spanned Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, and other districts of Telangana, with further investigations ongoing. These actions highlight the state's ongoing efforts to curb corruption within public offices.

# FASTag Usage on the Rise



**Low Balance? Your FASTag May Get Blocked**  
**Strict Transaction Rules at Toll Gates**

**Delayed Payments to Attract Extra Charges**  
**Ensure KYC and Balance to Avoid Fines**

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** The Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, in collaboration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has introduced significant changes to FASTag rules, effective from today. These updates aim to streamline toll payments, prevent fraud, and minimize disputes. Vehicle owners must be aware of these new rules to avoid penalties while traveling on highways.

**Strict Penalties for Low Balance and Delayed Payments**

According to the circular issued on January 28, 2025, FASTag users with low balances, late payments, or blacklisted tags will now face additional

penalties. A FASTag with insufficient balance will be blacklisted, and if a vehicle remains inactive for more than 60 minutes before reaching a toll plaza, the transaction will be rejected with "Error Code 176." Additionally, if a vehicle remains inactive for 10 minutes after scanning at the toll plaza, the transaction will also be declined with the same error code. In such cases, users will be required to pay double the toll fee as a penalty.

**Reasons for FASTag Blacklisting**

FASTags can also be blacklisted for reasons beyond low balance, including incomplete KYC verification or discrepancies between the chassis number and vehicle registration number. To avoid unnecessary fines, vehicle

owners are advised to check their FASTag balance regularly and ensure their details are up to date.

**Changes in the Chargeback Process and Cooling-Off Period**

The new rules also include updates to the chargeback process, cooling-off period, and transaction rejection rules to improve toll payment efficiency and reduce disputes. A critical change is that toll transactions must be completed within 15 minutes of the vehicle passing the toll reader. Previously, users could recharge their FASTag at the toll booth and proceed, but now, failing to maintain sufficient balance in advance could result in penalties.

**Growing FASTag Usage**

According to NPCI data, FASTag transactions have been steadily increasing. In December 2024, transactions rose by 6% to 382 million, compared to 359 million in November. The total transaction value also grew by 9%, reaching ₹6,642 crore in December, up from ₹6,070 crore in November.

With these new regulations, authorities hope to encourage timely toll payments and reduce congestion at toll plazas. Vehicle owners are advised to keep their FASTag accounts active and well-funded to avoid penalties and ensure smooth travel.

## High Court Issues Notices to Telangana Govt

**Government Seeks Time for Response**  
**HC Adjourns Hearing to Next Week**



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** The Telangana High Court has issued a major directive to the state government regarding the allotment of land for community buildings in Hyderabad. In a significant decision, the court has ordered the government to halt any construction on these lands until further notice.

A petition was filed challenging the state's decision to allocate government land to certain caste-based communities, including Balija, Kapu, Velama, and Kamma. The petitioner argued that granting land worth crores to specific caste groups was unjust and requested the court to annul the government order (GO).

Taking up the case, the High Court issued notices to the Telangana government, instructing it to refrain from proceeding with any construction on the disputed land. The government's legal representative sought additional time to file a counter-response. Acknowledging this request, the court adjourned the hearing to next week.

This ruling has sparked discussions about the legality and fairness of caste-based land allotments, with many closely watching the government's next move.

## QR Code on Inter Hall Tickets to Help Students Reach Exam Centers on Time

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** The Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TG BIE) has introduced a new feature on inter hall tickets this year to assist students in reaching their exam centers without confusion. A QR code will be included on the hall tickets, allowing students to scan it and access route maps and estimated travel times.

This initiative aims to alleviate the common confusion students face due to the similar names of many colleges, despite having different center codes. By scanning the QR code with their smartphones, students will have clear directions to their designated exam centers, reducing the risk of late arrivals. In addition to the QR code, the inter hall tickets will provide contact information for Interactive Voice Response (IVR) services, as well as helplines for the center college, district officer, and state helpline.



This year, a total of 488,336 and 507,956 students have registered for the first and second-year inter exams, respectively. Students can download their hall tickets online 10 days prior to the exams. The inclusion of QR codes and helplines is expected to simplify the process and ensure a smoother exam experience for students.

## Telangana Government Relaxes Sand Booking Window and Strengthens Monitoring Measures



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** On Monday, February 17, the Telangana government relaxed the time window for citizens to book sand from designated stockyards for construction purposes. The decision was made following a meeting chaired by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and top officials from the mines and geology department.

Citizens can now book sand through the Sand Sale Management and Monitoring System (SSMMS) website during office hours, from 10

am to 5 pm, making the process more convenient. Previously, bookings were allowed only during specific time slots at 12 pm, 3 pm, and 5 pm.

During the meeting, Principal Secretary N. Sridhar emphasized the need to ensure sand resources are used ethically and directed stricter monitoring of sand reaches, stockyards, and illegal transportation. District collectors and police superintendents will now have access to portals for better monitoring of sand distribution.

The government also issued directives to sand contractors, including increasing supply, ensuring compliance with weight limits, and preventing unauthorized transport. Overloading of lorries will not be tolerated, and violators will face criminal charges. A total of Rs 14.28 lakh was collected in fines between February 1 and 12 for violations such as overloading and lack of waybills.

## Trains Cancelled and Delayed Due to Traffic Block in Telangana



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced the cancellation and delay of several trains due to a traffic block between Pembarti and Aler railway stations in the Kazipet section of the Secunderabad division.

**Cancelled Trains**

- Train number 17659, scheduled to travel from Secunderabad to Bhadrachalam on Monday, February 17, has been cancelled.
- Train number 17660, scheduled to travel from Bhadrachalam to Secunderabad on Tuesday, February 18, has also been cancelled.

**Delayed Trains**

- Train number 22533, which was scheduled to depart from Gorakhpur to Yeshvantpur on Monday, February 17, has been delayed by 2 hours.
- Train number 12286, scheduled to travel from Nizamuddin to Secunderabad, has been delayed by 1.5 hours.

Passengers are advised to check for updates before travel and plan accordingly due to the ongoing disruptions.

## Yadadri Bhuvanagiri Collector Launches Maternity Care Initiative to Support Pregnant Women

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 18 :** Yadadri Bhuvanagiri (Bhongir) district collector M Hanumantha Rao initiated an awareness campaign for maternity care by visiting the residence of a pregnant woman, Aparna, in Anantharam village, Gundala Mandal, on Monday, February 17. The visit, which included health department officials and doctors, aimed to raise awareness and provide support to pregnant women.

During his visit, the district collector interacted with the family in a light-hearted manner, inquiring about their financial situation and offering a nutrition kit to Aparna, emphasizing the importance of stress-free pregnancy. As part of the district's ongoing maternal health efforts, the collector has launched the "Amma Ku Bharosa" initiative, which focuses on providing care and guidance to 300 pregnant women expecting delivery in March.

The initiative addresses issues such as low iron levels, high blood pressure, and diabetes, which are common risk factors in pregnancies. A team consisting of ASHA

workers, Anganwadi teachers, and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANM) has been formed to monitor these pregnancies and offer necessary guidance, including mental health support and advice on safe deliveries.



The initiative also promotes deliveries in government hospitals to ensure free, high-quality care and to encourage normal deliveries for the well-being of both mothers and babies. Additionally, it stresses the importance of breastfeeding within the first hour after birth for the baby's health.

District health officials have urged families to support pregnant women by providing a nutritious diet, including iron-rich foods like leafy vegetables, milk, dates, and dry fruits. In cases of severely low iron levels, doctor-prescribed iron tablets or injections are recommended.



## President's Rule in Manipur: A Political Move, Not a Solution to the Crisis



The imposition of President's Rule in Manipur by the Union Government has sparked debate over its true motivations. While some see it as a necessary step to restore peace and constitutional order, others view it as a political maneuver aimed at protecting the BJP's interests, rather than addressing the root causes of the ongoing crisis. The violence in Manipur, which erupted on May 3, 2023, has led to significant loss of lives and property. Despite the deployment of over 60,000 central troops and law enforcement agencies, the situation has remained volatile. Yet, the Prime Minister has downplayed the severity of the violence, even claiming that the situation is "normal," and the state is functioning as usual. This contrasts sharply with the experiences on the

ground, where residents continue to endure suffering and uncertainty. BJP's internal divisions have also played a role in this political crisis. Chief Minister N Biren Singh, once seen as a loyal ally to the Union government, faced mounting criticism from his party members due to his handling of the lawlessness in the state. While the Union government claimed to work closely with Singh, it became apparent that Delhi was taking control of key decisions, including the appointment of the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police, without consulting the state leadership. Singh himself admitted that central agencies were often bypassing his authority, indicating a breakdown in governance at the state level.

Amid growing resentment, the BJP leadership in Delhi pushed for Singh's resignation, fearing a possible loss in the upcoming elections if the current situation continued. However, the party could not agree on a suitable replacement, leading to the imposition of President's Rule. Critics argue that this move is an attempt to divert attention from the BJP's failures in handling the crisis and the suffering of the people of Manipur. For true accountability and a resolution to the crisis, a Joint Parliamentary Committee should be formed to thoroughly examine the multiple dimensions of the Manipur tragedy. Only through this process, rather than the political expediency of President's Rule, can justice be delivered to the people of Manipur.

## Qatar Emir's India Visit: A Strategic Imperative Beyond Diplomatic Pleantries



The state visit of Qatar's Emir, Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, to India, beginning February 17, 2025, marks a significant diplomatic moment, but beyond the formalities and pleasantries, it highlights deeper strategic interests that shape this important bilateral relationship. With India's increasing geopolitical influence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, the relationship with Qatar is becoming more pivotal, not just in terms of energy but also regional stability and economic cooperation. India-Qatar ties are underpinned by deep historical and economic roots. A significant part of Qatar's workforce—around 830,000—comprises Indians, playing a vital role in driving the country's economy. These expatriates contribute across various sectors, from construction and healthcare to technology, making them indispensable to Qatar's growth. Their expertise, along with their substantial remittances—approximately \$4.143 billion annually—shows the significance of this demographic to both countries. In addition to people-to-people ties, Qatar is a reliable supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to India. This energy partnership has been central to the relationship, providing India with affordable and stable energy. However, with India diversifying its energy sources, especially increasing imports from the United States, questions arise about Qatar's future role in India's energy landscape. While the

country remains an important partner, India must navigate this evolving energy dynamic cautiously, mindful of not taking Qatar's generosity for granted. Furthermore, India's engagement with Qatar goes beyond trade and energy. The resolution of the diplomatic crisis involving eight former Indian Navy officials, sentenced to death in Qatar, demonstrated India's strategic leverage. Prime Minister Modi's personal intervention underscored the importance of high-level diplomatic relations with Qatar, which also signed long-term LNG deals with India despite the European gas scramble. As India strengthens its ties with the broader GCC region, Qatar's strategic importance remains paramount. With the focus shifting to emerging sectors like renewable energy, fintech, and infrastructure, India's relationship with Qatar will likely continue to evolve beyond traditional energy partnerships. However, challenges such as regional instability, labor rights issues, and tensions in the Israel-Hamas conflict require ongoing, nuanced dialogue. In conclusion, India-Qatar relations are increasingly complex, intertwined with energy security, regional geopolitics, and economic collaboration. As India's influence in the Gulf grows, it must continue to nurture this critical relationship with Qatar, ensuring mutual benefits while addressing regional and global challenges.

## New Delhi Station Stampede Highlights Urgent Need for Railway Modernization

On February 15, 2025, a tragic stampede at New Delhi Railway Station claimed the lives of at least 18 people and injured many others. This incident has once again brought attention to the perennial problem of overcrowding at the station, which, despite being the busiest in India, continues to operate at outdated capacity levels. While the standard rituals—condolences from the government, compensation for the victims, and the announcement of a high-level inquiry—have been swiftly completed, the underlying issue remains unaddressed: the lack of modern infrastructure at one of the most critical transport hubs in the country.

### The Growing Traffic Surge and Its Risks

New Delhi station is not just the busiest station in India; it generates the highest passenger revenue, accounting for over Rs 3,337 crore in 2023-24. However, the station's infrastructure, which opened in 1955, has not been upgraded to handle the ever-growing number of passengers. Officially, the station's capacity reached its limit by 2000, with daily traffic hovering around 500,000 passengers. This is in stark contrast to the current numbers, where the station regularly handles between 7 to 8 lakh passengers during peak seasons, causing congestion that can turn hazardous in a heartbeat.

Despite the seasonal surge in passenger traffic being predictable, Indian Railways (IR) continues to rely on rudimentary measures to manage this influx. As the recent stampede tragically demonstrated, the lack of adequate infrastructure to handle surges leaves passengers vulnerable, and this vulnerability will only increase as the number of rail users continues to rise.

### A Long Delayed Modernization Plan

The need for New Delhi station's modernization has been apparent for over two decades. The first attempt to modernize the station was conceived in the early 2000s, around the same time as the modernization of Delhi's international airport. In 2007, a design was finalized by the renowned architecture firm Farrells, with the plan to increase station capacity, improve amenities, and create a new urban space above the railway tracks. Despite this ambitious plan, it never came to fruition due to delays, opposition from local authorities, and failed tenders. The first failed attempt came in 2008, with confusion surrounding tender clauses, followed by another cancellation in 2009 due to bureaucratic



hurdles. A third attempt in 2022 saw a scaled-back version of the original plan, but that, too, failed when the winning bidder, L&T, quoted over Rs 8,000 crore, exceeding the government's estimate of Rs 5,000 crore.

In 2023, Indian Railways reduced the scope of work further and attempted to launch the project on a smaller scale, yet the tender was withdrawn in early 2024. The Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) has since fragmented the project into smaller tenders in hopes of attracting more bidders, but as of now, the modernization effort remains stalled.

### Effective Measures to Prevent Future Accidents

While the tragic stampede at New Delhi Station highlights the urgency of modernization, it is also a reminder that such incidents can be prevented with the right measures. Here are some strategies that can be adopted to manage the surge in passenger traffic:

- **Optimizing Platform Capacity:** This involves increasing the number of platforms and utilizing space more efficiently to accommodate more trains and passengers.

- **Technology-Based Solutions:** Implementing smart ticketing systems, AI-based crowd management tools, and real-time passenger flow tracking can help manage congestion.
- **Improved Signage and Barriers:** Clear and visible signage to direct passenger movement can reduce chaos, especially during peak hours. Barriers can be used to separate different streams of passenger flow.
- **Adequate Staffing:** Adequate staff presence at critical locations, including ticket counters, platforms, and gates, is essential for maintaining order and directing passengers effectively.
- **Coordination with Train Schedules:** Well-coordinated train schedules during peak times can reduce overcrowding on platforms and in trains.
- **Crowd Control Measures:** Barriers, ropes, and entry/exit points should be designed to channel passengers in a way that prevents overcrowding, especially at entry and exit points.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Stations should have well-established emergency re-

sponse protocols, with staff trained to handle crises efficiently.

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Finally, upgrading station infrastructure to handle the increased traffic and to provide adequate facilities for passengers is key to preventing such accidents.

New Delhi Railway Station stands as a symbol of India's growth in terms of rail passenger traffic, but its outdated infrastructure is a stark reminder of how critical modernization efforts can be in preventing avoidable tragedies. As the busiest station in the country, it is inconceivable that New Delhi Railway Station is still grappling with capacity issues, especially when its modernization plan has been on the table for over 20 years. The failure of successive efforts to upgrade the station is a reflection of the inefficiencies within Indian Railways, and the recent stampede should serve as a wake-up call for both the government and the railway authorities. If such accidents are to be avoided in the future, New Delhi Station's modernization needs to move beyond planning stages into actionable, urgent steps—before another tragedy strikes.

# India Can Turn "Fast Fashion" Waste Into Opportunity: PM Modi At Bharat Tex 2025

- Modi urges textile industry to upcycle waste.
- India's recycling market may hit \$400M.
- Bharat Tex 2025 hosts 120+ countries.



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the gathering at Bharat Tex 2025 on Sunday evening, emphasizing the need for India's textile industry to turn the challenge of "fast fashion waste" into an opportunity. He highlighted the importance of maximizing resource use and minimizing waste generation in the sector. The Prime Minister pointed out that millions of garments are discarded each month due to changing fashion trends, creating significant environmental concerns. He also noted that by 2030, fashion waste could reach 148 million tons, with less than a quarter currently being recycled.

PM Modi suggested that India's rich traditional skills in textile

recycling and upcycling could address this issue. He cited examples from Maharashtra, where old fabrics are transformed into mats, rugs, and quilts. The Prime Minister encouraged innovation in these practices, which could help tap into global market opportunities. He announced that the Textile Ministry had signed a MoU with the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises and e-Marketplace to promote upcycling, with several up-cyclers already registered.

PM Modi projected that India's textile recycling market could grow to USD 400 million in the next few years, while the global recycled textile market is expected to reach USD 7.5 billion. He expressed confidence that India could capture a larger share of this market.

Reflecting on India's prosperous past, where the textile industry played a crucial role, the Prime Minister reiterated that as the country strives towards becoming a Viksit Bharat, the textile sector would again be pivotal. He lauded Bharat Tex as a strong platform for global engagement, collaboration, and partnership, with over 120 countries participating in the event.

He also urged the banking sector to support textile entrepreneurs, fostering business growth and job creation. Bharat Tex 2025, held at Bharat Mandapam from February 14-17, is one of the largest events of its kind, showcasing the entire textile ecosystem and providing a platform for innovation and collaboration.

# Gyanesh Kumar Likely to Become India's Next Chief Election Commissioner

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Gyanesh Kumar, who was appointed as an Election Commissioner in March of last year, is set to replace Rajiv Kumar as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, sources told NDTV on Monday evening. If confirmed, Mr. Kumar will oversee the conduct of several crucial elections, including the Bihar Assembly election later this year, as well as elections in Bengal, Assam, and Tamil Nadu next year.



relationship with Home Minister Amit Shah.

Mr. Kumar, a 1988-batch IAS officer from the Kerala cadre, is currently the senior-most commissioner on the three-member Election Commission panel, which was previously led by Rajiv Kumar. The other commissioner on the panel is Sukhbir Singh Sandhu from the Uttarakhand cadre. However, Mr. Kumar's appointment has yet to be formally ratified.

The Congress party has raised objections to the swift move to appoint a new CEC, pointing out that the Supreme Court is set to hear a challenge to the 2023 law that governs the selection process. Critics of the law argue that it allows the ruling BJP to have control over the CEC appointment, with the process being decided by a three-member panel consisting of the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kumar, 61, has held several key positions in the Indian civil services. Prior to his appointment as Election Commissioner, he was part of the Union Home Ministry, where he played a crucial role in drafting the bill that scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. He was also responsible for handling key documents related to the Supreme Court case on the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Additionally, he is known to have a close rela-

Before retiring in January last year, Mr. Kumar served as the Secretary of the Ministry of Cooperation, a position also overseen by Amit Shah. He has previously held roles in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and the Defence Ministry during the Congress-led UPA government. Mr. Kumar holds a B.Tech in Civil Engineering from the Indian Institute of Engineering in Kanpur, along with degrees in Business Finance and Environmental Economics from the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India and Harvard University, respectively.

Rajiv Kumar, the outgoing Chief Election Commissioner, stepped down this morning after a tenure marked by efforts to modernize the election process. In his farewell speech, Mr. Kumar emphasized the importance of innovations such as remote voting for NRIs and migrant workers, biometric voting systems, and safeguarding against post-poll violence by ensuring the non-disclosure of votes. He also highlighted the need for greater financial transparency in election campaign expenses and the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in the future of elections.



# To Ban or Not to Ban: Alcohol Divides J&K's Political Landscape

TPN Correspondent | Assam

The ruling National Conference (NC) in Jammu and Kashmir is facing significant criticism for its change of stance on the issue of liquor sales in the region. The NC's volte-face has sparked a backlash, especially from political and religious figures, as well as civil society groups. The controversy revolves around the Bills to be introduced in the upcoming assembly session, which seek to ban the sale and consumption of liquor in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the chairman of the Moderate Hurriyat, condemned NC leader Tanvir Sadiq's defense of liquor sales, which he justified under the pretext of boosting tourism. Mirwaiz, speaking at an interfaith event in Budgam district on February 16, questioned the morality of such a move in a Muslim-majority region, emphasizing the harm caused to society by drug abuse. He criticized the NC for ignoring the example of other Indian states, such as Gujarat, where alcohol is banned and tourism continues to thrive.

Sadiq had earlier argued that liquor sales should be allowed to support tourism, noting that several countries in the Arab world permit alcohol for tourists. He insisted that the local stakeholders, including travel agents, should be consulted before taking any drastic steps.

However, Mirwaiz dismissed this argument, pointing out that no consultation had been held with the stakeholders of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the issue. Opposition parties, including the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), also expressed their disapproval, arguing that linking tourism to alcohol sales is flawed. PDP leader Waheed Parra pointed to Gujarat's success as a dry state, where tourism has flourished without the need for liquor sales.

In the upcoming legislative session, at least three private member Bills will be introduced, seeking a ban on alcohol in Jammu and Kashmir. These Bills have garnered support from various quarters, including BJP leader Darakhshan Andrabi, who welcomed the move as a step toward protecting the youth from drug abuse.

The ongoing debate reflects the deepening divide over the future of alcohol sales in Jammu and Kashmir, with strong opinions from both sides of the political spectrum.

# CM Stalin Slam Pradhan For Forcing Tamil Nadu to Adopt Three-Language Formula

TPN Correspondent | Tamilnadu

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has accused Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan of "blackmail" after the latter stated that Tamil Nadu would not receive funds under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan unless it accepts the National Education Policy (NEP) and the controversial three-language formula. Stalin expressed his displeasure over Pradhan's comments, asserting that Tamil Nadu's rightful due for educational funds should not be contingent on political conditions.

Stalin posted a video of Pradhan speaking on social media, stating that the Union Minister's remarks were disrespectful and threatening, warning that Tamil Nadu might show Delhi the "real trait" of its people in response. The Chief Minister's comment resonated with opposition parties across Tamil Nadu, who strongly criticized the Union government's stance on this issue.

Edappadi K. Palaniswami, General Secretary of AIADMK and Leader of the Opposition in Tamil Nadu, also condemned the central government's decision. He remarked that the Centre's refusal to release funds based on Tamil Nadu's rejection of the three-language policy was unjust. Palaniswami emphasized that Tamil Nadu had been a pioneer in the field of education and that the Centre should focus on the welfare of the people, not the political leaders in power.

The stance was echoed by Seeman, the chief of the Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK), who criticized the NEP's push to make Hindi mandatory. He argued that while the people of Tamil Nadu could choose to learn Hindi, the Centre should not impose the language on them. Seeman expressed that India's unity lies in its linguistic diversity and that Tamil Nadu's opposition to the NEP should not result in withholding educational funds.

The controversy highlights the growing tensions between the state and central governments over educational policies, with Tamil Nadu leaders continuing to reject the imposition of Hindi and the three-language policy.



# Assam CM Orders Probe into Alleged Pakistani Links of Gaurav Gogoi's Wife

TPN Correspondent | Guwahati



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has ordered a case against a Pakistani national, Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, for allegedly attempting to interfere in domestic matters in Assam and India. Sarma also revealed that Elizabeth Colburn, the wife of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, will be investigated for her alleged ties to Pakistan and its intelligence agency, ISI.

Sarma's decision came after a cabinet meeting on Sunday, where he cited reports of Sheikh's online activities and his connections with Colburn. According to Sarma, Sheikh, who founded LEAD Pakistan, a non-profit organization focused on climate change, has had direct contact with Colburn, who was involved with the organization during her time in Islamabad. Both Sheikh and Colburn were part of the global climate action group, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), which operates in both India and Pakistan.

Sarma raised concerns over the national security implications of the situation, particularly given Assam's historical vulnerabilities to destabilization by Pakistani actors. The Chief Minister also pointed out that Colburn, a British citizen, allegedly campaigned for Gogoi during two Lok Sabha elections, which would be a violation of visa norms. Sarma questioned the appropriateness of a foreign national participating in Indian elections, especially given her potential involvement in sensitive issues raised by her husband in Parliament, including nuclear radars and uranium mines.

Gaurav Gogoi, in response, dismissed the accusations as "dirty and baseless" politics and rejected the charges as "laughable and entertaining." He stated that his focus remains on improving Assam's economy, education, and healthcare policies, and expressed frustration with the ongoing political drama.

Sarma has called for a thorough investigation, involving central agencies, into the allegations against Colburn and Sheikh, stressing the importance of national security. He plans to share all relevant documents with Congress leaders to verify the facts.

# UK willing to 'put own troops on ground' in Ukraine if needed: PM Starmer

- UK PM Starmer open to deploying troops to Ukraine.
- Trump-Putin talks raise concerns in Europe.
- Zelenskyy calls for a European army.



TPN Correspondent | UK

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer expressed on Monday that he was prepared to send British troops to Ukraine "if necessary," highlighting a shift in European security discussions following the changing stance of the United States under President Donald Trump. Starmer's comments come in the context of Trump's recent talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which have raised concerns about Europe's security and Ukraine's future.

While Trump prepares for a meeting with Putin, reportedly to discuss peace negoti-

ations, European leaders, including Starmer, have been intensifying efforts to address the continent's security needs. Starmer described the situation as a "once-in-a-generation moment," emphasizing that any role in supporting Ukraine's security directly contributes to the security of Europe and the UK. "Helping to guarantee Ukraine's security is helping to guarantee the security of our continent, and the security of this country," Starmer remarked, underlining the urgency of collective European defense.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also called for the establishment of a Europe-

an army, believing that such an institution could reduce Europe's dependence on US security guarantees. Zelenskyy's plea came amid growing concerns about the US pivoting its focus away from Europe, as indicated by Trump's stance on NATO and his previous comments about Russia's desire to end the war in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a key meeting in Paris, scheduled ahead of the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, will gather leaders from several European nations including the UK, Germany, and Poland, as well as EU officials like Ursula von der Leyen and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

The meeting will focus on Ukraine's situation and broader European security issues.

The ongoing diplomatic tension has also been exacerbated by the Kremlin's push for negotiations between the US and Russia, which could shape the future of Europe's defense strategy. EU nations remain concerned that Russia might demand a return to pre-2022 positions, including limiting NATO's presence in Eastern Europe. As Europe grapples with these uncertainties, Starmer's willingness to deploy UK troops signals the UK's commitment to the security of Ukraine and the broader continent.

# Myanmar frees 1,000 scam center workers as crackdown widens



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

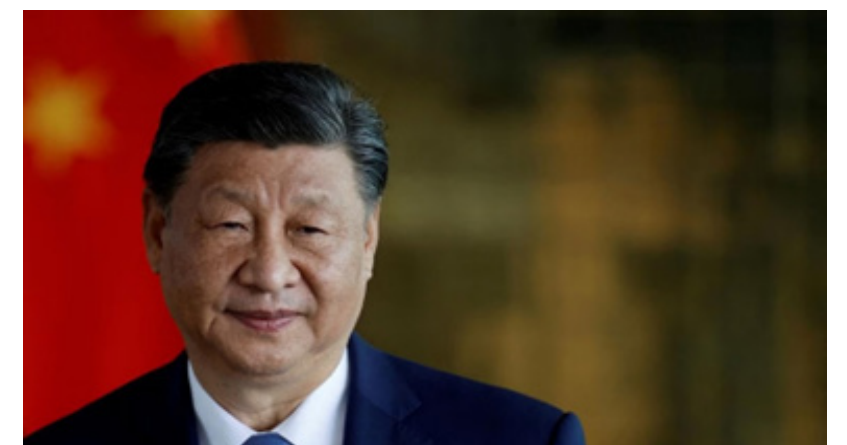
Myanmar's military government announced it is ready to hand over around 1,000 foreign nationals who were rescued from cyber scam centers near the Thai border. The victims, mostly from Asia and East Africa, were trafficked or tricked into working at these illicit centers. Myanmar authorities have vowed to intensify efforts to combat transnational criminal groups responsible for the operations.

Over the past three weeks, approximately 1,030 foreign nationals have been rescued from these scam centers, which are believed to be involved in online fraud. The Myanmar government has already repatriated 61 of the victims to their home countries, while the remaining individuals are set to be returned in the coming days, according to a statement from the State Administration Council, Myanmar's ruling military body.

The majority of the victims come from Asian countries, including China and India, although some are from East Africa. The victims were reportedly coerced or deceived into participating in online scams, where they were forced to defraud people across the globe. Many of the centers were located near the border with Thailand, a region notorious for transnational human trafficking and cybercrime activities.

The military junta launched a large-scale operation to combat online scams and human trafficking following mounting pressure from neighboring countries like Thailand and China. The high-profile trafficking of a Chinese actor, which highlighted the scale of criminal activities in the region, spurred Myanmar to take action.

The recent operation is part of a broader effort to dismantle criminal networks operating across Myanmar's borders. The government has promised to continue its crackdown on these illegal operations, although human rights organizations have raised concerns about the safety and treatment of the victims during the rescue and repatriation process. Myanmar's actions come amid growing regional concerns over the rise of cybercrime and human trafficking in Southeast Asia.



# Xi Jinping Urges Chinese Entrepreneurs to Boost Confidence Amid Economic Slowdown

TPN Correspondent | Beijing

On Monday, Chinese President Xi Jinping held a rare meeting with top business leaders, including Alibaba founder Jack Ma, Xiaomi's Lei Jun, Tencent's Pony Ma Huateng, and BYD's Wang Chuanfu, to address concerns over China's slowing economy and the challenges facing private enterprises. The meeting, a symposium on private enterprises, aimed to restore business confidence amid uncertainties, both domestically and internationally.

This gathering came at a time of growing concern about the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, particularly with his plans to raise tariffs on Chinese exports. China's GDP growth has also slowed to around 5 percent in recent years, further intensifying worries among entrepreneurs and business leaders about the future of the economy.

During the symposium, President Xi emphasized that the current moment presents a significant opportunity for private enterprises to unleash their full potential. He urged the business leaders to reach a consensus and strengthen their confidence to contribute to the healthy and high-quality development of China's private sector. Xi reassured the attendees that the government's policies regarding the private economy remain firmly embedded within China's socialist system and would not change.

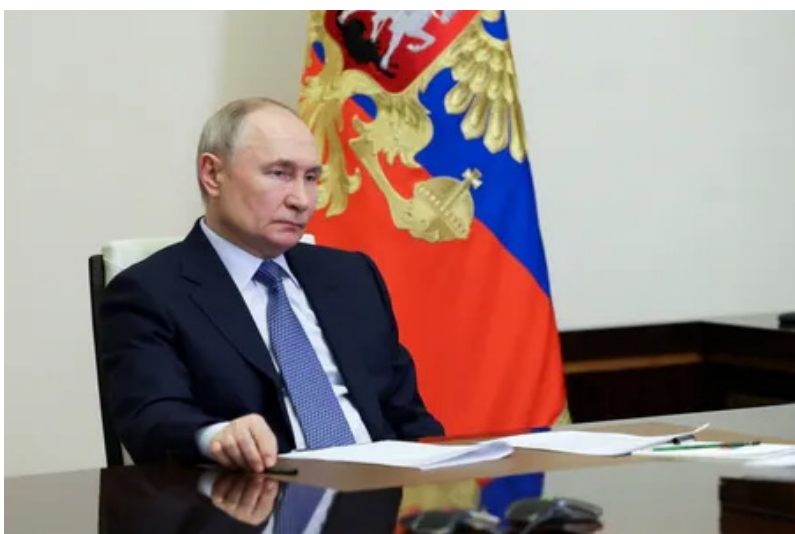
The meeting comes after a period of tension between Jack Ma and the Chinese Communist Party, following Ma's outspoken criticism of China's regulatory system. The fact that Ma was present at this high-profile meeting signals a potential shift in relations between China's government and its private business leaders, especially as the country faces ongoing economic challenges.

# Russia, US to hold talks on Feb 18 in Saudi Arabia on restoring ties

TPN Correspondent | Washington

The Kremlin announced on Monday that top Russian officials will meet with their US counterparts in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to discuss restoring relations between the two nations and the ongoing war in Ukraine, which is approaching its third year.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Yuri Ushakov, a senior foreign policy advisor to President Vladimir Putin, are scheduled to participate in the talks with US officials in Riyadh. According to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, the primary focus of the meeting will be on revitalizing the broader scope of US-Russia relations, which have been severely strained since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine.



Peskov also stated that the talks will address preparations for possible peace negotiations concerning Ukraine, though he did not provide further specifics on potential outcomes. The Kremlin had previously hinted at discussions surrounding a peace settlement, but the details have remained unclear.

Regarding the potential deployment of European troops to Ukraine following a possible peace deal, Peskov referred to the issue as a "complex question," which has not yet been thoroughly discussed. This issue remains a point of contention among international actors as the war continues to

devastate the region.

Lavrov and Ushakov are scheduled to fly to Riyadh on Monday ahead of the high-stakes meeting. The Kremlin's announcement of these talks comes amid growing international pressure for negotiations to end the war, which has caused immense suffering and geopolitical instability since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

As the conflict enters its third year, the meeting in Saudi Arabia represents a crucial moment for diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and possibly finding a path to peace. The outcome of the discussions could significantly impact the future of US-Russia relations and the broader international response to the war in Ukraine.

# Kim Jong Un Visits Father's Mausoleum, Pledges Commitment to 'Sacred Struggle'

TPN Correspondent | North Korea

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made a rare visit to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun in Pyongyang on Monday to mark the birthday of his late father, Kim Jong Il. This significant visit, which came on February 16—celebrated annually as the Day of the Shining Star—was the first in four years for Kim Jong Un to pay his respects at the mausoleum, where the embalmed bodies of his father and grandfather, Kim Il Sung, are housed.

Accompanied by his sister, Kim Yo Jong, a senior official in the ruling Workers' Party, and other aides, Kim Jong Un paid homage to his family's legacy in what state media de-



scribed as "the humblest reverence." The state news agency KCNA reported that Kim expressed his deep commitment to the country's future, vowing to continue the "sacred struggle" to ensure the prosperity, security, and well-being of the North Korean people.

Kim Jong Il's birthday is con-

sidered one of North Korea's most important holidays, and it is marked by various ceremonies and celebrations. This year's observance coincides with heightened political tensions on the Korean Peninsula, as Kim Jong Un continues to solidify his leadership amid ongoing regional and international challenges.

In his remarks during the visit, Kim Jong Un pledged to honor the legacy of his father and grandfather by working towards North Korea's continued advancement and stability. His statement underscored the importance of maintaining the "sacred struggle" for the eternal prosperity of the nation, as well as the security of its citizens. This rare appearance at the family mausoleum is viewed as a symbolic gesture of continuity in leadership and North Korea's political ideology. The visit highlights Kim Jong Un's role in upholding the Kim family's dynastic rule and his determination to preserve the country's political and military priorities amidst ongoing challenges on the global stage.



# Stock Markets Rebound After Eight-Day Losing Streak, Banking and Pharma Lead Recovery



The eight-session losing streak came to an end. The indices gained today. The indices, which started with heavy losses in the morning, recovered after the afternoon due to mixed signals from global markets. As expected, a counter rally took place. Investors bought fundamentally strong shares. Bank, pharma and healthcare shares also supported this. With this, the Nifty, which traded in a loss of more than 180 points in the morning, finally ended with a gain of 30 points. The

Sensex also followed the same path.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 75,939 in the previous session, started at 75,641 on Monday. It touched an intraday low at 75,294. It reached an intraday high at 76,041. It finally closed at 75,996 with a gain of 57 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,809, touched a low of 22,725 and a high of 22,974. It closed at 22,959, up 30 points.



**MURTHY NAIDU PAADAM**  
Stock Market Analyst  
+91 988 555 9709

The Nifty Bank rose 159 points to settle at 49,258.

In the Nifty50, 34 companies gained while 16 lost. Adani Enterprises, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports were the top gainers. Mahindra & Mahindra, Airtel, Infi, TCS, ICI- CI Bank were the top losers. Pharma, healthcare, bank, finance, metal indices rose. Auto, FMCG, IT, media indices were mixed. India VIX rose 4.71% to 15.72.

Market breadth on NSE today was completely in favour of sellers. Out of 2955 shares traded, only 1014 gained. 1871 lost. 22 shares touched 52-week highs. 747 shares touched 52-week lows.

Rupee settled at 86.87 against the dollar. Jefferies has given a buy rating to Samvardhan Motherson with a target price of Rs.165. Singtel is looking to sell Airtel worth billions of dollars. Nomura has given a neutral rating to Glenmark with a target price of Rs.1500. Quality Power Electric IPO received a response of

0.79 times by the afternoon of the second day. LTI Mindtree partners with Eurobank for multi-year banking. Borosil Renewables shares hit 5% lower circuit as losses widen in third quarter. Cyient DLM wins avionics manufacturing award from Thales. Motilal Oswal gives neutral rating to United Breweries with a target price of Rs 2000. Antony Waste EBITA rises 21.5%. Nomura gives buy rating to Mahindra & Mahindra with a target price of Rs 3681. CLSA maintains buy rating on Hindalco Industries with a target price of Rs 815.

**Ashok Leyland Limited (ASHOKLEY):**



Ashok Leyland is a leading commercial vehicle manufacturer in India, producing trucks, buses, and light vehicles. The company has a strong market presence and has been focusing on expanding its product portfolio and increasing exports.

**Aarti Pharmalabs Limited (AARTIPHARM):**



Aarti Pharmalabs specializes in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and intermediates. In Q3 FY2024-2025, the company reported a net profit of ₹73.99 crore, a 40.24% increase compared to the same period last year. This growth is attributed to enhanced operational efficiencies and a diversified product portfolio.

**Kaveri Seed Company Limited (KSCL):**

Kaveri Seed Company is one of India's largest agricultural seed companies, offering a wide range of hybrid seeds for crops like cotton, maize, and paddy. The company has a robust research and development division, focusing on developing high-yielding and disease-resistant seed varieties.



**Jubilant Pharmova Limited (JUBLPHARMA):**

Jubilant Pharmova operates in the pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors, providing a range of products and services, including APIs, contract manufacturing, and drug discovery solutions. The company em-



phasizes innovation and has a global presence, catering to various markets worldwide.

**Castrol India Limited (CASTROLIND):**

Castrol India is a prominent player in the lubricants industry, offering a wide array of automotive and industrial lubricant products. The company has a strong distribution network and focuses on continuous product innovation to meet the evolving needs of consumers.



## Income tax relief should not be seen as govt shifting focus from capex: Sitharaman

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday clarified that the substantial income tax relief announced in Budget 2025 does not signal a shift in the government's focus from capital expenditure to boosting consumption. This clarification comes after debates emerged over the decision to keep individuals earning up to Rs 12 lakh annually out of the income tax net, particularly following tepid GDP growth figures over two consecutive quarters. During a post-budget interaction with stakeholders in Mumbai, Sitharaman emphasized that the government's commitment to capital expenditure (capex) remains strong. She noted that the allocation for capex in the 2025 Budget is over 10.2% higher than last year, amounting to approximately Rs 16 lakh crore, including Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). The central government alone has budgeted Rs 11.21 lakh crore for capex in 2025-26. The effective capital expenditure, which includes core capital outlays and grants for



state capital assets, is projected to rise to Rs 15.48 lakh crore from Rs 13.18 lakh crore in 2024-25.

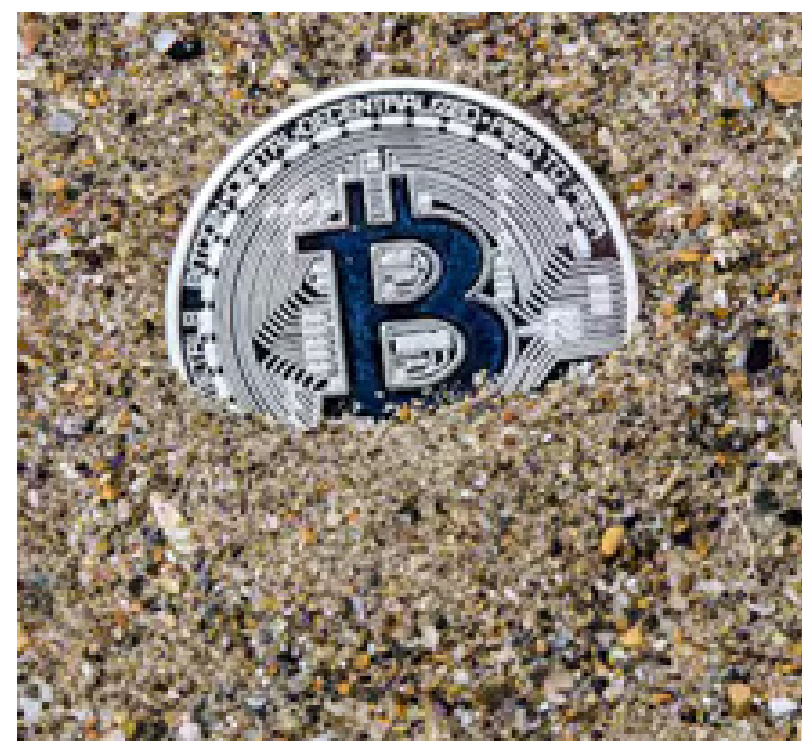
Sitharaman dismissed concerns that the focus had shifted to consumption, stating that the government's emphasis has consistently been on public expenditure to build capital assets, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. She reassured stake-

holders that the increased tax relief, which primarily benefits middle-class taxpayers, is aimed at enhancing disposable income for consumption and investment, not at sidelining the capital expenditure drive.

The income tax relief, which raises the exemption limit from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 12 lakh, was positioned as part of the government's strategy to support economic recovery. Sitharaman also credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for supporting the tax relief proposal, recognizing the need to reward taxpayers while maintaining the focus on infrastructure development.

In conclusion, Sitharaman reiterated that the government's approach remains balanced, with continued investment in capital assets and targeted tax relief to stimulate consumption, creating a strong foundation for future economic growth.

## Establishing New World Finance Broader Impact Of Bitcoin On Global Economy



Bitcoin's emergence in 2008, closely following the global economic crisis, marked the beginning of a transformative journey in the world of finance. Although Bitcoin was initially not viewed as a significant player in the global economy, it gradually became a symbol of the future of finance. Over the past decade, Bitcoin has not only revolutionized digital currency but has also influenced key aspects of global finance through blockchain technology and decentralization.

The most profound effect Bitcoin has had on the global economy is through the rise of blockchain technology, which underpins it. Initially met with skepticism, blockchain's decentralized nature has reshaped cross-border transactions, offering greater speed, transparency, and affordability. Bitcoin's market capitalization, which exceeds \$1.9 trillion, is evidence of its growing importance as a tool for value creation. Blockchain has also spurred the rise of Decentralized Finance (DeFi), further accelerating financial innovation. The increased use of Bitcoin and blockchain-based jobs is diversifying conventional finance, offering opportunities for employment and income generation worldwide.

The economic impact of Bitcoin extends beyond technology. The global cryptocurrency industry, valued at \$2.7 trillion in 2024, is projected to grow to \$6.2 trillion by 2033. Bitcoin's rise has led to the creation of new job roles, with salaries in the sector often exceeding 150% of traditional industries. The taxation of Bitcoin-related income, such as in India (30% tax) and the US (up to 37% short-term tax), has also contributed to national and global economies, supporting governments' budgets.

In addition, Bitcoin's role as a hedge against inflation has been especially beneficial in countries with unstable currencies. Nations like Venezuela and Lebanon, suffering from hyperinflation, have turned to Bitcoin as an alternative currency to safeguard economic stability. As Bitcoin's influence continues to grow, its potential to reshape global economic policies remains significant, promising a future where digital finance becomes the backbone of global economies.

## Reliance Industries Surpasses Apple to Rank No. 2 in FutureBrand Index 2024

In a significant milestone for Indian corporations, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has been ranked No. 2 in the FutureBrand Index 2024, surpassing tech giant Apple. This marks the first time an Indian company has entered the top three of this prestigious global ranking, reflecting the increasing global influence of Indian businesses.

The FutureBrand Index evaluates companies based on brand perception, not financial performance, and in 2024, Reliance saw a remarkable jump from No. 13 in 2023 to No. 2. This achievement highlights the company's strong brand positioning, consumer trust, and strategic growth across multiple sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and retail.

The FutureBrand Index has evolved over the years, with the global rankings becoming more diversified. In 2014, seven of

the top ten brands were from the United States, but by 2024, only four US brands remain in the top ten. In contrast, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) and Middle Eastern regions now boast five brands in the top ranks, demonstrating their significant investments in brand development, especially in B2B sectors.

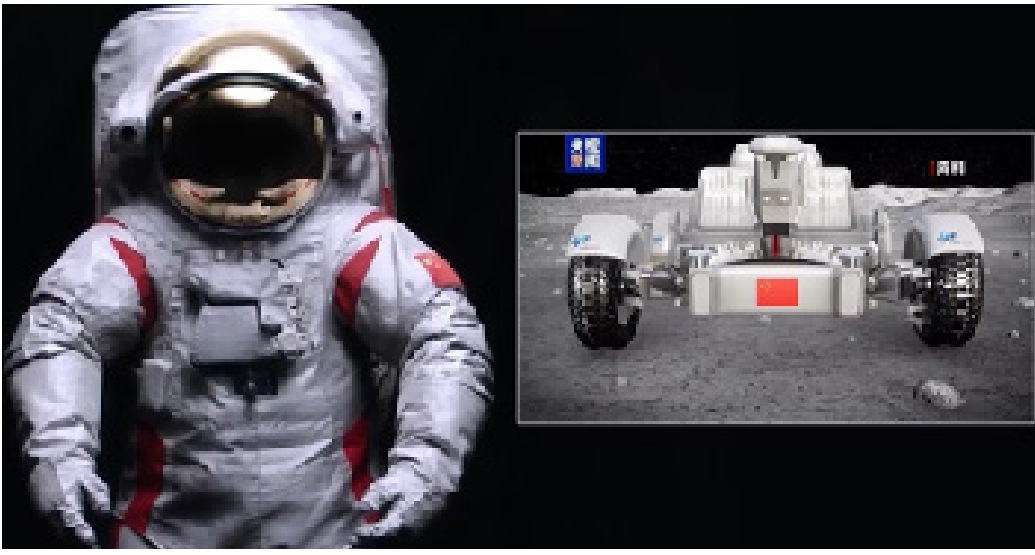
Samsung, which ranked No. 5 in 2023, has risen to the No. 1 position in 2024. The company's focus on innovation, storytelling, and authenticity has driven its success, along with its strong scores in thought leadership and consumer well-being. Apple, while still a top contender, dropped from No. 1 in 2023 to No. 3 this year, maintaining its reputation for brand loyalty and customer experience.

The finance sector emerged as the strongest performer in the 2024 index, with 10 out of 15 brands showing upward mo-



mentum, signaling robust growth and increasing consumer trust. Conversely, the healthcare sector struggled, with 10 out of 15 brands declining, reflecting ongoing challenges in public perception and industry turbulence. Overall, the 2024 FutureBrand Index underscores the shifting dynamics in global brand power, with Reliance's rise marking a notable achievement for Indian businesses on the world stage.

## China Names Its Moon Spacesuit and Rover Ahead of Lunar Mission



gressing through its development phase. Zhang Chongfeng, a spacecraft designer at CMSA, revealed that the rover prototype has been tested in a simulated lunar surface environment. The rover is undergoing design refinements and engineering assessments to ensure its effectiveness in transporting astronauts across the moon's challenging terrain. China's lunar mission framework is taking shape as the nation aims to land astronauts on the moon before 2030. CMSA has made significant progress in the development of ground facilities for production and testing, and construction at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan is advancing. Additionally, CMSA announced the names of other mission components, including the crew spacecraft, "Mengzhou" ("Dream Vessel"), and the lunar lander, "Lanyue" ("Embracing the Moon").

This mission is part of China's broader space exploration goals, which include advancing technology and scientific research beyond low Earth orbit. With an integrated system of heavy-lift launch vehicles, crewed spacecraft, and lunar surface mobility solutions, China is taking significant steps toward its ambitious goal of establishing a human presence on the moon.

China has officially unveiled the names for its next-generation lunar spacesuit and crewed moon rover, key components for its planned human moon landing before 2030. The China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) revealed that the spacesuit will be called "Wangyu," meaning "gazing into the cosmos," while the rover has been named "Tansuo," which translates to "explore." Over 9,000 suggestions were submitted during a public participation process in 2024, culminating in the final selection of these names.

The spacesuit, Wangyu, is designed to withstand the harsh conditions of the moon's surface, providing astronauts with enhanced mobility and protection. According to Zhang Wanxin, director of the spacesuit engineering office at the China Astronaut Research and Training Center, the prototype has already been developed, and performance assessments are currently underway to ensure it meets the required operational standards.

The Tansuo rover, which will facilitate lunar surface exploration, is also pro-

## Manipur Street Stall Selling Dalgona Candies Looks Straight Out Of Squid Game

The global phenomenon \*Squid Game\* continues to inspire creative ventures around the world, and now, fans in Manipur have brought the hit show to life with a Squid Game-themed roadside stall. Digital creator Lanchenba Meitei recently shared a video on Instagram, showcasing this innovative tribute to the Korean series. The stall features a variety of Dalgona candies, one of the key elements of the show, shaped like umbrellas, triangles, stars, and circles, just like in the famous "Dalgona candy challenge" from \*Squid Game\*.

The stall's design pays homage to the iconic aesthetic of the series, with the owners dressed in pink jumpsuits and wearing masks similar to the guards in the show. The stall's banner prominently displays the words "Dalgona" and "Squid Game," along with an image of the protagonist, Seong Gi-hun, holding a Dalgona candy. The background features a poster of the infamous doll from the "Red Light, Green Light" game, one of the most memorable scenes from the series. To add to the immersive experience, the background music includes the popular



song "Round and Round" from \*Squid Game\*'s second season, instantly evoking the show's atmosphere.

The stall not only offers the delicious Dalgona candies but also showcases other \*Squid Game\*-themed merchandise. Fans can purchase Ddakji cards, a nod to the game played during the selection process in subway stations, as well as coasters featuring images of the show's

characters. The stall has quickly become a popular stop for fans of the show, combining the thrill of the series with the charm of local creativity in Manipur.

This unique pop-up stall is a testament to the global impact of \*Squid Game\* and how it continues to inspire cultural references and creative displays worldwide.

## Chinese Zoo Paints Donkeys To Look Like Zebras, Leaves Netizens Annoyed



A Chinese zoo has come under scrutiny after it allegedly painted donkeys to pass them off as zebras in an attempt to attract more visitors. The stunt, which took place at a zoo in Zibo City, Shandong province, quickly backfired after keen-eyed netizens recognized the creatures

for what they truly were—donkeys, not zebras.

The controversy began when a video went viral showing a zoo worker standing next to a donkey with black and white stripes across its body. However, the worker left the donkey's face un-

touched, which made it even more obvious that it was not a zebra. The attempt to disguise the donkey as a zebra was so poorly executed that online viewers immediately noticed the difference, sparking a wave of jokes and criticism across social media platforms.

In response to the growing uproar, representatives from the amusement park told Chinese media that the painted donkeys were part of a "marketing strategy." However, their explanation did little to quell the backlash, with many criticizing the zoo for trying to deceive visitors. The debacle has raised questions about the ethics of using such deceptive practices in animal exhibits. While the zoo's marketing attempt may have been intended to draw attention, it ultimately served as a reminder of the power of social media and the sharp eye of internet users. The incident also highlights the importance of authenticity in tourism, with visitors increasingly expecting transparency and honesty from attractions.

Despite the failed stunt, the story has given the zoo a fleeting moment of fame—though likely not the kind they had hoped for. Instead of gaining new visitors through their creativity, they have become the subject of ridicule and mockery online.

## OpenAI Shifts Focus to GPT-5, Cancels Standalone o3 AI Model



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman recently announced that the company has decided not to release the highly anticipated o3 artificial intelligence (AI) model. Instead of launching the o3 model as planned, OpenAI will now focus on a unified GPT-5 model, which will integrate the capabilities of o3.

Altman shared details about the company's updated AI roadmap, revealing that OpenAI will simplify its product offerings with the release of GPT-4.5 and GPT-5. The goal is to eliminate user confusion when choosing between various models for different tasks. Instead of offering multiple specialized models, GPT-5 will be designed to deliver "unified intelligence," meaning it will be capable of utilizing all OpenAI tools and know when to apply reasoning without users having to choose the appropriate model for each task.

The cancellation of the o3 model's standalone release marks the end of the o-series of AI models, with the company opting to integrate the features of o3 di-

rectly into GPT-5. Altman also announced changes to OpenAI's tiered subscription model. When GPT-5 is launched, all ChatGPT users will have access to the AI model, with free-tier users receiving unlimited chat access at the standard intelligence level. To prevent misuse, the company will impose abuse thresholds. Pro subscribers will get access to a higher intelligence level, and the top-tier subscribers will have the most advanced capabilities. GPT-5 will also introduce new features, including Advanced Voice, Canvas, Search, and Deep Research. However, before GPT-5 arrives, OpenAI plans to launch GPT-4.5, its last non-chain-of-thought (non-CoT) model. While the exact release date is still unclear, Altman suggested that GPT-4.5 could arrive in the coming weeks or months. Interestingly, GPT-4.5, internally referred to as "Orion," was initially rumored to be GPT-5 itself.

With these developments, OpenAI is aiming to streamline its AI offerings and deliver a more efficient, user-friendly experience.

## Apple Maps may soon include ads to boost services revenue



Apple Maps, which has long maintained an ad-free experience, is set to introduce ads on its platform. According to a Bloomberg report, the decision to integrate advertisements follows Apple's ongoing effort to enhance its services revenue. Business owners will soon have the opportunity to promote their locations within the app, a move that mirrors the advertising model used by Google Maps.

This shift in Apple Maps' strategy follows an internal all-hands meeting where the company's board gave the green light to explore the inclusion of ads. Although discussions around adding ads to Apple Maps have been ongoing since 2022, the rollout was initially expected in 2023 but was delayed for unspecified reasons.

Apple Maps users, who have enjoyed an ad-free experience up until now, will soon encounter promoted listings for businesses, making it more similar to other mapping platforms like Google

Maps, which has long allowed businesses to pay for visibility in search results and map locations.

By introducing ads, Apple aims to diversify its services revenue, which has become an increasingly important part of the company's financial growth. As Apple continues to expand its advertising initiatives across its ecosystem, including the App Store and other apps, the move to include ads in Apple Maps marks another step in the company's broader strategy to increase earnings from services.

The exact timeline for the launch of ads on Apple Maps has not been confirmed, but business owners will soon be able to begin promoting their locations to potential customers directly through the platform. This change may offer new opportunities for businesses looking to increase their visibility within the app, while also contributing to Apple's overall revenue growth.

## Indian Women's Hockey Team Aims for Victory Against Spain in FIH Pro League



The Indian Women's Hockey Team is eager to return to winning ways as they face Spain in the FIH Pro League 2024-25 on February 18 and 19 at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium. After a 3-2 win over England and a tough 2-2 draw followed by a shootout loss, India sits in eighth place with four points. With a focus on improving penalty corner conversions, the team aims to rectify their previ-

ous mistakes. Vice-captain Navneet Kaur, with a goal in each game, has been in strong form. Spain, currently in fourth place with eight points, comes off back-to-back wins over Germany. India captain Salima Tete expressed confidence, stating the team is ready for the challenge, aiming to build momentum with a solid performance in front of the home crowd.

## Rajasthan Kings Set Up Final Showdown with Chhattisgarh Warriors in Legend 90 League



als in Qualifier 2 at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium. Batting first, Delhi Royals posted a competitive 167/5 in 15 overs, with Lendl Simmons (63 off 34) and Sharad Lumba (60 off 24) leading the charge. Despite a strong start, the Kings made a strong comeback, with Sudeep Tyagi's crucial delivery forcing Simmons' retirement. Rajasthan Kings chased the target with ease, thanks to explosive knocks from Phil Mustard (53\* off 34) and Rajat Singh (56 off 28). The final will be played against Chhattisgarh Warriors on Monday at 7:15 pm, featuring a special performance by Bollywood star Thamman Bhatia.

Rajasthan Kings booked their spot in the grand finale of the Legend 90 League with a dominant six-wicket victory over Delhi Roy-

## 23rd National Para Athletics Championships Kick Off in Chennai

The 23rd National Para Athletics Championships have officially commenced at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai, marking a historic first for the city. The event, running from February 17 to 20, features a massive participation of 1,476 para-athletes across 30 teams, competing in 155 events. Organized under the guidance of Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and supported by the Tamil Nadu Government, the championship is one of the largest para-athletics gatherings in India.

The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), led by Devendra Jhajharia, and the Tamil Nadu Paralympic Sports Association (TNPSA), headed by Chandrasekar Rajan, are overseeing the successful execution of the



event. With world-class facilities and strong government support, the championship not only celebrates para-athlete talent but also fosters inclusivity and excellence in Indian sports.

## 23rd National Para Athletics Championships Kick Off in Chennai



With Jasprit Bumrah sidelined due to injury, India's hopes in the 2024 ICC Champions Trophy rest on Mohammed Shami's shoulders. Set to partner Arshdeep Singh, Shami's experience and wrist wizardry are expected to be pivotal in India's campaign. The 34-year-old, returning from injury, faces the challenge of delivering in a high-pressure tournament, especially without Bumrah, his trusted ally for years. Shami's impact with the new ball will be crucial, and former pacer Laxmipathy Balaji believes the bowler can step up and lead India's attack. With his ability to move the ball off the deck and hit the stumps, Shami's leadership and skills are vital for India's Champions Trophy aspirations.

## Crispin Chettri Names 23-Member Squad for Pink Ladies Cup in UAE



Indian senior women's football team coach Crispin Chettri has announced a 23-member squad for the upcoming Pink Ladies Cup, a friendly tournament set to take place in Sharjah, UAE, from February 20 to 26. India will face Jordan, Russia, and the Korean Republic in this tournament, providing valuable preparation for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers. India's matches are scheduled at the Al Hamriya Sports Club Stadium, Sharjah, with the team set to play Jordan on February 20, Russia on February 23, and Korea Republic on February 26. The squad includes goalkeepers Elangbam Panthoi Chanu, Payal Basude, and Shreya Hooda, along with defenders Aruna Bag, Kiran Pisdha, and others. Coach Chettri emphasized the importance of adapting to different playing styles for a well-rounded team performance.

um, Sharjah, with the team set to play Jordan on February 20, Russia on February 23, and Korea Republic on February 26. The squad includes goalkeepers Elangbam Panthoi Chanu, Payal Basude, and Shreya Hooda, along with defenders Aruna Bag, Kiran Pisdha, and others. Coach Chettri emphasized the importance of adapting to different playing styles for a well-rounded team performance.

## Indian Men Aim to Continue Winning Momentum Against Germany in FIH Pro League



India's men's hockey team will look to build on their recent victory as they take on Germany in their next FIH Pro League match on Tuesday. After a tough start to their campaign, the team bounced back with a 2-0 win over Spain on Sunday, earning three points from two matches and sitting eighth in the standings. India's victory against Spain was marked by field goals from Mandeep Singh and Dilpreet Singh, but the team continues to face challenges with penalty corner conversions, having failed to score from seven attempts so far. Captain Harmanpreet Singh's return to the lineup is expected to strengthen the set-piece execution. Germany, currently seventh in the standings with four points, will be India's next challenge, with their attack led by Raphael Hartkopf, Gonzalo Peillat, and Thies Prinz. Harmanpreet emphasized the need to stay focused and improve in key areas to secure another win.

## MoS Sports Inaugurates Maharashtra Esports Open Championship 2025

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Raksha Nikhil Khadse, inaugurated the Maharashtra Esports Open Championship 2025 at MIT World Peace University, marking a historic milestone in the state's sports history. This state-backed tournament, organized by the Federation of Electronic Sports Associations India (FEAI) and the Maratha Esports Association (MEA), has attracted 2,100 participants, with 52 finalists advancing to the Grand Finale. Khadse highlighted the growing

significance of esports, which became a medal sport at the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games and will feature in the 2027 Olympic Esports Games. The Government of India's recognition of esports as a "multi-sport event" and the recent introduction of cash incentives for outstanding players further cements esports' status. With over 500 million gamers in India, Maharashtra is positioned to be the country's esports hub, poised for explosive growth and future Olympic success.



## Kanika Kapoor Unveils 'Gori Hai Kalaiyan 2.0' – A Vibrant Reinterpretation of a Classic



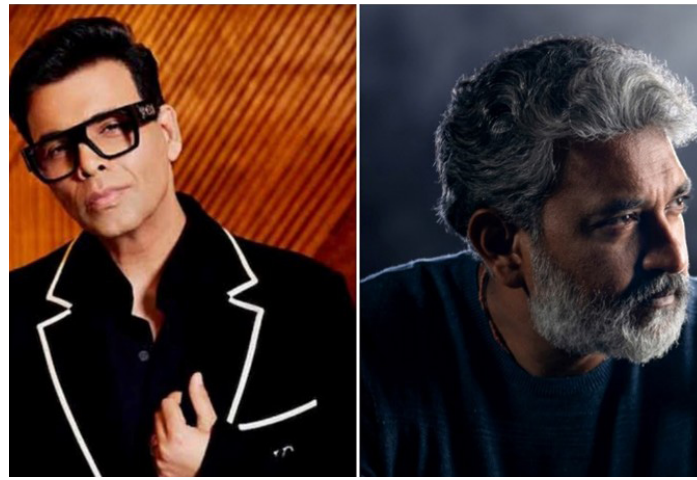
Singer Kanika Kapoor is back with a fresh, energetic take on the iconic track Gori Hai Kalaiyan for the upcoming film Mere Husband Ki Biwi, releasing on February 21. Featuring Badshah, Sharvi Yadav, and IP Singh, the song blends nostalgia with a modern vibe, earning buzz for its upbeat rhythm. Kanika, known for hits like Baby Doll and Chittiyaan Kalaiyaan, calls the track a perfect fit for her playful, high-energy style. She shares her excitement about experimenting with different genres, including Afro and R&B. Despite the pressure of maintaining success, Kanika sees it as motivation, focusing on enjoying the creative journey. With upcoming collaborations, she's eager to share more diverse music soon.

## AR Murugadoss Announces Title of Upcoming Sivakarthikeyan Film as Madharasi



The much-anticipated film directed by AR Murugadoss, starring Sivakarthikeyan, has officially been titled Madharasi. The announcement was made on Sivakarthikeyan's birthday, adding excitement to his fans. The film, previously referred to as #SKXARM, promises a high-octane action-packed experience. A teaser featuring intense action sequences was shared by Murugadoss, hinting at a role for actor Biju Menon as a cop. The movie also stars Rukmini Vasanth, Vidyut Jammwal, Shabeer Kallarakkal, and Vikranth. The film, 90% complete, will wrap up after Murugadoss finishes working on Salman Khan's project. Produced by Sri Lakshmi Movies, Madharasi features music by Anirudh Ravichander and cinematography by Sudeep Elamon. The film's visual effects will be handled by Knack Studios, Phantom FX, and BeastBells.

## Karan Johar Praises SS Rajamouli's "Conviction" in Filmmaking



Karan Johar recently discussed the key to creating blockbuster films – conviction in one's craft. In a conversation with Komal Nahata for his YouTube channel Game Changers, Johar highlighted that conviction is more important than logic in filmmaking. He specifically mentioned SS Rajamouli, stating that his films, such as RRR, thrive not on logic but on Rajamouli's unwavering conviction.

Johar explained, "When conviction comes to the forefront, even the audience believes in it," citing examples like RRR, Animal, and Gadar as films driven by this powerful belief. He also noted that the moment filmmakers doubt themselves or overthink logic, it can hinder a film's success. Johar, who has a good rapport with Rajamouli, had previously presented the Hindi version of Baahubali 2.

## Producer SKN Faces Backlash Over Comments on Telugu Actresses



Producer SKN (Srinivasa Kumar Naidu), who introduced actress Vaishnavi Chaitanya as the heroine in Baby, has sparked controversy with his recent remarks about Telugu actresses. Speaking at the pre-release event of Return of Dragon, SKN mentioned that he and director Sai Rajesh had decided not to promote Telugu actresses anymore. He explained that they had realized the consequences of supporting Telugu girls, leading to their decision. These comments are believed to be aimed at Vaishnavi, who reportedly declined another film offer from SKN's banner after the success of Baby. Many netizens have criticized SKN's remarks, claiming they are inappropriate, especially as Telugu actresses are gaining recognition in the industry.

## New Releases This (February 17 & February 21): Must-Watch Movies & Shows

1. Mere Husband Ki Biwi (Feb 21) - Theatres



A comedy-drama about a man juggling relationships with his wife and girlfriend, starring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, and Bhumi Pednekar.

2. Nilavuku En Mel Ennadi Kobam (Feb 21) - Theatres



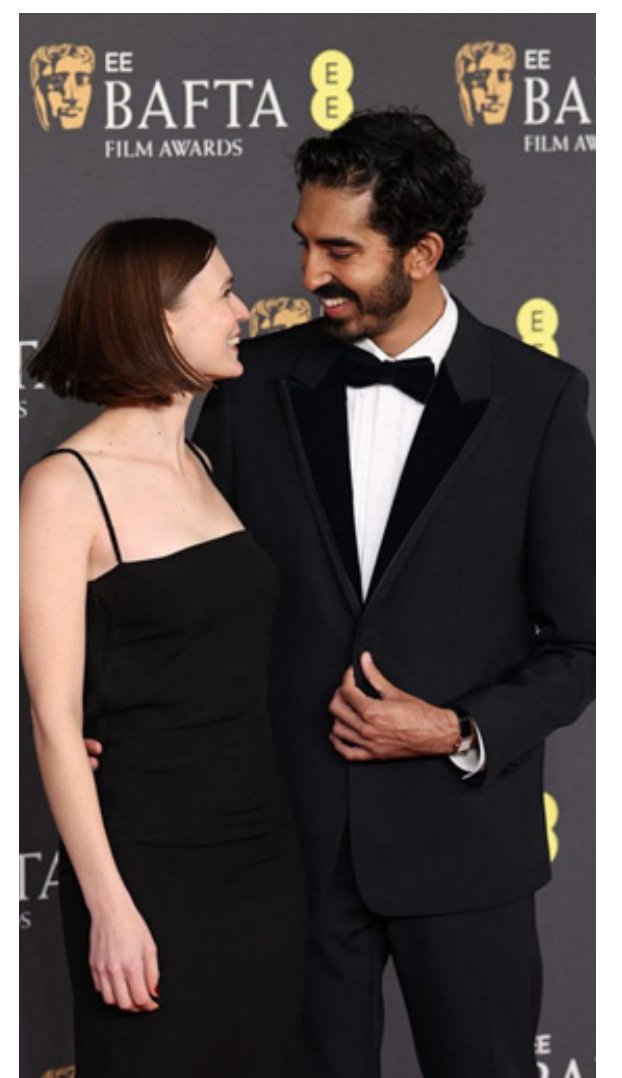
Dhanush's directorial debut featuring his nephew Pavish, a love story with Anikha Surendran and Priya Prakash Varrier.

3. The White Lotus Season 3 (Feb 17) - JioHotstar



Set in Thailand, the new season follows a group of privileged vacationers at a luxury resort.

## BAFTA Awards 2025: 'Conclave' Wins Best Film, Indian Films Earn Recognition



At the 2025 BAFTA Awards, British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri's Santosh, Karan Kandhari's Sister Midnight, and Dev Patel's directorial debut Monkey Man did not secure wins in the Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer category, which went to Irish filmmaker Rich Peppiatt for Kneecap. Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light lost the Best Film Not in the English Language award to Emilia Perez, despite its Cannes victory. Conclave, a papal thriller starring Ralph Fiennes, took home the coveted Best Film and Best British Film awards. Other notable winners included Brady Corbet (Best Director for The Brutalist), Mikey Madison (Best Actress for Anora), and Kieran Culkin (Best Supporting Actor for A Real Pain).