



Weather Forecast

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

BSF and BGB hold DG-level talks in Delhi on border security

Discussions cover fencing issues, border crimes, and insurgent activity

Focus on strengthening cooperation and coordinated management

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The bi-annual Director General (DG)-level border talks between India and Bangladesh commenced in Delhi on Tuesday, with the Border Security Force (BSF) planning to address several critical issues concerning the India-Bangladesh border. Key issues on the agenda include obstructions in fencing work, along with attacks on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants.

This is the first high-level meeting between the BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024. The 55th Director General-level Border Coordination Conference is being held at the BSF headquarters in Lodhi Road, New Delhi, following a ceremonial guard of honour and welcome extend-



India, Bangladesh Border Talks Begin in Delhi

ed to Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuz-zaman Siddiqui, the head of the BGB.

The Bangladeshi delegation arrived in India on Monday, where they were received by BSF Director General Daljit Singh Chawdhary at the IGI Airport.

According to a statement issued by the BSF, the purpose of the conference is to

discuss a range of border-related issues and improve coordination between the two forces. The talks will focus on preventing attacks by Bangladesh-based miscreants, addressing trans-border crimes, and resolving concerns regarding the construction of a single-row fence along the border. Furthermore, the meeting will also address actions against Indian Insurgent Groups op-

erating in Bangladesh, border infrastructure, and ways to strengthen the implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan.

In addition to these issues, discussions will include Confidence Building Measures (CBM) and other ongoing concerns related to the management of the 4,096-km-long India-Bangladesh

boundary that spans across five Indian states—West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, and Mizoram.

The last round of these bi-annual talks took place in Dhaka in March 2024, and this meeting marks a significant step toward reinforcing cross-border security and cooperation between the two neighboring nations.

FM Nirmala Sitharaman Meets Former UK PM Rishi Sunak In Delhi

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in New Delhi on Tuesday to discuss new avenues for strengthening market-based financial ties and promoting economic growth between the two nations. The meeting focused on the importance of leveraging the Commonwealth to bring mutual issues to the G7 agenda, benefiting the Global South.



Sitharaman emphasized

the need for collaboration within the Commonwealth, aligning with India's stance at international forums, particularly regarding the interests of developing countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during the G7 summit in June, had underscored India's commitment to representing the Global South's priorities. He highlighted that these nations, often bearing the brunt of global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, must have a stronger voice on the world stage.

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Odisha Govt Orders Probe into Police Brutality at KIIT University

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Odisha government has launched a high-level fact-finding committee to investigate allegations of police brutality against Nepali students protesting the suicide of their colleague at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University in Bhubaneswar. The incident has triggered protests and escalated tensions between India and Nepal.



On Sunday, Prakristi Lamsal, a third-year engineering student at KIIT, was found dead in her hostel room. The university confirmed her death as a suicide, citing suspicions that it may have been linked to a love affair with another student. Following her death, several Nepali students at the university staged protests, demanding justice and answers.

However, the protests took a violent turn when security personnel at the university reportedly used force against the demonstrators. The situation worsened further when Nepal's Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, intervened, expressing concern over the treatment of the students. In response, Nepal dispatched two embassy officials from New Delhi to Odisha to address the matter.

The Odisha government swiftly reacted by ordering a thorough investigation

into the allegations of police brutality. The state administration also took immediate action by arresting security guards allegedly involved in beating the students during the protest. Several officials responsible for the misconduct have been suspended pending further inquiry.

An official statement from the Odisha government confirmed that the institution had been placed under notice, and legal and administrative action would follow based on the findings of the fact-finding committee. The statement also emphasized that any individuals found guilty of using excessive force against the students would be held accountable according to the law.

The investigation is set to examine not only the actions of the university's security staff but also the broader context of how the protests were handled by the authorities. The case has drawn significant attention both in India and Nepal, with calls for justice growing louder from both governments.

BJP To Launch Campaign On 3-Language Policy From March 1 In Tamil Nadu

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Tamil Nadu has launched a door-to-door campaign in support of the Centre's proposed three-language policy, reigniting the ongoing debate over language in the state. The campaign aims to garner public support for the policy, which has sparked significant opposition from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party.



The BJP has strongly criticized the DMK for its resistance to the three-language policy, asserting that the opposition is a violation of

the Constitutional principles laid down by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. According to the BJP, the policy aligns with the foundational values of the Indian Constitution, which pro-

ports national integration while respecting regional languages and diversity.

The Centre's proposed three-language policy suggests that students should learn Hindi, English, and the regional language of the state. This policy has met with considerable resistance in Tamil Nadu, where many local political groups, particularly the DMK, argue that the imposition of Hindi would undermine the importance of Tamil and infringe on the state's linguistic rights.

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PM Modi, President Murmu extend ceremonial welcome to Qatar Amir

- PM Modi and President Murmu welcomed Qatar's Amir in Delhi
- The visit focuses on strengthening India-Qatar trade and diplomacy
- A high-level Qatari delegation attended the ceremonial reception.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alongside President Draupadi Murmu, extended a ceremonial welcome to Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. This welcoming ceremony marked the beginning of the Amir's two-day state visit to India.

The Amir, accompanied by a high-level delegation that included ministers, senior officials, and business personnel, was greeted in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. The event included a formal Guard of Honour, underscoring the significance of the visit.



cance of the visit.

During the ceremony, Prime Minister Modi and President Murmu interacted with the visiting dignitaries, engaging in discussions with the Amir and his delegation. The visit aims to strengthen bilateral ties between India and Qatar, especially in areas of trade, investment, and diplomatic cooperation. The interaction also provided an opportunity for senior Indian government ministers to meet with the Qatari leadership.

Prosecution Seeks Death Penalty for Sajjan Kumar in 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots Case

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The prosecution in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case has called for the death penalty for former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar, who was convicted for the brutal killings of a father-son duo in Delhi's Saraswati Vihar area. The two victims, Jaswant Singh and Tarundeep Singh, were murdered on November 1, 1984, during the horrific riots that targeted the Sikh community.



On February 17, Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) Manish Rawat filed written submissions urging the court to impose the death penalty, citing guidelines from the Nirbhaya case and other similar cases. The special court, led by Judge Kaveri Baweja, has scheduled further hearings on February 21 to deliberate on the sentencing. Both the defense and victims' counsel have been asked to file their written arguments before the next hearing.

Senior advocate H.S. Phoolka, representing the victims, plans to submit his arguments, emphasizing the severity of the crimes and the long-delayed justice. Meanwhile, the defense counsel, unable to attend due to a lawyers' strike, requested more time to present their case.

APP Rawat described this case as one of the "rarest of rare" instances, where an entire community was targeted without provocation. The prosecution argued that the violence disrupted communal harmony, damaging trust between religious and social groups. Kumar's conviction, Rawat stated, was integral to addressing the severe ramifications of the riots.

In February, Kumar was convicted in connection with the killings of the father-son pair. He is currently serving a life sentence for his involvement in another 1984 anti-Sikh riots case in Delhi Cantonment. Defense attorney Anil Sharma had argued that Kumar's name was not included initially and raised concerns about delays in identifying him. He also pointed out that Kumar's earlier conviction in a similar case is under appeal at the Supreme Court.

H.S. Phoolka argued that police investigations in riot cases were deliberately slow to protect the accused, emphasizing that this case was part of a larger pattern of violence and genocide, with over 2,700 Sikhs killed in Delhi alone. The defense contended that international law should not influence the proceedings, but Phoolka stressed the extraordinary nature of the crimes, highlighting the need for justice in such cases.

Manipur Crisis Driven By Demand for Separate Administration, Meitei Group Tells Governor

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a key umbrella organization representing the Meitei community in Manipur, has urged Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla to take steps towards restoring an elected government in the state within a month. This request follows the imposition of President's Rule on February 13, after the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh, amid ongoing violence in the region. A delegation from COCOMI met with Governor Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal, where they submitted a 13-point memorandum outlining measures that the Governor could take to address the crisis and bring peace to the state. According to the memorandum, COCOMI believes that the ongoing law and order situation in Manipur has been exacerbated by groups pursuing the demand for a separate administration, with no clear agenda for peaceful resolution from the Meitei community. One of the key points raised in the memorandum was the need for a comprehensive initiative to identify, dismantle, and evict illegal



villages that have reportedly sprung up across the state. COCOMI emphasized that these unauthorized settlements pose a threat to both the demographic balance and the environmental integrity of Manipur. Furthermore, COCOMI called for an end to violent activities and the unauthorized movements of armed groups. They emphasized the importance of halting all such actions to restore peace and stability in the state. The group also requested that measures be implemented to ensure security for all affected villages, along with providing amnesty to civilian village defense forces, who are under threat due to the ongoing violence.

Dirt On Mind: Supreme Court Relief, Scathing Rebuke For Ranveer Allahbadia

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed strong disapproval of social media influencer Ranveer Allahbadia's "obscene" comments made during a recent episode of the YouTube show "India's Got Latent". Allahbadia had been under scrutiny following his remarks, which were widely criticized for being inappropriate and offensive. The court's remarks came during the hearing of Allahbadia's plea to club multiple FIRs filed against him over the controversial statements. While hearing his request for relief, the bench questioned Allahbadia's conduct, with one of the judges remarking, "If this is not obscenity, what is it? Why should we quash or club FIRs against you?" This comment highlighted the seriousness with which the court viewed the nature of the remarks made by Allahbadia on the show.

Despite the harsh criticism, the Supreme Court granted interim relief from arrest to the social media influencer while the legal proceedings continued. The court's decision allowed Allahbadia some temporary respite, but it also set a tone of disapproval regarding his actions. The case revolves around remarks made during an episode of "India's Got Latent", which airs on Allahbadia's YouTube channel. The comments were deemed offensive by many viewers, leading to several FIRs being filed against him in different parts of India. The Supreme Court's remarks are a part of a broader conversation on accountability and responsibility for social media influencers, especially in relation to their impact on public discourse and social values. The case continues to unfold, with Allahbadia now awaiting further legal proceedings and potentially facing consequences for his actions.

President grants prosecution sanction against AAP leader Satyendar Jain in ED probe

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a significant development, the President of India has granted prosecution sanction against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Satyendar Jain in connection with an ongoing investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). This decision comes after a thorough review of the case, which involves allegations of money laundering and other financial irregularities. Satyendar Jain, who is the former Delhi Minister for Health and Family Welfare, was arrested by the ED in 2022 in connection with a money laundering case. The

agency claims that Jain, along with others, was involved in a conspiracy to launder proceeds of crime through shell companies and various illegal transactions. Jain has been accused of using his position to secure kickbacks and illegal gains, with the money allegedly routed through several front companies. The prosecution sanction marks a crucial step in the legal process, as it paves the way for the filing of formal charges and trial proceedings against the AAP leader. The decision to grant the sanction was made after careful consideration of the evidence presented by the ED, which has been investigating Jain's financial dealings for over a year.

The case against Jain is part of the ED's larger crackdown on money laundering, particularly involving politicians and public figures. The agency has been using its powers under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe the financial activities of several individuals connected to various corruption allegations. Jain, however, has denied all charges, maintaining that the case is politically motivated. His legal team has repeatedly argued that the evidence against him is insufficient and that the charges are part of an effort to discredit him and his political career. Despite his claims of innocence, the legal battle is expected to intensify as the trial moves forward.

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FM Nirmala Sitharaman Meets Former UK PM Rishi Sunak In Delhi

Modi's address at the G7 Outreach session stressed the inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20, a significant step under India's chairmanship to give the Global South more influence. The Prime Minister also called for ending the technological monopoly held by advanced countries, urging for transparent, fair, and secure global governance in artificial intelligence (AI). He praised India's leadership in AI, noting the country's initiative to develop a national AI strategy and launch the "AI for All" mission.

Additionally, Modi discussed India's energy principles based on availability, accessibility, affordability, and accept-

ability, reinforcing the country's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2070. He called for collective global efforts to ensure a sustainable future.

Sitharaman's meeting with Rishi Sunak follows a recent interaction between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the former UK Prime Minister. Jaishankar posted on X about his appreciation for Sunak's consistent support in strengthening India-UK relations.

This meeting between Sitharaman and Sunak marks another important step in solidifying bilateral ties and addressing key global issues, particularly those impacting the Global South.

BJP To Launch Campaign On 3-Language Policy From March 1 In Tamil Nadu

In response to the growing opposition, the BJP has intensified its outreach efforts, with party leaders emphasizing the need for a unified approach to strengthen the nation's linguistic diversity. The BJP argues that the three-language policy would foster better communication and integration between various regions of India while preserving the cultural significance of regional languages.

The DMK, on the other hand, continues to resist the policy, warning that any at-

tempt to promote Hindi in Tamil Nadu would not be tolerated. The party argues that Tamil, as one of the oldest and most prominent languages in India, deserves to be respected and promoted without any form of external imposition.

As the debate over the three-language policy intensifies, the political discourse in Tamil Nadu is expected to become more charged, with both sides asserting their stance on linguistic autonomy and national unity.

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Amid Deportation By US, Court Asks Punjab To Act On Illegal Immigration Plea

TPN Correspondent | Chandigarh

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed the Punjab government to address a petition regarding the growing issue of illegal travel agents duping individuals by illegally sending them abroad. The bench, led by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Harmeet Singh Grewal, issued the directive while resolving the petition filed by advocate Kanwar Pahul Singh on February 17.

The petitioner, Singh, called for the establishment of "emigration check posts" and an updated list of "certified recruiting agents" to curb



the rise of illegal immigration. The petition was filed in light of recent mass deportations of illegal Indian immigrants from the United States and emphasized the urgency of creating proper emigration processes. It specifically sought the formation of check posts across Punjab under the Emigration Act of 1983, aiming to streamline legal emigration and reduce the risks of illegal

immigration. The petitioner highlighted the significant financial losses faced by the people of Punjab due to the deportations, stressing that these incidents have resulted in millions of rupees in damages. Singh also pushed for a review of the existing list of certified recruiting agents and employers abroad, suggesting that it would help the public access legal channels for

emigration and avoid falling prey to fraudulent travel agents. In addition, the petition called for immediate legal action against the fake agents operating in Punjab under the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, to curb human trafficking and illegal migration via dangerous routes. During the hearing, Advocate Dheeraj Jain, representing the Central Government, noted that the court instructed the petitioner to submit his concerns to both the state and central authorities within a month. Both levels of government were urged to review the representation and make a decision.

Ensure Terror Provisions In New Laws Are Not Misused: Amit Shah Tells J&K Admin



the use of provisions related to terrorism and organised crime should involve scrutiny at the Superintendent of Police (SP) level. He further underscored the necessity of strict monitoring to ensure that these provisions are not exploited for any unfair purposes. The Home Ministry, in a statement, quoted Shah's emphasis on the importance of ensuring justice and transparency in the application of the new laws.

The review meeting was attended by key figures, including Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, senior officers from Jammu and Kashmir's police, and the heads of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB), as well as officials from the Union Home Ministry.

This meeting and Shah's directive reflect the government's focus on ensuring the fair implementation of the updated legal provisions while safeguarding against potential misuse, particularly in sensitive regions like Jammu and Kashmir. The review also aimed at assessing the effectiveness of these new laws in maintaining law and order while balancing the protection of citizens' rights.

- Shah urges caution in enforcing terror laws in J&K
- Decisions to invoke provisions require SP-level scrutiny
- Govt aims for fair, transparent law implementation

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday called on the Jammu and Kashmir administration to exercise caution in the enforcement of provisions related to terrorism and organised crime under the new criminal laws. Shah emphasized that these provisions must not be misused and that any decision to invoke them should be made only after a thorough and careful examination.

The home minister's comments came during a review meeting held in Delhi with

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. The meeting was convened to assess the implementation of three significant criminal laws – the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam. These laws replaced the British-era legal frameworks, namely the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), and Indian Evidence Act, which had been in place for over a century.

In his address, Shah instructed that decisions regarding

Disrespectful for PM, HM to have made midnight decision to appoint new CEC: Rahul Gandhi

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday condemned the government's late-night decision to appoint Gyanesh Kumar as the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), calling it "disrespectful" and "discourteous" while the selection process is under Supreme Court scrutiny. The appointment was finalized on Monday night, just hours after the Prime Minister-led selection committee's meeting, despite objections from Gandhi.

As a member of the three-person selection panel, alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Gandhi had urged the government to postpone the meeting until the Supreme Court hearing on February 19, 2025. He submitted a dissent note, stating that proceeding with the appointment while the matter is being legally contested undermines democratic institutions and the spirit of India's Constitution.

Gandhi cited a March 2, 2023, Supreme Court ruling that mandated the inclusion of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) in the CEC selection panel, along with the Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition (LoP). However, the government later passed a law in August 2023, excluding the CJI and replacing them with a Union cabinet



minister, effectively reversing the court's directive. Gandhi argued that this legislative change weakened electoral integrity and reflected growing public distrust in India's election process.

He referenced Constitution framer B. R. Ambedkar's 1949 warning against executive interference in the Election Com-

mission's functioning. Gandhi emphasized that an independent election body requires a transparent, fair selection process, free from political manipulation. He reiterated that the Congress strongly opposes the government's approach and called for greater accountability to protect India's democratic institutions.

BJP puts off meet to pick Delhi CM, AAP smells 'internal strife: Atishi

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The BJP has once again postponed its legislature party meeting to select a new Delhi Chief Minister, rescheduling it for Wednesday. However, the party has yet to appoint observers to facilitate discussions with its newly-elected MLAs, raising concerns about the delay in forming the government.

As the decision is postponed, the BJP has begun preparing for an elaborate swearing-in ceremony at the Ram Lila Ground, which is expected to be attended by the party's top leadership. Despite this, the repeated delays in finalizing a Chief Minister have sparked criticism from opposition parties, who accuse the BJP of being unable to swiftly form a government.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been particularly vocal in its criticism, claiming the BJP is embroiled in an internal conflict. A senior AAP leader questioned why the people of Delhi should suffer due to the BJP's internal issues, arguing



that the party's groupism has already begun to show. "If they are taking 10 days just to decide on a Chief Minister and cabinet, one can only imagine how long they will take to make decisions for the welfare of Delhi's people," the leader said.

Outgoing Chief Minister Atishi also condemned the BJP for failing to announce a Chief Minister even 10 days after the election results were declared. She suggested that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi was aware that BJP MLAs lacked the necessary skills to govern effectively, which might be contributing to the delay.

The ongoing delay has led to growing concerns about the BJP's ability to expedite the formation of a new government in the national capital, as opposition parties continue to question the party's internal struggles and decision-making process.

Maha Kumbh has turned into 'Mrityu Kumbh: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee

TPN Correspondent | West Bengal

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday challenged the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to prove allegations linking her to Bangladeshi fundamentalists, asserting that she would resign if the party could establish any such connection. Speaking in the West Bengal Assembly, Banerjee dismissed the accusations as baseless and demanded that the BJP substantiate its claims.

The Chief Minister also took the opportunity to criticize the central government and the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government over the alleged mismanagement of the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. Banerjee referred to the event as having turned into a "Mrityu Kumbh" (Death Kumbh), implying poor organization and inadequate safety measures at the religious gathering.

Banerjee further stated that she would lodge a complaint with Prime Minister Narendra Modi regarding the BJP's allegations, particularly those made by his party's MLAs accusing her of having ties with Bangladeshi fundamentalists. She condemned the BJP for us-



ing religion to further its political agenda, arguing that the party was inciting hatred and division in the country. She also asserted that while freedom of speech is important, it should not be used as a tool to spread divisive rhetoric.

The controversy erupted after Suvendu Adhikari, the Leader of the Opposition in West

Bengal, accused Banerjee's government of allowing anti-national activities in certain parts of the state. Adhikari claimed that several arrests of Bangladeshis, Rohingyas, and extremists by Assam and Jammu & Kashmir Police had highlighted the growing problem. He alleged that the demographic composition in 50-55 assembly constituencies and 30-35 police stations had changed due to illegal immigration, which he attributed to Banerjee's leadership as Home Minister.

The BJP has repeatedly accused Banerjee's government of allowing illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and Rohingya migrants to settle in West Bengal. These allegations were also raised by top BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign in the state.

BJP MLAs Protest Mamata Banerjee's Remarks on Maha Kumbh Mela, Call Her Anti-Hindu



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

BJP MLAs in West Bengal staged a protest on Tuesday, accusing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of being anti-Hindu over her controversial remarks about the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela. The protest followed Banerjee's comments in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, where she criticized the Uttar Pradesh government for its handling of the mega religious event in Prayagraj.

Banerjee referred to the gathering as a "Mrityu Kumbh" (Death Kumbh), claiming that the Uttar Pradesh government had mishandled the event, offering VIPs special treatment while failing to make proper arrange-

ments for the poor. She emphasized the lack of adequate facilities for the common people, even though the event is a significant religious occasion for millions of Hindus.

"Maha Kumbh has turned into 'Mrityu Kumbh'," Banerjee stated, adding that while rich VIPs could pay up to ₹1 lakh for premium camps, the poor were left without any arrangements. She also pointed out the common occurrence of stampedes at such events, suggesting that despite the inherent risks, proper planning was necessary to ensure the safety of attendees.

Banerjee's comments were met with strong

criticism from the BJP, led by Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari. The BJP condemned the remarks, accusing Banerjee of disrespecting a sacred Hindu event. They also labeled her as an "anti-Hindu" leader and called for an apology. The BJP emphasized that such derogatory remarks towards the Kumbh Mela would not be tolerated.

The debate over Banerjee's comments highlights the ongoing political tension between the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP in West Bengal, with both sides regularly accusing each other of mismanaging affairs and undermining cultural and religious sentiments.

UN Climate Chief Lauds India's Solar Energy Leadership



- India among top four solar superpowers
- UN urges stronger clean energy push
- Calls for better climate finance

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India has firmly established itself as a global leader in solar energy, becoming one of only four nations worldwide to have surpassed 100 gigawatts of installed solar capacity. The country's impressive strides in renewable energy were highlighted by Simon Stiell, the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, during his address at the curtain-raiser event for the ET Now Global

Business Summit.

Stiell commended India for its success in solar power, calling the nation a "solar superpower" for achieving results where many others have failed to take meaningful action. India joins China, the US, and Germany in the elite group of countries with over 100 gigawatts of solar capacity. He also lauded India for its ambitious clean energy targets, which align with the global push

toward reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to sustainable energy sources.

In his address, Stiell emphasized that countries leading the charge in renewable energy stand to benefit economically, and India is already on a path to reap those rewards. The country's proactive approach to energy access, particularly its success in electrifying every village ahead of schedule, has further strengthened its position as a global leader in sustainable development.

However, Stiell urged India to take the next step by strengthening its climate plan, suggesting a focus on expanding growth in sectors like wind and solar energy, living standards, and job creation. He noted that this approach would supercharge India's economic growth while simultaneously addressing climate change.

Acknowledging the global clean energy race, Stiell also pointed out that nations must adopt an integrated approach, involving governments, businesses, and societies, to ensure effective research, investment, and training for a cleaner future. He reminded richer nations of their responsibility to provide adequate climate finance to support developing countries in their climate actions.

The UN Climate Chief also recognized India's leadership in promoting the "Lifestyle for Environment" (LiFE) initiative, which encourages individuals and communities to take action to protect the environment. Stiell concluded by highlighting that the global clean energy revolution is unstoppable and that India is well-positioned to lead in this transformative movement.

UPSC further extends last date to apply for civil services prelims exam



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has once again extended the deadline for candidates to apply for the Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2025. The new deadline is set for February 21, 2025, at 6 PM. This marks the second time the application deadline has been extended for this year's examination.

The Civil Services Examination, one of the most competitive exams in India, is conducted annually in three stages: the preliminary examination, the mains, and the interview. It selects candidates for various prestigious positions, including officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Foreign Service (IFS), among others.

The notice issued by UPSC confirmed the extended deadline and also mentioned that a correction window for applicants would be available from February 22 to February 28, allowing candidates to make any necessary changes to their applications.

The second extension follows complaints from aspirants about technical issues with the online application system, which the Commission has acknowledged and worked to address. No specific reasons have been provided for the extension, but it offers a further opportunity for candidates to complete or correct their applications.

Aspirants are advised to take advantage of the extended time to ensure their applications are submitted accurately and before the new deadline.

Delhi HC seeks response from Police on STD testing for minors in sexual cases



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Delhi High Court has sought responses from the Centre, Delhi Police, and other concerned authorities regarding a plea that calls for the creation of guidelines for testing both the accused and minor survivors in sexual offences for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

A bench consisting of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela issued notices to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Delhi government, Delhi Police, and the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights. The court directed the concerned parties to submit their responses by the next hearing scheduled for March 28.

The petitioners, including Aishwarya Sinha, who filed the plea, are seeking the formulation and implementation of a set of guidelines that would clarify the roles of various stakeholders in the process. These stakeholders include the investigating officers,

hospitals, and child welfare committees, among others. The guidelines would ensure that both the child survivors and the accused in sexual offence cases undergo testing for STDs and STIs in a timely manner.

According to the petitioners, such guidelines would provide a strong legal framework that prioritizes the health and rights of child survivors of sexual violence. It aims to ensure that these survivors receive prompt medical attention to prevent any long-term health complications from possible exposure to STDs or STIs. The petition emphasizes that clear protocols would also assist in maintaining accountability in the handling of sensitive cases involving minors, further protecting their well-being.

The plea has highlighted the need for clarity and prompt action in addressing the health concerns of minors who may have been exposed to sexual violence, calling for a more organized and compassionate approach to handling such cases.

IMD forecasts light drizzles in Delhi till Thursday; AQI to remain poor

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Delhiites woke up to a gloomy morning on Tuesday, as the minimum temperature rose slightly to 13.2°C, which is two degrees above the normal temperature for this time of year. Despite the mild increase in temperature, the air quality remained in the 'poor' category, with the average Air Quality Index (AQI) standing at 211 at 9 am, compared to 231 (poor) at 4 pm on Monday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) attributed the weather changes to a western disturbance that has been influencing the region, causing partially cloudy skies. The IMD also forecast isolated drizzles in parts of Delhi for the next few days. The drizzle or very light rain could affect isolated areas of Delhi NCR on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

On Monday, the maximum temperature in Delhi reached 29°C, and it is expected to remain between 27°C and 29°C on Tuesday. The minimum temperature on Monday was recorded at 11.2°C.

The air quality in Delhi has been a consistent concern. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) categorizes the AQI in different ranges: 0-50 is considered "good," 51-100 is "satisfactory," 101-200 is "moderate," 201-300 is "poor," 301-400 is "very poor," and anything over 400 is considered "severe." With an AQI of 211, Delhi's air quality remains in the "poor" category, which can affect individuals with respiratory conditions and other vulnerable groups.

Morning walkers in areas like Lodhi Garden had to contend with both the cool, gloomy weather and the lingering pollution. As Delhi continues to face these air quality challenges, residents are being advised to take necessary precautions, especially those with pre-existing health issues.



Recklessly Driven Audi Rams Into Scooter In Delhi, BBA Student Arrested



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A student was arrested late Monday night after allegedly driving a red Audi convertible recklessly and colliding with a scooter in the upscale Lodhi Road area of South Delhi. The crash, which took place near the Jor Bagh post office, left two men on the scooter injured, one of whom is in critical condition.

According to police officials, the Audi, driven by one of two Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) students, collided with the scooter before smashing into a tree. The two men on the scooter, identified as Naitik and Tushar, were rushed to AIIMS Trauma Centre for medical treatment. While one of the victims is stable, the other remains in critical condition, prompting serious concern.

The authorities registered a case of rash driving and endangering public safety after the driver of the Audi was apprehended at the scene of the incident. Video footage from the scene reveals the extensive damage to the vehicle, with the front of the Audi completely smashed. The hood of the car was severely bent, one of the wheels

was facing sideways, and the car's signature four-circle logo was detached, found near the tree where the vehicle finally stopped. These significant damages suggest that the car was traveling at a high speed when the crash occurred.

Shubham, a relative of Naitik, described the accident and confirmed that Naitik had sustained a leg injury. He mentioned that while the details regarding Tushar's condition were unclear, both the accused individuals had been arrested by the police. The severity of the crash has raised concerns about road safety, particularly regarding reckless driving in the area.

This incident occurred just hours after two other students in Hyderabad were arrested for performing dangerous stunts in a Fortuner and a BMW on a busy road. CCTV footage from the scene showed the Fortuner making donuts in the middle lane of Outer Ring Road, while the BMW performed similar dangerous maneuvers on the side. Both drivers were arrested by the police, drawing attention to the growing issue of reckless driving by young individuals.

Accusations or unparliamentary conduct cannot solve problems': UP CM Adityanath



TPN Correspondent
| Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed hope on Tuesday that the opposition, despite its frustration over recent electoral defeats, would not disrupt the Budget Session but instead contribute positively to its smooth proceedings. Adityanath's remarks came ahead of the start of the 2025-26 Budget Session, where he emphasized the importance of the governor's address and the presentation of the state budget as key moments for all members, including the opposition, to voice their views.

Addressing the media, Adityanath stated that such significant events provide a platform for meaningful discussions, urging

the opposition to participate constructively. He stressed that accusations and unparliamentary behavior would not resolve issues and would only hinder productive dialogue. "Accusations or unparliamentary conduct cannot solve problems," he added.

The Chief Minister assured that the government was fully prepared to address any concerns raised by the opposition, providing factual responses to ensure transparency and clarity. Adityanath underscored the need for the assembly to serve as a space for deliberation and constructive debates rather than being disrupted by baseless allegations or disorderly conduct.

He expressed confidence that the governor's address would set a

tone of discipline and constructive engagement for the remainder of the session. By doing so, the government hopes to ensure that all discussions in the house are centered on the state's development, the budget, and the welfare of the people.

Adityanath's comments highlight the importance of cooperation in the legislative process, with the aim of making the upcoming Budget Session a productive and positive one for the state of Uttar Pradesh. The government remains committed to ensuring that the legislative proceedings are conducted efficiently and that all members, regardless of political affiliation, have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the discussions.

- Adityanath urged opposition to ensure a smooth Budget Session.
- He emphasized constructive debate over accusations.
- Government assured transparency in addressing concerns

SP members protest in UP Assembly premises ahead of Budget session



TPN Correspondent | UP

Ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Budget session on Tuesday, members of the Samajwadi Party (SP) staged a protest in the assembly premises, raising concerns over multiple issues, including the Sambhal incident and the deaths of devotees in the Kumbh Mela stampede.

Carrying banners and placards, SP members raised slogans against the government, demanding accountability. Senior SP MLA Amitabh Trivedi accused the government of manipulating figures related to the deaths of devotees at the Kumbh Mela, alleging that the official toll was being misrepresented.

Rajendra Chaudhary, the chief spokesperson of the Rashtriya Samajwadi Party (RSP), joined the protest, criticizing the BJP government as "anti-people and anti-farmer," claiming that the government had failed on all fronts.

The Budget session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly commenced with Governor Anandiben Patel's address, marking the start of the legislative proceedings. In a significant development, Speaker Satish Mahana announced that members of the Assembly would now be able to express their views in regional dialects such as Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Bundeli, and Braj. This move aims to make the proceedings more inclusive and reflective of the state's diverse linguistic culture.

During an all-party meeting held on Monday ahead of the Budget session, Speaker Mahana urged all political parties to cooperate for the smooth functioning of the House, ensuring that the legislative process remains productive and focused on public welfare.

As the session continues, it is expected that the Samajwadi Party and other opposition members will continue raising key concerns, while the government prepares to present its Budget plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

High Faecal Bacteria In River Water At Some Locations In Maha Kumbh: Pollution Board

TPN Correspondent | Mahakumbh

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday addressed concerns regarding water quality at various locations in Prayagraj during the ongoing Maha-Kumbh Mela. A report from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) revealed that the water in the Ganga and Yamuna rivers did not meet the primary bathing water quality standards, particularly with regard to faecal coliform levels.

Faecal coliform, a key indicator of sewage contamination, has a permissible limit of 2,500 units per 100 ml, as per CPCB guidelines. The report highlighted that at multiple monitoring locations during the Mahakumbh, the faecal coliform levels exceeded this threshold, which could pose health risks to the thousands of devotees who bathe in the rivers during the religious event.

The bench, comprising NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal, and Expert Member A Senthil Vel, was hearing a case on the prevention of sewage dis-



charge into the rivers. The CPCB's report dated February 3 noted repeated violations of water quality standards, with high faecal coliform concentrations observed in the river water at different points.

The bench also pointed out that the Ut-

tar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UP-PCB) had failed to comply with an earlier directive to submit a detailed action report on measures taken to improve water quality. Instead, the UPPCB had only submitted a covering letter with some water test results, which still showed concerning levels of faecal and total coliform.

The NGT granted one day for Uttar Pradesh's counsel to review the report and submit a response. The tribunal also directed the Member Secretary of UPPCB and other relevant state authorities to attend the next hearing virtually, scheduled for February 19, 2025. The tribunal emphasized the importance of immediate action to ensure the safety of the river water, especially with large numbers of devotees participating in the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela.

In custody for 6 years, Christian Michel gets bail in WIP chopper scam

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Suresh K Reddy, a seasoned diplomat from the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), has been appointed as India's Ambassador to Egypt, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Monday. Reddy, currently serving as India's envoy to Brazil, is a 1991 IFS batch officer with an illustrious career spanning several countries and key diplomatic roles.

Reddy has had a distinguished career, with his first overseas posting in Cairo. His extensive experience includes serving in Muscat, Abu Dhabi, and Islamabad, followed by his appointment as India's Ambassador to Iraq and ASEAN. He also served as the Special Envoy of the Government of India to Iraq in 2014, where he addressed issues related to the safety, welfare, and evacuation of Indian nationals during a critical period.

Within the MEA, Reddy has held significant positions. Notably, he served as the Head of the Office of the Minister of State for External Affairs, where he dealt with matters related to India's relations with neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. His expertise also extended to regional cooperation, as he played a key role in the establishment of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Secretariat.

Reddy's contributions to India's foreign relations extended to multilateral forums as well. He headed the ASEAN Multilateral Economic Relations Division, working on initiatives like ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting), ACD (Asia Cooperation Dialogue), and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation). His leadership was also instrumental when he headed the Multilateral Economic Relations Di-



vision between December 2018 and January 2020.

In addition, Reddy represented India as the Sous Sherpa to the G20, G7, BRICS, and IBSA. In January 2020, he took on the role of Additional Secretary (Europe), where he coordinated India's diplomatic engagements with Europe and Central Asia. With his broad expertise and extensive diplomatic experience, Reddy's appointment to Egypt underscores his critical role in shaping India's foreign policy.



ED Raids Multiple Locations in Kerala Over Rs 1,000 Crore Fake CSR Scam

TPN Correspondent | Kochi

The Kochi unit of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids at 12 locations across Kerala on Tuesday in connection with the Rs 1,000 crore corporate social responsibility (CSR) fund scam. The raids focused on the residence and offices of K.N. Anandakumar, Chairman of the NGO Confederation and a prominent social activist in the state. Anandakumar is accused of receiving Rs 10 lakh per month from Ananthu Krishnan, the 26-year-old mastermind of the scam.

The ED also raided the residence of Laly Vincent, a senior Congress leader and the legal

counsel for Krishnan. The scam, orchestrated by Krishnan, allegedly promised high-value products such as scooters, laptops, and sewing machines at half the market price. Many unsuspecting individuals were convinced by Krishnan's aggressive marketing tactics and invested their savings in what seemed to be an irresistible offer.

The timing of the raids coincided with the lower court's decision to pronounce the verdict on Anandakumar's anticipatory bail plea. Meanwhile, Krishnan, who was arrested last week, is currently in custody after a court in Ernakulam district granted the police two days to question him further. The

police have revealed that Krishnan maintained 21 bank accounts, 11 of which saw a total of Rs 548 crore in transactions.

The police also discovered that Krishnan had collected Rs 143.50 crore from around 25,000 victims, promising them discounted two-wheelers. However, the whereabouts of the collected funds remain unclear, and the investigation is still in its early stages. The Crime Branch of Kerala Police is handling the case, which has led to over 500 complaints of cheating. Authorities are continuing to piece together the financial trail in a bid to uncover the full extent of the scam.

India's Paradox: Booming Economy, But Where Are The Jobs?



India, with the world's largest youth population, is at a critical juncture. While it stands as Asia's fastest-growing economy, it faces a severe employment crisis that remains unique to its socio-economic context.

The real paradox lies not in the absence of jobs but in the lack of skilled professionals who meet industry demands. An alarming 83% of India's unemployed workforce is between 15 and 29 years old, highlighting a mismatch between education and employability. Although India produces 50 lakh graduates annually, nearly half of them are unemployable—not due to lack of knowledge, but because of essential skill deficiencies, including communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.

This skills gap is further exacerbated by low youth workforce participation, leading to rising frustration among young professionals and deepening economic strain for families that invest heavily in education, only to see their children unable to secure stable jobs. The inability of the job market to absorb this growing unemployable workforce, particularly in fields like research and development, hampers innovation and productivity, which are vital to sustaining India's economic growth. Efforts like the National Education Policy (NEP) and skill development programs are commendable but haven't fully addressed the skills gap. These initiatives encourage alignment between academia and industry needs, yet many graduates remain

unemployable due to deficiencies in real-world skills. Additionally, rural youth face a further disadvantage, with limited English proficiency hindering their entry into urban job markets, where English fluency is often a requirement for multinational companies. For India to continue its growth trajectory, it must bridge this skills gap to ensure that economic expansion translates into equitable job creation. The solution lies in realigning education with industry needs, fostering lifelong learning, and investing in skills development. If done correctly, India's demographic dividend can become a major economic asset, transforming its youth into a powerhouse of innovation and progress. The time for reform is now.

Trump's Blunt 'No' To Europe Could Change Everything



A new phase in the Ukraine war is unfolding, as the Trump administration seeks to engage Russia without involving Ukraine or Europe. The Saudis are stepping in as mediators, with key figures like US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff, and National Security Adviser Mike Waltz playing central roles. This shift marks a dramatic departure from the US's policy of the past three years and leaves Europe scrambling to respond. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has strongly opposed any deals made without Ukraine's involvement, but the US seems ready to walk away from its commitment to European security. US officials, including Vice-President JD Vance, have emphasized that Europe must take on a greater role in its own defense, with US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stating that Ukraine returning to its pre-2014 borders is unrealistic, while also downplaying Ukraine's NATO aspirations. The Trump administration's stance represents a fundamental rethink of the US-Europe partnership. In Paris, European leaders are urgently discussing how to respond to this shift, with UK leader Keir Starmer and Germany suggesting peace-keeping troops for Ukraine. However, many fear that Trump's pursuit of peace with Putin could put Europe at a long-term disadvantage. As the US shifts its focus to the Indo-Pacific, Europe must confront the reality that its security is no longer a top priority for Washington. The task now is for European leaders to bolster their defense commitments and ensure that they have a say in the future of transatlantic relations. Trump's bold moves could disrupt the global order, with Europe left to reconsider its place in the new world order.

Beyond Deportation: Joint Efforts a Must to Curb Illegal Immigration

India is facing a serious challenge in the form of illegal immigration, particularly with planeloads of deported Indian migrants arriving from the United States. The individuals involved are primarily Indian citizens, and their deportation not only reflects poorly on the states they originated from but also on the nation as a whole. Political finger-pointing over the matter does little to address the deeper issues at play. Successive governments at both the central and state levels have failed these citizens to such an extent that they risked their lives seeking opportunities abroad. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his recent visit to Washington, pledged to accept any verified Indian migrant deported from the United States and to intensify efforts to combat human trafficking. His call to move beyond mere repatriation and to address the root causes of illegal immigration is a positive step. However, this effort cannot be the responsibility of the Indian government alone. Tackling illegal immigration requires coordinated action from both the Union and state governments, as well as collaboration with civil society and the general public. All these stakeholders are key to formulating a sustainable solution to this pressing issue. The situation is particularly dire in Punjab, which has experienced an alarming exodus of its residents seeking better prospects in the US. Over the past 15 years, the state has been ruled by various political parties, including the Akali-BJP alliance, the Con-

gress, and the Aam Aadmi Party. Despite the change in leadership, the problem persists. The tendency to shift blame between political factions has failed to yield any real solutions. It is crucial for all political parties to put aside differences and prioritize the long-term interests of the state, addressing the root causes of illegal immigration in a unified manner. The treatment of deportees has been another point of contention, with many arriving in India still shackled despite the country's protests to the US authorities. Additionally, the fact that nearly all deportations are being routed through Amritsar raises further concerns. While these issues cannot be ignored, they should not divert attention from the larger challenge at hand. A key task for both the central and state governments moving forward will be to prevent deported individuals from resorting to similar illegal attempts to migrate again. Equally important is to dissuade potential migrants from taking dangerous and desperate measures in pursuit of the elusive "American dream." To truly curb illegal immigration, it is essential for India to adopt a holistic and collaborative approach. Rather than focusing solely on deportation, efforts must be directed toward addressing the socio-economic factors that drive people to take such drastic steps. Only through coordinated action across all levels of government, along with the involvement of civil society, can India hope to solve this pressing issue and prevent further harm to its citizens.

Failure of Planning: Will Vaishnav Take Blame for Stampede?



The tragic stampede at New Delhi station, which claimed 18 lives during the Maha Kumbh Mela rush, was not merely an accident. It was a catastrophic failure of planning, foresight, and accountability by the authorities. As thousands of pilgrims descended on the station to board trains to Prayagraj, the lack of preparation to manage the massive influx of passengers became tragically apparent. The event's scale was not unexpected—such large gatherings have long been part of the Mela, and the resulting strain on railway infrastructure is well-documented. The fact that authorities failed to anticipate and implement proper crowd control measures is a glaring oversight that ultimately led to the deaths of innocent people. Former Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal was blunt in his assessment of the situation,

asserting that the ultimate responsibility lay with the current Railway Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav. While the government hastily announced compensation for the victims' families—Rs 10 lakh for each deceased and Rs 2.5 lakh for the seriously injured—ethical concerns arose when reports emerged of cash being distributed at the station. The distribution of money in violation of the 2023 compensation guidelines, which limit cash payouts to Rs 50,000, only served to highlight the government's inability to address systemic issues properly. The optics of handing out large wads of cash amid chaos seemed insensitive and inadequate in the face of such a preventable tragedy. The demand for Vaishnav's resignation is gaining momentum, especially after the government initially dismissed the stampede as a "rumor." Such deflection of responsibility highlights a deep-

er reluctance to acknowledge the failure in managing the situation. Historically, railway ministers such as Lal Bahadur Shastri and Nitish Kumar demonstrated moral responsibility by resigning following similar disasters. This raises the question: will Vaishnav follow suit and take accountability for the loss of life under his watch? While resignations might offer a symbolic gesture of responsibility, what is needed now is not just individual accountability but a comprehensive overhaul of the railway system. Effective crowd management protocols must be instituted, especially during major religious and festival events. It is time to put in place robust systems that prioritize passenger safety, preventing such disasters from occurring in the future. Without this, no amount of compensation will be able to undo the damage done.



India, Qatar Elevate Ties To 'Strategic Partnership' As Emir Meets PM Modi

- India and Qatar upgrade ties to a strategic partnership.
- Discussions focus on trade, energy, and investment growth.
- Leaders explore a free trade deal and fiscal cooperation.



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India and Qatar have officially agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership, marking a significant milestone in their diplomatic ties. The agreement was finalized following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, in New Delhi.

The leaders engaged in extensive discussions at Hyderabad House, focusing on key areas such as trade, investment, technology,

energy, food security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. One of the highlights of the talks was a potential free trade agreement, with both nations aiming to double bilateral trade to \$28 billion over the next five years.

Energy security also featured prominently in the discussions, with both sides exploring ways to broaden their cooperation in this sector. Additionally, the two countries agreed on measures to prevent fiscal evasion and avoid double taxation concerning income taxes. An agreement on this front was also exchanged.

Both leaders also touched upon regional and global issues of mutual interest during their talks, reinforcing the strong partnership between the two nations. The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, shared details of the discussions on social media, emphasizing the breadth of cooperation envisioned across various sectors, including innovation and technology.

In a rare diplomatic gesture, Prime Minister Modi personally received the Emir at the airport,

offering a warm handshake and a hug, underscoring the importance of the visit. The Emir's visit, which began on Monday evening, follows Prime Minister Modi's trip to Qatar in February 2024.

During the visit, the Emir was given a ceremonial guard of honour at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, where he was warmly welcomed by President Droupadi Murmu. Accompanying the Emir is a high-level delegation, including ministers, senior officials, and business leaders, further strengthening ties between the two nations.



Maharashtra Cabinet Approves Formation Of 6th Finance Commission

TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

In a significant move, the Maharashtra Cabinet has approved the establishment of a Sixth State Finance Commission to assess the financial position of panchayats and municipalities and recommend necessary financial measures. The Cabinet authorized Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to propose the names of the Chairman and members of the Commission to the state Governor, C.P. Radhakrishnan. Additionally, an officer with at least a Junior Administrative Grade Officer rank will be appointed as the Member Secretary of the Commission.

The Finance Commission will be responsible for reviewing the financial status of local government bodies and recommending the allocation of state revenue from taxes, duties, tolls, and fees among panchayats and municipalities. The Commission will also suggest the principles for the distribution of grants-in-aid and measures to improve the financial health of local bodies. The recommendations will be based on the 2011 Census population data to determine the fair share of taxes and subsidies. The Commission's work will be supported by necessary resources, including office space and a dedicated budget for recurring and non-recurring expenses.

In addition to the Finance Commission approval, the Cabinet greenlit a major solar power project for the Mysal Lift Irrigation Scheme under the Krishna-Koyna Lift Irrigation Project. This energy-efficient initiative, with a budget of Rs 1,594 crore, aims to meet the annual electricity needs of approximately 398 million units for the scheme. The project will benefit drought-prone areas in Sangli and Solapur districts by providing irrigation water to over 1 lakh hectares.

Furthermore, the Cabinet approved the revised budget of Rs 1,275.78 crore for the Varkhede Londhe Barrage project in Jalgaon. Another notable decision was the establishment of an anti-drug task force, with 346 posts created to strengthen efforts in combating substance abuse in the state.

Gyanesh Kumar appointed as CEC; Vivek Joshi election commissioner

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

On Monday, Gyanesh Kumar was appointed as the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), according to the law ministry. Kumar's appointment marks a significant moment as he becomes the first CEC to be appointed under the new law that governs the appointment of members to the Election Commission (EC). His term will extend until January 26, 2029, just before the expected announcement of the schedule for the next Lok Sabha election.

Vivek Joshi, a 1989-batch Haryana-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, was also appointed as an Election Commissioner. Joshi, born on May 21, 1966, will serve in this role until 2031, in line with the law stipulating that CECs and ECs retire at the age of 65 or serve for a six-year term.



Before his appointment, Sushil Chandra had resigned from his position as the Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to become an Election Commissioner. Joshi, a former Haryana Chief Secretary, had been on central deputation since January 2019.

During his tenure as CEC, Kumar will oversee several crucial state elections, including the Bihar Assembly elections later this year, as well as the Kerala and Puducherry Assembly elections in 2026. He will also supervise the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which are scheduled for 2026.

Kumar, a 1988-batch Kerala-cadre IAS officer, played a vital role in implementing decisions related to the abrogation of Article 370 during his tenure in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. He took over as Election Commissioner on March 15, 2024.

Indian Embassy Assures Investigation into Nepalese Student's Alleged Suicide at KIIT

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Indian Embassy in Nepal has promised a thorough investigation into the alleged suicide of Nepalese student Prakriti Lamsal at Odisha's Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT). The third-year B Tech student was found dead in her hostel room on Sunday, triggering protests on the KIIT campus where nearly 1,000 Nepali students are enrolled.

In response to the incident, students took to the streets, blocking roads and staging protests against the administration. Demonstrations also took place in front of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, with students demanding a comprehensive probe into the matter.

The embassy issued a statement urging Nepali students to return to campus and continue their studies. It highlighted that Nepali students form a crucial part of the educational and cultural ties between India and Nepal. The statement further reassured that the Indian government would



continue taking necessary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of Nepali students in India.

The protests escalated on campus, leading to some Nepali students being evicted from their hostel by the authorities. KIIT clarified that extensive counseling efforts had

been made for over 10 hours to manage the situation. However, certain protesters had disrupted the process, blocking roads and creating tensions. As a result, the university advised students to return to their homes until the investigation is complete, with assurances that their academic progress would not be affected.

Meanwhile, Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli intervened, dispatching officials to counsel students and provide them with the option of returning to their homes or staying in the hostel. State education ministers also instructed KIIT to ensure the safe return of Nepali students to Bhubaneswar by special buses.

Former UK PM Rishi Sunak and Family Visit India's Parliament House

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, accompanied by his wife Akshata Murty, visited the Parliament House in India on Tuesday, February 18, 2025. The family, including their two daughters, Krishna and Anoushka, was welcomed by the Lok Sabha Secretary General, Utpal Kumar Singh, during their visit to the iconic political landmark.

In a video shared by news agency ANI, Sunak can be seen arriving at the Parliament with his family. The warm reception marked a special moment for the Sunak family during their trip to India. In addition to his immediate family, Sunak's mother-in-law, Sudha Murty, who is a Member of the Rajya Sabha, was also present



at the Parliament House on the same day. Sudha Murty is known for her extensive philanthropic work and as the chairperson of Infosys Foundation.

Rishi Sunak's visit comes amid a series of engagements in India that have included cultural and

official events. The former UK PM, who made history as the first person of Indian descent to hold the position of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, continues to maintain close ties with India, where his in-laws are prominent figures in the business and philanthropic spheres.

The visit was an opportunity for Sunak and his family to experience India's legislative heart and engage with Indian political leaders. The family's connection to India has always been a subject of interest, especially considering Sunak's background, with both of his parents being of Indian origin.

This trip also highlights the strengthening of ties between the UK and India, two nations with historical, political, and cultural bonds. As Sunak and his family toured the Parliament, the occasion symbolized a moment of personal and professional significance for the former Prime Minister, alongside his continued support for fostering UK-India relations.

Tesla Begins Hiring In India After PM Modi-Elon Musk Meet In US

- Tesla begins hiring in India, signaling market entry plans
- Job listings in Mumbai and Delhi hint at service expansion
- India's EV sector set for increased competition with Tesla's arrival



TPN Correspondent | Riyadh

Tesla has initiated recruitment efforts in India, signaling its upcoming entry into the country's burgeoning electric vehicle (EV) market. This development follows a recent meeting between Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his trip to the United States, highlighting growing ties between the two nations in the tech and defense sectors.

A LinkedIn job post from Tesla revealed that the company is looking to fill 13 positions across Mumbai and Delhi. The roles range from customer-facing positions to back-end roles, including service technicians, customer engagement managers, delivery operations specialists, and advi-

sory positions. This recruitment drive is seen as a clear indication that Tesla is laying the groundwork for its expansion into India's EV market.

Tesla's potential entry into India is significant, given the country's increasing focus on clean energy and sustainability. With its strong brand recognition and innovative electric vehicles, Tesla could play a pivotal role in shaping India's transition to electric mobility. The company's recruitment efforts suggest that it plans to offer a range of services, including customer support and after-sales services, to ensure a smooth experience for Indian consumers.

The move also follows ongoing discussions between India and the US aimed at

reducing trade imbalances and increasing cooperation in key sectors, including military sales. As US President Donald Trump mentioned during his tenure, the US was keen on increasing military exports to India, including potential deals for advanced fighter jets like the F-35. These talks further strengthen the economic and strategic partnership between the two nations, providing a favorable backdrop for Tesla's entry into the Indian market. As Tesla continues to expand globally, its foray into India is expected to spark increased competition in the country's electric vehicle industry, which is experiencing rapid growth. Tesla's entry could further boost India's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and promote sustainable transportation solutions.

Netanyahu Orders Immediate Enforcement of UNRWA Law, Ending Operations in Israel

TPN Correspondent | Tel Aviv

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has directed the immediate enforcement of the UNRWA law, following the Knesset's passage of the legislation with broad support. The law mandates the cessation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) operations within Israeli territory, including East Jerusalem.

The law, passed in October 2024, prohibits Israeli authorities from engaging with UNRWA and calls for the agency to vacate all premises in occupied East Jerusalem by January 30, 2025. Israel's Prime Minister's Office (PMO) confirmed the directive in a post on social media, stating there are no restrictions on its implementation. UNRWA, a vital relief and human development agency, was established in 1949 to provide services to Palestinian refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. For decades, the agency has provided essential humanitarian aid, including health facilities, schools, and vocational training, primarily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Knesset's decision to end UNRWA's operations in Israeli-controlled areas has drawn international criticism. UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed concern, warning that the effective ban could have devastating consequences for Palestinian refugees. Joyce Msuya, the acting head of the UN aid coordination office, called the move "dangerous and outrageous." UNRWA's Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini also condemned the decision, claiming that the legislation would increase suffering among Palestinians and amounted to "collective punishment." Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump also signed executive orders to cut U.S. funding to UNRWA, further isolating the agency. As tensions surrounding the issue continue to rise, the implementation of the UNRWA law reflects Israel's stance on the ongoing Palestinian refugee situation and its efforts to limit the agency's influence in the region.



Vatican cancels Pope's weekend engagements as he battles 'complex' infection

TPN Correspondent | Vatican City

Pope Francis, who is currently in the hospital for a "complex" respiratory infection, will not participate in this weekend's Holy Year events, the Vatican announced on Tuesday. The 88-year-old pontiff has been suffering from the infection for over a week and was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on Friday.

As a result of his health condition, the Vatican confirmed that a public papal audience scheduled for Saturday has been canceled. However, a papal mass set for Sunday will still be held but will be led by a senior Vatican official in place of the Pope.

On Monday, the Vatican shared that doctors had modified the Pope's medication for the second time during his hospitalization in an attempt to address his "complex clinical situation." The infection is described as a "polymicrobial" one, which can involve a combination of viruses, bacteria, and fungi affecting the respiratory tract.

Pope Francis, who has faced various health challenges over the past two years, including bouts with influenza, continues to receive medical care. Despite these ongoing health struggles, his condition is described as stable, although his public engagements are being reduced for now to ensure his recovery.

About Ukraine, Without Ukraine": Zelensky Slams US-Russia Talks

TPN Correspondent | Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has voiced strong opposition to the ongoing discussions between the United States and Russia regarding the war in Ukraine, highlighting that these talks are being held without Ukraine's participation. The talks, which are taking place in Saudi Arabia, involve high-level officials from both the US and Russia, but Zelensky expressed his frustration over Ukraine's exclusion from these crucial conversations.



ing dissatisfaction in Kyiv over the fact that decisions regarding Ukraine's future are being made without the country having a seat at the table.

Zelensky's remarks underscore Ukraine's longstanding position that any peace talks or negotiations involving the country must

include direct Ukrainian participation. Ukraine has consistently maintained that it should have the opportunity to actively engage in any diplomatic conversations related to the war, especially considering the profound impact these discussions have on the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security.

The ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, which began in February 2022, has led to significant loss of life, displacement, and destruction. As international efforts to mediate the conflict continue, Zelensky's comments reflect his belief that Ukraine's involvement is essential in shaping the outcome of any discussions. He has repeatedly emphasized the importance of Ukraine determining its own future and security, rather than having decisions made by outside powers.



Russian Delegation Arrives in Saudi Arabia for High-Level Talks with US Officials

TPN Correspondent | Moscow

The US and Russian delegations have agreed to address ongoing tensions in their bilateral relationship, according to a statement from US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce following talks in Riyadh on Tuesday. The discussions, which focused on the Ukraine conflict and future economic cooperation, marked a significant step toward improving relations between the two countries.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who participated in the meeting, revealed that both sides had agreed to form a 'high-level team' tasked with negotiating peace in Ukraine and fostering economic cooperation. The aim, he said, was to find a sustainable, enduring solution to the conflict that would be acceptable to all parties involved.

Bruce emphasized that the US is committed to finding a resolution to the war in Ukraine "as soon as possible," while ensuring that the solution is long-lasting and acceptable to all sides. However, despite the discussions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed concerns about the talks, warning that Ukraine would not accept any agreements made about the country's future without its direct participation.

The meeting, which was hosted by Saudi Arabia, was significant for its lack of Ukrainian representation at the table, highlighting the complexities of the peace process. Zelensky's statement underscored the importance of Ukraine's involvement in any discussions related to its sovereignty and future.

In addition to the peace talks, Bruce noted that the US and Russia would explore opportunities for future cooperation on matters of mutual geopolitical interest. This includes potential economic and investment opportunities that could arise from a successful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine.

Secretary Rubio acknowledged the complexity of the process, calling the Riyadh talks "the first step of a long and difficult journey." He also hinted that the European Union (EU), which has imposed sanctions on Russia, would likely need to be involved in future negotiations. Rubio suggested that EU involvement would be crucial to reaching a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement.



Hasina vows to return, blames Yunus for 'terrorism and lawlessness' in Bangladesh

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a strong condemnation of the interim government in Bangladesh, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has blamed Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus for causing "terrorism and lawlessness" in the country. Speaking virtually to her supporters from exile in India, Hasina, who was ousted from power in August 2024, accused Yunus of destroying Bangladesh's social fabric and allowing terrorists to wreak havoc on the population.

Hasina's remarks came as she criticized Yunus for his silence during violent student-led protests last year, which saw dozens of police officers killed. She accused Yunus' administration of being ineffective and unable to manage the country, particularly in terms of addressing the violence and civil unrest that erupted during her government's downfall.

"He has no experience in running a government. He dissolved all inquiry committees and unleashed terrorists to butcher people. They are destroying Bangladesh," Hasina said. She vowed to return to Bangladesh and promised that the perpetrators of the violence would be held accountable for their actions.

Hasina's comments were aimed at rallying support for her political party, the Awami League, which she leads. She pledged that her return would be marked by justice for those who had suffered under Yunus' leadership, adding, "Inshallah, we will oust this government of terrorists. The killers will face justice in Bangladesh."



Intraday Rebound Falls Short

Markets Slip Amid FII Outflows and Global Uncertainty

Domestic stock markets were in turmoil on Tuesday. The trend of benchmark indices is not clear due to lack of proper direction. Nifty lost 140 points in the morning due to mixed signals from global markets and FIIs leaving. Sensex also followed the same path. After the afternoon, it recovered after finding support at the crucial 22800 level. Investors recovered intraday losses as they bought IT, pharma, oil and gas shares. Overall, Nifty lost 14 points and Sensex lost 29 points.



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a strong brand presence, robust distribution network, and is expanding in premium product categories. Rising demand in housing and infrastructure. Expanding premium product lines. Strong brand recall and distribution network.

2. Sundaram Finance

Sundaram Finance is a leading non-bank-



SUNDARAM FINANCE
Enduring values. New age thinking.

ing financial company (NBFC) specializing in commercial vehicle and auto financing. The company has a strong presence in South India and a history of conservative lending. Rising demand for vehicle financing. Expansion in rural and used vehicle finance. Strong capital adequacy ratio.

3. Tech Mahindra

Tech Mahindra is one of India's top IT services companies, with a strong focus on telecom, BFSI, healthcare, and digital transformation. The company has been expanding in



AI, cloud computing, and cybersecurity services. Strong order book in telecom and BFSI segments. Expansion in AI and cloud solutions. Increasing digital transformation projects. Slowdown in IT spending by global clients. Margin pressure due to wage hikes and competition.

4. Axis Bank

Axis Bank is one of India's largest private sector



banks, offering retail, corporate, and investment banking services. The bank has a strong digital presence and a growing loan book. Expanding retail and digital banking services. Strong loan growth across sectors. Low non-performing assets (NPA).

5. NLC India

NLC India is a public sector company engaged in coal mining and power generation. It is expanding into renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power projects. Government push for renewable energy projects. Stable coal-based power demand. Expansion in solar and wind energy.



The BSE Sensex, which closed at 75,996 in the previous session, opened at 76,073 on Tuesday. It touched an intraday low of 75,531. It reached an intraday high of 76,091. Finally, it closed at 75,967, down 29 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,963, touched a low of 22,801 and a high of 22,992. It closed at 22,945, down 14 points. The Nifty Bank lost 171 points and settled at 49,087.

In the Nifty50, 18 companies gained while 32 lost. NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, ONGC and Apollo Hospitals were the top gainers. IndusInd Bank, Trent, BEL, UltraTech Cement and Mahindra & Mahindra were the biggest losers. IT, Oil & Gas indices rose. Realty, Metal and Finance indices ended flat. Bank, auto, FMCG, media, pharma, consumer durables stocks were volatile.

Market breadth on NSE today turned in favor of sellers. Out of a total of 2928 stocks traded, 720 gained and 2128 lost. 14 stocks touched 52-week highs. 652 stocks touched 52-week lows.

Rupee weakened by 7 paise to settle at 86.94 against dollar. Morgan Stanley has given an overweight rating to Deepak Nitrate with a target price of Rs 3000. CLSA has given an underperform rating to Nazara Technologies with a target price of Rs 665. Quality Power Electrical received a response of 1.16 times by noon on the third day. Shares of Mahanagar Gas rose after the Mumbai Municipal Commission ordered roadside vendors and restaurants to switch to clean energy. CLSA gave Tech Mahindra an Outperform rating at Rs 2030. 16 lakh shares changed hands in GAIL. Reliance Infra is looking to enter the renewable energy manufacturing industry. Shares of Rate Gain Travel Technologies fell to an 18-month low after successive cuts in its FY2025 guidance. JPMorgan gave Persistent Systems an Outperform rating with a target price of Rs 7200.

1. Berger Paints

Berger Paints is India's second-largest paint manufacturer, offering decorative and industrial paints. The company has



India's Fiscal Deficit Target for FY2026 Set at 4.5%, Focus on Capital Expenditure Growth



India's fiscal deficit target for FY2026 is projected to be set at 4.5% of the country's GDP, marking a reduction of 25-30 basis points compared to the anticipated fiscal deficit of 4.8% in FY2025. This follows the government's efforts to rein in fiscal deficits while continuing to support economic growth through infrastructure and capital spending.

lakh crore, which accounts for 46% of the budgeted target of ₹11.11 lakh crore. Nayar stressed that a large capex shortfall is expected for the current fiscal year, and for FY2026, maintaining a fiscal deficit target of 4.5% of GDP would be realistic. This would enable a capex allocation of ₹11 trillion, marking an 11-12% growth compared to FY2025's feasible capex figure.

Domestic credit rating agency ICRA has emphasized the need for the government to prioritize capital expenditure (capex), estimating that the target for Budget 2025 should be ₹11 lakh crore. ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar highlighted that the current year's budgeted capex of ₹11.11 lakh crore is likely to fall short by around ₹1.4 lakh crore, and next year's capex target should align with the previous year's level to stay within borrowing limits. Nayar also noted that the capex spending for FY2025 is currently trailing the required run rate, indicating a potential shortfall.

Nayar also warned that setting a higher capex target could be "imprudent," as larger borrowing and a higher fiscal deficit would increase yields. Over the past few years, India has ramped up its capex spending to stimulate the economy, with increases from ₹4.39 lakh crore in 2020-21 to ₹10 lakh crore in FY2023-24. This push has been vital in stimulating economic growth and generating a positive cycle that benefits other sectors.

Between April and November 2024, the government's capex spending amounted to ₹5.13

In conclusion, while India aims to reduce its fiscal deficit in FY2026, prioritizing capital expenditure remains crucial to sustaining economic momentum and supporting infrastructure development.

Samsung Electronics to Cancel \$2.01 Billion in Treasury Shares as Part of Buyback Plan



Samsung Electronics announced on Tuesday that it will cancel 3 trillion won (\$2.01 billion) worth of treasury stocks as part of its ongoing buyback initiative aimed at enhancing shareholder value. The company will retire approximately 50.1 million common shares and 6.9 million preferred shares, according to a regulatory filing.

In related news, Samsung Electronics Chairman Lee Jae-yong emerged as the top dividend earner in South Korea last year. According to a survey by corporate data tracker Leaders Index, Lee received 346.5 billion won in dividends for 2024, marking a 7.1% increase from the previous year. The survey, which covered 560 companies, revealed that these firms collectively distributed 40.7 trillion won (US\$28.2 billion) in dividends, reflecting a 10.4% increase from 2023.

This move follows a decision made by the Samsung board in November 2024 to repurchase a total of 10 trillion won worth of shares over the course of the upcoming year. The initial phase will involve the buyback of 3 trillion won worth of shares within three months, which will then be fully canceled. By reducing the number of outstanding shares, Samsung aims to improve its earnings per share (EPS) and support its stock price, ultimately benefiting its investors.

Hyundai Motor Group's Honorary Chairman Chung Mong-koo and Executive Chair Euisun Chung ranked second and third for dividends, receiving 189.2 billion won and 174.7 billion won, respectively. Meanwhile, SK Group Chairman Chey Tae-won ranked seventh, receiving 91 billion won in dividends. Among the surveyed companies, 285 increased their dividends, 94 maintained the same level as in 2023, and 181 reduced their payouts.

SK hynix, a key affiliate of SK Group, saw its dividends nearly double following record earnings driven by high demand for artificial intelligence (AI) chips. This trend of increasing dividends reflects a strong performance by major corporations in South Korea.

3rd in a row: Goods exports shrink 2.4%



India's merchandise exports saw a decline for the third consecutive month in January 2025, with exports falling to \$36.43 billion, representing a 2.38% drop compared to the same month last year. The dip in exports has raised concerns about the country's trade performance as global demand remains sluggish.

The merchandise trade deficit also widened, reaching \$22.99 billion in January, an increase from \$16.56 billion in January 2024 and \$21.94 billion in December 2024. This growing trade gap highlights the challenges faced by India's export sector, which has been struggling to recover from various global and domestic economic pressures.

Several factors have contributed to the

decline in exports, including weakening demand from major trading partners and the global slowdown in economic growth. Key export sectors, including petroleum products, gems and jewelry, and engineering goods, have seen reduced demand. This trend is in line with broader global economic conditions, which have been characterized by lower consumer spending and slower growth in both advanced and emerging economies.

The widening trade deficit is a cause for concern as it could exert pressure on India's foreign exchange reserves and contribute to the depreciation of the rupee. As India continues to grapple with challenges in the global market, experts suggest that there is a need for increased

focus on diversifying export markets and enhancing the competitiveness of Indian goods.

Despite these challenges, the Indian government has emphasized its commitment to boosting exports and addressing structural issues in the trade sector. Measures to improve logistics, enhance export credit availability, and provide incentives for export-oriented industries are expected to play a role in supporting India's long-term trade growth.

The outlook for India's export sector remains uncertain, but officials remain hopeful that recovery will take place with the right policy measures and favorable global conditions in the near future.



China Approves Deep-Sea Research Facility to Boost Marine Exploration



tem and be designed for long-term operation.

The research facility will also incorporate cutting-edge technologies, including a four-dimensional surveillance grid that integrates surface ships, unmanned submersibles, and seabed observatories. This network will enhance data collection, enabling comprehensive deep-sea exploration and research. The new facility is expected to be part of a broader infrastructure project, including a vast fibre-optic communication system on the seabed and the drilling ship *Mengxiang*. The latter will be tasked with exploring the Earth's mantle and investigating deep-sea resources, adding another layer of capability to China's growing marine exploration ambitions.

This deep-sea station will not only advance scientific knowledge but also give China greater control over one of the world's most contested and resource-abundant maritime regions, further strengthening its strategic influence in the South China Sea.

China has officially approved the construction of a deep-sea research facility in the South China Sea, a move that could significantly advance marine exploration and bolster Beijing's geopolitical influence in the region. After years of planning and technical evaluations, the approval marks a major milestone in the country's deep-sea scientific pursuits. The facility, located at a depth of 2,000

meters (6,560 feet) in the resource-rich and strategically important South China Sea, will focus on studying "cold seep" ecosystems, areas where cold methane and hydrogen-rich fluids seep from the seabed. The research station will be equipped to support up to six scientists for missions lasting up to a month. To endure the extreme conditions of the deep sea, the facility will feature an advanced life-support sys-

The Great London Beer Flood: When Beer Became a Tsunami

On October 17, 1814, London witnessed one of the most bizarre disasters in history: the Great London Beer Flood. Instead of rain, the streets of St Giles Rookery were flooded with beer, creating a chaotic scene that would forever be etched in the annals of odd historical events.

It all began at the Meux & Co Horse Shoe Brewery, located in the bustling Tottenham Court Road area. At around 4:30 PM, one of the brewery's massive wooden fermentation tanks, holding over 3,500 barrels of fermenting porter beer, suddenly gave way. The iron rings holding the tank together snapped, causing a catastrophic chain reaction. Within minutes, the rupture unleashed between 128,000 and 323,000 gallons (4.85 lakh - 12.2 lakh liters) of beer onto the streets. A 15-foot wave of alcohol surged through the densely populated slum, tearing down houses and claiming the lives of eight people.

As the beer flooded the streets, locals, in a bizarre twist, rushed to scoop up the "free beer," with some even drinking it straight from the ground. Sadly, a ninth victim succumbed to alcohol poisoning



days after the event, highlighting the dangers of such an unexpected deluge. The aftermath of the flood was both tragic and surreal. The stench of beer lingered in the air for months, while reports of more casualties surfaced, including one involving a collapsed floor at an Irish wake, plunging visitors into a beer-soaked cellar.

The brewery faced legal consequences, but was ultimately absolved after the event was deemed an "act of God." How-

ever, Meux & Co suffered significant financial losses, nearly bankrupting the company. The disaster did, however, result in the implementation of new safety regulations for breweries, replacing wooden casks with safer materials like concrete.

The Great Beer Flood became a source of humor and inspiration in art and literature, reminding us that even in the most chaotic moments, there's always room for a laugh.

Pizza Hut Hong Kong Introduces Snake Meat Pizza: A Bold Culinary Experiment



Pizza lovers around the world are used to seeing all sorts of quirky toppings on their favorite pies, from pineapple to seafood. However, Pizza Hut in Hong Kong has taken the concept of unusual pizza toppings to a whole new level by introducing a truly shocking ingredient: snake meat.

In collaboration with Ser Wong Fun, a restaurant that has been serving traditional Chinese cuisine for over 100 years, Pizza Hut has created a unique pizza that features shredded snake meat as its star topping. The nine-inch pizza, which is available until November 22, also includes black mushrooms, Chinese

dried ham, and is topped with an abalone sauce base, replacing the usual tomato sauce.

According to CNN, this experimental pizza is designed to challenge the conventional notion of what a pizza should be and offers a bold departure from traditional Italian

flavors. Pizza Hut Hong Kong believes that the addition of snake meat, paired with cheese and diced chicken, enriches the flavor profile and offers a new taste experience that also ties into health-conscious eating. They described the dish as not just an exciting culinary adventure but also a way to rethink the relationship between food and well-being.

For those brave enough to try it, the snake meat pizza combines rich flavors and textures, with the tender snake meat complementing the savory cheese and unique abalone sauce. While it may sound strange to some, it's a part of a growing trend where restaurants around the world are pushing the boundaries of what ingredients belong on a pizza.

Pizza Hut's snake meat pizza may not be for everyone, but it's certainly a conversation starter. Whether you're an adventurous foodie or simply curious about unusual global dishes, this pizza is one way to experience an entirely new take on a classic comfort food.

Italian Woman Undergoes 20 Body Modifications to Become a Human Cat



Chiara Dell'Abate, an Italian woman who goes by the name Aydin Mod, has revealed that she is on a unique quest to transform herself into a "human cat." At just 22 years old, Dell'Abate has undergone an astonishing 20 body modifications to achieve her dream, including over 72 piercings, subdermal implants, and even cosmetic surgery.

Her journey into body modification began at the young age of 11 when she got her first ear piercing and started stretching her ears. Over the years, her transformation has grown more extreme, with her most recent changes including split tongue procedures, punched nostrils, and multiple piercings on her lips and inner labia. She also underwent blepharoplasty, a surgery that removes excess skin or fat from the eyelids, to further enhance her cat-like appearance. Dell'Abate's modifications don't stop there. She has added 10 subdermal implants on both her hands, which give her a more unique, otherworldly look. Ad-

ditionally, her transformation includes eyeball tattoos, pointed ears, permanent eyeliner, and even claw-like nails to complete her feline-inspired aesthetic.

In a TikTok video that has gone viral with over 65 million views, Dell'Abate shows off her split tongue as it flicks through two holes above her lips, further showcasing her dedication to becoming a human cat. Despite being criticized and labeled as "psychotic" by some, Dell'Abate remains confident and unapologetic about her lifestyle choice. When asked about her transformation, she explained, "I'm thinking that I would be a pretty cool cat lady." Embracing her distinctive look, she continues to document her body modifications and share them on social media platforms, where she has attracted a large following.

While her extreme modifications may be shocking to some, Dell'Abate sees her unique appearance as an expression of her true self and an example of the possibilities of body modification.

Man Calls Mumbai "Chaotic and Unlivable," Compares it to Dubai in Viral Reddit Post



In a viral Reddit post, a man from Mumbai shared his recent experiences comparing his hometown to Dubai, calling Mumbai "chaotic and unlivable." Despite spending over 40 years in Mumbai, the Reddit user, identified as Mr. Yash, expressed that his trip to Dubai made him acutely aware of the glaring differences between the two cities.

Yash highlighted that Dubai, being a developed city, has a significant edge over Mumbai in various aspects, including infrastructure, traffic management, and civic sense. "I just came back from a week-long trip to Dubai. When you are back from a developed country, you can see just how far behind we are," he wrote. While not his first visit to a developed country, he not-

ed that this time, the contrasts were more apparent.

He pointed out several frustrations he has with Mumbai, such as its "non-existent infrastructure" and the lack of road discipline, which he believes worsens traffic congestion. "Main roads that have no lanes, construction and debris everywhere," he complained. Yash also mentioned the city's ongoing pollution issues, saying it "burns your throat." The overwhelming presence of trash and rubble, coupled with chaotic traffic, left him feeling disillusioned with his home city.

In contrast, Yash praised Dubai's organization and cleanliness. He observed that Dubai's roads were clearly marked, with separate lanes and designated truck routes that avoided congestion. He was also impressed by the disciplined traffic flow in Dubai, where vehicles stop at signals, and drivers do not cut in front of each other, unlike the situation in Mumbai.

While Yash confessed his love for Mumbai, he ultimately concluded that the city, which serves as India's financial capital, is becoming increasingly unlivable. He urged for better infrastructure and a more organized approach to urban planning, which he believes could help Mumbai catch up with cities like Dubai.

FIH Hockey Pro League: Germany Defeats India 4-1 with Dominant Performance



minute. From the very beginning, both teams showcased their competitive spirit, with the game producing fast-paced, thrilling action. While India enjoyed greater possession in the early minutes, Germany's tactical brilliance paid off in the 7th minute, as Florian Sperling finished a superb assist from Eric Kleinlein to open the scoring. India quickly responded in the 13th minute, when Rajinder Singh set up Gurjant Singh with a well-executed cross to equalize. However, Germany took control again in the 14th minute, when Thies Prinz scored a dramatic goal, extending their lead to 2-1 despite a defensive hit on Manpreet Singh. The second quarter saw India push for an equalizer, with young forwards creating several chances. Nilakanta Sharma's brilliant pass to Abhishek in the 17th minute came close, but Abhishek failed to control it. Another opportunity arrived when Gurjant Singh missed a deflection attempt in the 20th minute. Suraj Karkera, who replaced Krishan Pathak

in the second quarter, was key in goal, making a brilliant save after India lost possession. India also had chances, with Dilpreet's unconventional shot on goal failing to find the mark. The third quarter was intense, with India earning a penalty corner in the 38th minute. Jugraj Singh, filling in for the rested Harmanpreet Singh, attempted a flick but failed to execute it successfully. India's defense remained strong, but a crucial moment arrived in the 50th minute when Michel Struthoff capitalized on a rebound to score, extending Germany's lead to 3-1. With a growing deficit, India intensified their search for goals, but to their dismay, Germany sealed their victory with a fourth goal from Raphael Hartkopf in the 55th minute, ending the match 4-1 in favor of the World Champions. Despite a spirited performance, India couldn't overcome the German side's dominance, leaving them with a bitter defeat in this high-stakes encounter.

The reigning World Champions, Germany, put on a stellar display to secure a comprehensive 4-1 win over India in a thrilling encounter at the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 at the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium on Tuesday. Germany's goals came from Florian Sperling (7'), Thies Prinz (14'), Michel Struthoff (48'), and Raphael Hartkopf (55'), while India's lone goal came from Gurjant Singh in the 13th

Russia, Greece, and India Join Forces to Expand Modern Pythian Games



In a groundbreaking move towards global cultural unity, representatives from the International Delphic Committee (Russia), Ecumenical Delphic Union (Greece), and International Pythian Council (India) have joined hands to strengthen the Modern Pythian Games. The collaboration aims to establish a larger platform for arts, culture, and traditional games, expanding the global reach of this revived cultural movement. The Modern Pythian Games celebrate artistic, cultural, and traditional sports excellence, providing an international platform for artists, performers, and athletes. This partnership marks a new chapter in promoting global cultural exchange, with both online and offline participation opportunities for individuals worldwide. Bijender Goel, Founder of the Modern Pythian Games, emphasized that this collaboration signals a new era of cross-cultural cooperation. Discussions are set to finalize the strategy and framework of this global initiative. In addition, Goel has invited Russia to participate in the upcoming 1st Global Para Pythian Games 2025, hosted by India, which will focus on empowering disabled artists and athletes. This alliance promises to enhance cultural diplomacy, inclusivity, and foster a revolution in sports and the arts by offering a truly global stage for creative expression and talent.

USA Breaks India's 1985 Record for Successfully Defending Lowest Total in ODI



In a remarkable achievement, the USA broke India's long-standing record for successfully defending the lowest total in a full men's ODI. On Tuesday, the USA, after posting a modest 123 runs in their first innings, managed to defend it and defeated Oman by 57 runs in their ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 match. India's previous record was set in 1985 during the Rothmans Four-Nations Cup, when they defended a total of 125 runs against Pakistan in Sharjah. India emerged victorious by 38 runs in that match, which had stood as the lowest total ever defended in an ODI for nearly four decades. The USA-Oman match was a unique encounter, with the entire game being dominated by spin bowling. All nine bowlers used in the match were spinners, marking the first game in ODI history after 4,671 matches in which no pacer bowled a single delivery. This rare scenario added a distinctive flair to the contest. The match also witnessed a record-setting 19 wickets falling, the same number as the ODI between Pakistan and Bangladesh in 2011 in Chattogram, where spinners claimed all the wickets. The combined total score of both teams was just 187 runs

from 61 overs, making it the second-lowest aggregate in ODI history where both teams were dismissed. The lowest aggregate remains a 163-run game between India and Bangladesh in 2014, played in 41 overs. Milind Kumar was the standout performer for the USA, scoring a steady 47* off 82 balls, leading

his team's efforts. Oman's bowlers, particularly Shakeel Ahmad, were impressive, with Ahmad claiming three wickets for just 20 runs. However, despite his efforts, Oman's chase of 123 faltered badly, with Hammad Mirza's 29 off 43 being the only score of note in their reply. USA's Nosthush Kenjige was the

hero with the ball, taking an incredible five-wicket haul. His spell dismantled the Oman batting lineup, which was bowled out for a mere 65 runs, sealing a comfortable 57-run victory for the USA. This game will now be remembered as a historic moment in ODI cricket for the USA.

InBL Pro U25 2025: Gujarat Stallions Edge Past Chennai Heat in Thrilling 74-72 Victory



FIH Hockey Pro League: India Women's Team Falls Short Against Spain in Thrilling 4-3 Defeat



The India women's hockey team suffered a heartbreaking 4-3 loss to Spain in a thrilling encounter at the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024/25 at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, on Tuesday. Spain dominated the final moments to edge past India in a high-intensity match. Baljeet Kaur (19'), Sakshi Rana (38'), and Rutaja Dadaso Pisal (45') scored for India, while Estel Petchame (25', 49'), Sofia Rogoski (21'), and captain Lucia Jimenez (52') found the net for Spain. The match began with both teams battling for dominance. India had an early chance when Sharmila Devi's shot narrowly missed the post, while Spain struggled to break India's defensive press. India earned the first penalty corner of the match but failed to capitalize. Spain's defense held firm until India's Baljeet Kaur scored her first senior international goal in the 19th minute. However, Spain responded swiftly, with Sofia Rogoski and Estel Petchame putting

Spain ahead 3-1 by the end of the second quarter. India fought back in the third quarter, with debutant Sakshi Rana equalizing before Rutaja Da-

daso Pisal restored India's lead. Yet, Spain continued to press, with Petchame scoring again and Jimenez netting the winner in the 52nd minute. Despite in-

dia's desperate attempt to equalize by pulling their goalkeeper in the final minutes, Spain maintained their lead to secure the 4-3 victory.

In a thrilling encounter that kept fans on the edge of their seats, the Gujarat Stallions emerged victorious with a hard-fought 74-72 win over the Chennai Heat at the Thyagraj Indoor Stadium in the InBL Pro U25. Despite the victory, the Stallions remain behind on a head-to-head basis after losing by 8 points to the Heat in their earlier tournament encounter. The match saw multiple lead changes, with standout performances from both teams. Chennai Heat's Arvinder Singh played a key role in the first quarter, leading his team to a 17-13 advantage. Matt Gray followed suit, contributing a couple of crucial three-pointers. The Gujarat Stallions, however, stayed in the contest thanks to Trenderon Hankerson's consistent scoring. The second quarter saw a surge from the Stallions, with Joshua Duach coming off the bench to score nine quick points, and Jock Perry joining the offensive charge. The Stallions ended the first half with a solid 41-29 lead, setting up a tense second half.



“Hari Hara Veera Mallu” to Release on March 28: Producer AM Ratnam Confirms



Powerstar Pawan Kalyan's upcoming film Hari Hara Veera Mallu is all set to hit the big screens on March 28, as confirmed by the producer, AM Ratnam. In a recent interview, Ratnam reassured fans that there would be no delays and that the film would release on the previously announced date. He also stated that the remaining shoot featuring Pawan Kalyan is currently being completed. On the occasion of Valentine's Day, the movie unit announced a key up-

date: the second single, a romantic track titled “Kollagottindhiro,” will be released on February 24 at 3 PM. Fans are eagerly awaiting the song's release.

Hari Hara Veera Mallu is a period action drama directed by Krish Jagarlamudi, with AM Ratnam's son Jyothi Krishna taking over the remaining portions of direction. Music is by Oscar-winning composer Keeravani. Nidhi Agerwal stars alongside Pawan Kalyan in the film.

Jyothika's New Netflix Crime Thriller “Dabba Cartel” Set to Stream on February 28



Netflix is all set to launch its latest crime thriller series, Dabba Cartel, which revolves around five women involved in a drug trafficking operation. Directed by Hitesh Bhatia, the series features an impressive cast including Shabana Azmi, Jyothika, and Shalini Pandey in pivotal roles. Premiering on February 28, the show is set in the backdrop of Mumbai's suburban areas, known for its thriving ‘dabba’ (lunch delivery) business. The story follows five women who venture into the illicit drug trade through the lunchboxes delivered to customers. Confident in their intel-

lect and skills, they begin their operations with full belief that no one can catch them. However, their journey is filled with unpredictable twists as they face challenges that test their wit and survival instincts. Blending crime with comedy, Dabba Cartel promises to offer a fresh take on the genre. With the rising demand for crime thrillers on OTT platforms, this series is expected to captivate audiences. Fans are eager to see how the show will be received, given its unique premise and star-studded cast.

Sikandar New Poster: All Eyes On Salman Khan Ahead of Release



Salman Khan fans have a reason to celebrate as the superstar recently unveiled a thrilling new poster of his upcoming film, Sikandar, which is set to

release on March 28. The intense poster showcases Salman in a fierce, all-black avatar, sporting a rugged bearded look and an earring. What stands out the most, however, is the fire in his eyes—capturing the essence of his character in a truly captivating way. The poster reveal coincided with the 59th birthday of Sikandar's producer, Sajid Nadiadwala. The film, produced under Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, marks the second collaboration between Salman and Sajid, following their successful partnership in the 2014 blockbuster Kick. To make the moment even more special, Salman

shared a heartwarming birthday wish for Sajid, along with the exciting poster announcement on Instagram.

Directed by AR Murugadoss, Sikandar stars Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead, with a supporting cast that includes Kajal Aggarwal, Prateik Babbar, Sharman Joshi, and Sathyaraj. Earlier this year, the much-anticipated teaser was released, giving fans a glimpse of Salman's action-packed role.

With the poster and teaser setting the stage, anticipation is high for Sikandar as it gears up for its big-screen release.

Amid Dating Rumours With Vijay Deverakonda, Rashmika Mandanna Receives Roses From Her “Paapalu”



Rashmika Mandanna, who is basking in the success of her latest film Chhaava, has once again ignited dating rumours with Vijay Deverakonda. The actress posted a cryptic story on Instagram on February 17, sharing a picture of herself holding a beautiful bouquet of red roses. The accompanying note read, “You always know how to put a smile on my face paapalu” (with a red heart emoji), though she did not reveal the sender's identity.

The pair, who starred together in the successful films Geetha Govindam (2018) and Dear Comrade (2019), have long been the subject of relationship speculations. While they have never confirmed their romantic status, their social media posts continue to fuel the rumours. For instance, on February 13, Rashmika shared the poster for Vijay's upcoming film Kingdom, cheerfully endorsing his work and expressing admiration.

In a recent interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Rashmika hinted at having a “partner” in her life, sharing her belief in the importance of home and personal connections. She emphasized how she cherishes her privacy, despite the public attention surrounding her career.

On the work front, Rashmika's Chhaava, which tells the story of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, hit theaters on February 14, starring alongside Vicky Kaushal.

“Exhuma”: A Chilling Korean Horror Movie Now Streaming on Amazon Prime

The Korean horror movie Exhuma has recently made its way to Amazon Prime, offering a spine-chilling experience for horror fans. Directed by Jang Jae-hyun, the film follows a haunting tale revolving around two coffins. Starring Choi Min-sik, Kim Go-eun, Yoo Hae-jin, and Lee Do-hyun, Exhuma initially hit theaters in February 2024, before its recent streaming release.

The story centers on Park Ji-young, a young man living in the U.S. with his family. When his newborn son cries incessantly, they seek help from a paranormal expert, who believes a vengeful spirit of Park's late grandfather is behind the child's distress. The investigation leads to the discovery of two coffins, with one unleashing a vengeful spirit. As the story unfolds, dark secrets tied to an ancient war between nations come to light.

While the film follows a familiar supernatural premise, the tension escalates when a second coffin is uncovered. The movie combines eerie photography, intense sound



effects, and blood-curdling moments, creating a gripping narrative. However, the gruesome visuals may not be suitable for all viewers. Exhuma scores a 3/5, providing an intriguing horror experience.