

# Rekha Gupta Will Work For Delhi's Development With Full Vigour: PM Modi

*Rekha Gupta Sworn In As Delhi Chief Minister With PM Modi & NDA Allies*

**PM Modi congratulates Rekha Gupta**  
**BJP returns to power in Delhi after 26 years**  
**Gupta rises from grassroots to top leadership**

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his congratulations to Rekha Gupta on Thursday after she took the oath as the new Chief Minister of Delhi, expressing confidence in her leadership and dedication to the city's development.

Gupta, a first-time BJP MLA, took office in a grand ceremony, marking the party's return to power in Delhi after a hiatus of over 26 years. In his congratulatory message following the swearing-in ceremony, PM Modi praised Gupta's journey, noting that she has risen from the grassroots level through her active involvement in campus politics, state organization, municipal administration, and now as an MLA and Chief Minister.

PM Modi said, "She has risen from the grassroots, being active in campus politics, state organisation, mu-

nicipal administration and now MLA as well as Chief Minister. I am confident she will work for Delhi's development with full vigour." He further expressed his best wishes to Gupta for a fruitful tenure, emphasizing his trust in her leadership.

In addition to Rekha Gupta, several other prominent leaders were sworn in as part of the new government, including Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, Ravinder Indraj Singh, and Pankaj Singh, who took their oaths of office in the presence of Delhi's Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena.

The swearing-in ceremony, held at Ramlila Maidan, was attended by a host of senior BJP leaders and allies, marking a significant moment in Delhi's political landscape. The event showcased the BJP's strength as it regains control of the city after more than two decades.



## Will make Delhi world's 'most beautiful capital': Parvesh vows to fulfil manifesto promises

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

BJP leader and New Delhi MLA, Parvesh Verma, on Thursday expressed his commitment to fulfilling the responsibility entrusted to him by the party and vowed to remain a disciplined worker of the BJP. Speaking after the BJP's return to power in Delhi with a commanding mandate of 48 seats, Verma acknowledged the party's significant responsibility towards the citizens of Delhi.

"The people of Delhi have given us their love and blessings. After more than 26 years, the BJP is forming the government here. I especially thank our Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership, and I assure the citizens of Delhi that under his guidance, we will make this the most beautiful capital in the world," Verma stated.

He also expressed his gratitude to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda for their leadership, noting that their guidance had



played a crucial role in the BJP's success in the capital.

Verma emphasized the party's promise to deliver on its manifesto, particularly in transforming Delhi into a "viksit" (developed) city. "Today is a very important day, and we will fulfill all the promises made to the people of Delhi," he added, thanking the party workers whose tireless efforts contributed to the party's victory.

When asked about the possibility of him

becoming the deputy chief minister, Verma remained focused on his role as a disciplined BJP worker. "I have been saying this for long: I am a very disciplined worker of the BJP and will remain in the party till my last breath. The BJP made my father Chief Minister of Delhi and a Union Minister, and he served the party till his last breath. I will do the same," Verma declared.

Rekha Gupta, BJP's MLA from Shalimar Bagh, was appointed as the Leader of the House in the Delhi Assembly on Wednesday. Gupta, 50, took her oath as the new Chief Minister at a ceremony held at Ramlila Maidan on Thursday. Her appointment marks her as the second woman Chief Minister for the BJP and the fourth woman to hold the position in Delhi.

The BJP's victory ends the decade-long reign of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by Arvind Kejriwal, marking a historic political shift in Delhi.

## Delhi Assembly Elections: As BJP storms to power in Delhi, what's next for AAP?



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

With the BJP taking control of Delhi on Thursday, the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is closing a significant chapter and stepping into uncharted waters as the Opposition in the national capital. The once-dominant party, which reshaped political engagement with its anti-Congress stance, now faces a fresh challenge: countering a BJP government that has long been a formidable force in Delhi's politics.

While the AAP managed to secure victories in Delhi's Assembly elections, it has never successfully defeated the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls. With corruption allegations and recent electoral setbacks, including the dent in its 'Delhi Model,' AAP's ability to continue with the same campaign strategy is in question. Moreover, the AAP government in Punjab is facing scrutiny over unfulfilled poll promises, further complicating its position.

Internally, the party is cautious about launching a full-fledged campaign against the BJP, opting instead to give the new government time to settle in and address governance challenges. AAP sources suggest that

aggressive political strategies were unpopular during the recent campaigns, and the party may avoid adopting a confrontational tone early on.

A key task for AAP will be to reaffirm its ideological foundation as it finds itself caught between an aggressive Hindutva narrative and an unclear stance on minority issues. The party's immediate focus will be on fulfilling its election promises in Punjab, particularly the rollout of a Rs 1,000 monthly allowance for women. The BJP and Congress have both raised this issue, putting pressure on AAP to deliver.

Retaining its stronghold in Punjab is critical for AAP, as a defeat in the state in 2027 could spell trouble for its position in Delhi. The Congress, sensing an opportunity, is ramping up its efforts in the border state, aiming to reclaim its lost ground.

In Delhi, the idea of an alliance with Congress is off the table after the failed attempt in the Lok Sabha elections, where vote transfer did not occur. With the middle-class vote shifting away from AAP, the party faces significant challenges as it re-orientates itself for the future.

## Lokayukta Clears CM Siddaramaiah in MUDA Site Allotment Case

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, 21

Lokayukta police found no evidence against CM Siddaramaiah in the MUDA site allotment case.

Cabinet ministers allege the case was a political conspiracy by BJP and JD(S). The opposition claims the investigation was influenced by the government.

Lokayukta Dismisses Allegations Against Siddaramaiah

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has been given a clean chit by the Lokayukta police in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case. The probe agency stated that allegations of illegal allotment of 14 sites to Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi B M, could not be substantiated due to a lack of evidence.

Cabinet ministers welcomed the verdict, calling the case a politically motivated attack orchestrated by the BJP and JD(S) to tarnish the Chief Minister's image.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar dismissed the allegations, stating that Siddaramaiah had no involvement in the allotment process.



"I had said from the beginning that this was a politically motivated case. His signature was not there, and he had no role in the allotment. His family had lost their property and was simply claiming their due compensation, which is a common practice," Shivakumar told reporters. He further added, "A case cannot be filed without evidence. The Lokayukta has done its duty. If the complainants have objections, they are free to challenge it legally."

Shivakumar also pointed out that lawyers from Delhi had represented the complainants, implying external political influence in the case.

The BJP and JD(S) have criticized the ver-

dict, alleging that the Lokayukta police acted under government pressure. Responding to these claims, Shivakumar asserted that the Lokayukta is an independent institution and that the High Court itself has upheld its autonomy.

"Lokayukta is not just the police; it is an independent body. The Chief Minister has no control over it. Even the appointment of officials is done with Lokayukta's approval," he explained.

Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi B M, his brother-in-law B.M. Mallikarjun Swamy, and others were named in an FIR filed by the Lokayukta police in Mysuru on September 27, following a directive from a Special Court handling cases related to elected representatives.

The complaint alleged that MUDA had allotted 14 compensatory sites in Vijayanagar Layout's 3rd and 4th stages—premium localities with higher property values—after acquiring Parvathi's original land.

With the Lokayukta now closing the case for lack of evidence, the opposition's next legal move remains to be seen.

## 18-Year-Old Woman Alleges Forced Marriage, Sexual Assault by Neighbor

- Lokayukta police clear Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah in the MUDA site allotment case due to lack of evidence.
- Ministers call the case a political conspiracy by the BJP and JD(S) to tarnish Siddaramaiah's image.
- BJP criticizes the probe, demanding a CBI investigation.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, 21

A young woman (18) has filed a complaint at the Keshwapur police station, alleging that her neighbour, Prakash (50), had been harassing her for a year and ultimately forced her into marriage. She stated that after learning she had traveled to her relatives' house in Kolhapur, Prakash contacted her by phone and took her to a hotel. In her police complaint, she alleged that Prakash drugged her, tied her up, and raped her. She further claimed that he confined her in a room for two weeks, repeatedly assaulting her and recording videos of the abuse. The woman managed to escape from his captivity and approached the police to file a complaint. Based on the information provided, the police arrested Prakash and have initiated an investigation. Authorities are also reviewing the digital evidence provided by the victim to corroborate her claims. In a separate incident, Keshwapur police arrested a

47-year-old man for raping a 15-year-old girl in a village near Keshwapur. The crime reportedly took place on Tuesday evening when the girl was alone at home. According to City Police Commissioner N Shashikumar, the accused threatened the girl before sexually assaulting her. Following the incident, the victim was taken to a government hospital for medical tests. The police promptly arrested the accused and have launched an investigation into the matter. Both cases have raised concerns about women's safety in the region. The police have assured swift action against the accused in both incidents. Investigations are ongoing to gather additional evidence, and authorities have urged the public to report any suspicious activities that could prevent such crimes in the future. The police have also stated that they will ensure the victims receive necessary medical and legal support. Both cases will be presented in court following the completion of investigations.

## Is it like 'Muda' has untied the knot...?

- Lokayukta police clear Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah in the MUDA site allotment case due to lack of evidence.
- Ministers call the case a political conspiracy by the BJP and JD(S) to tarnish Siddaramaiah's image.
- BJP criticizes the probe, demanding a CBI investigation.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 21

The Lokayukta police, investigating the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, have given a clean chit to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The probe found no evidence to support allegations of illegal allotment of 14 sites to Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi B M. Siddaramaiah faced allegations that MUDA had allotted compensatory sites in Mysuru's prime Vijayanagar Layout to his wife in exchange for acquired land. However, the Lokayukta found no proof of misconduct and dropped the charges. The Lokayukta police submitted their investigation report to the Lokayukta headquarters in Bengaluru, concluding that there was no evidence to support the allegations. A B-report is expected to be prepared against the Chief Minister and his family members, which will be submitted to the High Court as per the orders of Justice Nagaprasanna. The Lokayukta police have issued notices to the com-

plainant, Snehamai Krishna, giving him a week to challenge the report. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar strongly condemned the accusations, stating that the case was politically driven. "I had said earlier that this was a plot by the BJP and JD(S) to malign Siddaramaiah's image. His signature was not even on the documents. His family simply claimed what was rightfully theirs," he said. Shivakumar dismissed allegations of government interference in the probe. "Lokayukta is an independent body. If complainants have objections, they are free to fight legally," he added. Home Minister G. Parameshwara reiterated that the Lokayukta's findings were based on evidence. "When there is no evidence, the case is closed. Is it right to question that?" he remarked, addressing BJP's demand for a CBI investigation. He pointed out that the Karnataka High Court had already rejected a plea for a CBI probe. The opposition BJP has expressed skepticism over the Lokayukta's probe. BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra stated, "We knew from day one that the Lokayukta would not conduct a proper investigation. That is why we have been demanding a CBI inquiry." Opposition leader R. Ashok alleged that the case involved irregularities, questioning why the Chief Minister's wife returned the properties if no wrongdoing was committed. He further accused the



government of using high-profile lawyers and spending crores to influence the case. Complainant Snehamai Krishna also criticized the findings, alleging that he had anticipated the clean chit and accusing an IPS officer of acting under government pressure. He challenged Siddaramaiah to prove that the 50:50 compensation ratio was legal and vowed to continue his fight until the Chief Minister was punished. Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa defended Siddaramaiah, calling the allegations baseless. "There was no violation of law, no political interference, and no financial wrongdoing. The opposition tried to use this case to damage Siddaramaiah's reputation and destabilize the government," he said. With the Lokayukta's ruling, Congress leaders hope the matter is put to rest, while the BJP remains adamant in its demand for further scrutiny.

## Teachers of Kannada Medium Institutions Stage Protest for Salary Share

- Teachers from Kannada medium institutions (1995-2000) demand salary allocation.
- Protesters allege non-release of government funds to governing bodies.
- SDPI activists call for filling Urdu medium school teacher vacancies.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 21

Teachers of Kannada medium educational institutions in the state, established between 1995 and 2000, staged a dharna at Swatantrya Udyavanam on Wednesday. They demanded that the state government allocate a salary share for educators working in these institutions. The protest witnessed participation from representatives of governing bodies, employees, and staff associations from institutions that have not received government financial assistance. Protesters expressed their dissatisfaction with the government's failure to release the re-

quired funds in support of these governing bodies. They claimed that the non-allocation of funds has caused financial distress among teachers, many of whom have been struggling with irregular or inadequate salaries. The demonstrators raised slogans, urging the government to allocate sufficient resources in the upcoming state budget. According to them, the lack of financial support has negatively impacted both educators and students, leading to deteriorating conditions in many Kannada medium institutions. Some protesters shared personal accounts of their hardships, emphasizing the urgency of the situation. They insisted that government intervention is necessary to ensure salary disbursement and improve the overall quality of education in these schools. Alongside the teachers' protest, activists from the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) organized a separate demonstration at Independence Park. They demanded urgent action to address issues in Urdu medium schools across the state. The protesters called for the immediate filling of vacant teaching positions, arguing that understaffed

schools have significantly impacted the quality of education. The activists also stressed the need for budgetary provisions to enhance infrastructure in Urdu medium schools. Many of these institutions reportedly lack basic facilities such as proper classrooms, sanitation, and teaching materials. Protesters carried banners and chanted slogans, emphasizing the necessity for immediate government attention and funding. Party leaders voiced their concerns, urging Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to make the upcoming budget a "Janata Budget"—one that addresses the needs of marginalized communities. They argued that both Kannada and Urdu medium institutions require strong financial backing to ensure equal opportunities for all students. The protests shed light on the persistent grievances of educators in the state, underlining the need for immediate financial and structural reforms in the education sector. Stakeholders now await the government's response to their demands, hoping for favorable policy changes that will address the ongoing challenges faced by both teachers and students.

## Karnataka Government to Provide 10 Kg Rice Under 'Anna Bhagya' Scheme

- Karnataka government to provide 10 kg of rice to BPL cardholders from March under 'Anna Bhagya' scheme.
- Previously, beneficiaries received 5 kg of rice and Rs. 170 cash per month.
- State to procure rice from the central government at Rs. 22.50 per kg.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, Feb 21

The Karnataka government has announced the full-scale implementation of its 'Anna Bhagya' scheme, under which every Below Poverty Line (BPL) cardholder will receive 10 kg of rice per month starting from March. The scheme, one of the Congress party's key guarantees in the Vidhan Sabha elections, was previously implemented with a partial cash transfer due to a shortage of rice supply. Until now, beneficiaries received 5 kg of rice and an additional Rs. 170 in their bank accounts as compensation for the remaining quota. However, with the availability of rice from the central government, the state has now decided to provide the full 10 kg directly to eligible families. Food and Civil Supplies Minister K.H. Muniyappa announced on Wednesday that the state government will purchase rice from the central government under the Open Market

Sale Scheme (OMSS) at a rate of Rs. 22.50 per kg. He emphasized that fulfilling the election promise was a priority and assured that beneficiaries would receive their full entitlement in kind rather than cash. He further stated that the decision was made following the central government's recent approval to supply rice. The minister clarified that the transition to a full rice distribution model would ensure food security and prevent any inconvenience to beneficiaries. Karnataka currently has 1,53,76,473 registered BPL cardholders. In addition, 2,30,549 new applications for BPL cards have been received. Of these, 1.58 lakh new cards have been distributed, while 65,000 applications were rejected due to ineligibility. With the implementation of the revised scheme, the state government aims to reinforce its commitment to addressing food security concerns and supporting economically weaker sections. The distribution process is expected to be streamlined to ensure timely and efficient delivery to all beneficiaries. The 'Anna Bhagya' scheme has been a flagship welfare initiative of the Congress government in Karnataka, aimed at reducing hunger and improving nutrition among the state's poor. The latest move to provide 10 kg of rice instead of a partial cash transfer marks a significant step toward fulfilling the party's electoral promise.

## MUDA case: Lokayukta police files 11,000 page closure report day after clean chit to Karnataka CM, kin

- Karnataka Lokayukta Police submits an 11,000-page final report in the MUDA site allotment case.
- The report clears Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his wife Parvathi B M of any illegalities.
- Complainant can challenge the report before the Special Court within a week.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka, 21

The Karnataka Lokayukta Police submitted an 11,000-page final report in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case to the Special Court handling criminal cases related to former and current MPs/MLAs in Bengaluru. This development comes a day after the Lokayukta police officially made public their clean chit to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The case involves allegations that MUDA illegally allotted 14 sites in Mysuru to Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathi B M. The FIR, registered on September 27 following a court order, named Siddaramaiah, Parvathi, his brother-in-law B M Mallikarjun Swamy, and Devaraju, from whom

Swamy had purchased land later gifted to Parvathi. The complaint was filed by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna. The Lokayukta police, in a notice to the complainant, stated that the allegations could not be substantiated due to a lack of evidence. They concluded that the case was civil in nature, involving a misinterpretation of law or facts, and was not fit for criminal investigation. However, they clarified that if the complainant had objections, he could challenge the findings before the Special Court within a week. While clearing Siddaramaiah and others, the Lokayukta police stated they would continue investigating MUDA's allotment of sites under the 50:50 ratio scheme between 2016 and 2024. They plan to submit an additional final report as per Section 173(8) of the CrPC. Parvathi B M had received 14 compensatory sites in Vijayanagar Layout (3rd and 4th stages), which had a higher market value compared to the original 3.16-acre land acquired by MUDA for residential development. MUDA's 50:50 ratio scheme allotted 50% of developed land to landowners in exchange for their undeveloped land. However, following public outcry, Parvathi requested MUDA to cancel the allotment, which was subsequently accepted. The case remains under scrutiny as further investigations continue into the broader site allotment practices by MUDA over the past eight years.

## Man, Daughter, and Brother-in-Law Arrested for Murder in Bengaluru

- Three family members arrested for attacking a woman and murdering her alleged lover.
- The brutal incident took place at noon in Kadugodi; the woman remains in critical condition.
- Police confirm prior disputes over the alleged extramarital relationship. Gruesome Attack in Kadugodi

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 21

Bengaluru witnessed a horrifying crime on Thursday when Kadugodi police arrested a man, his daughter, and his brother-in-law for attacking his wife and murdering her alleged lover. The accused—Yellappa (45), his daughter Pooja (21), and his brother-in-law Venkataramana (37)—carried out the assault at Kishore's residence near Kadugodi, using machetes to attack the victims. The victims, Kishore (38) and Arundathi (38), were allegedly in an extramarital relationship, which had caused previous tensions within the family. Around noon, the accused confronted the duo, leading to a heated argument that escalated into a violent attack. Arrests and Investigation Following the incident, Kishore succumbed to his injuries on the spot, while Arundathi was rushed to a nearby hospital,

where Ji ji she remains in critical condition. Police officers confirmed that the three accused were immediately taken into custody and are being interrogated. A senior police official stated, "The suspects were detained soon after the attack. Arrest procedures have been initiated, and further investigation is ongoing."

Authorities revealed that Kishore, who was also married, worked as a private school bus driver. Meanwhile, Yellappa managed agricultural land in Srinivasapur, Kolar, and Venkataramana made a living by driving an auto and taking up odd jobs. According to police investigators, the accused had prior knowledge of the alleged affair, leading to multiple disputes in the past. On Thursday, the situation turned violent, resulting in the fatal assault.

Kadugodi police have registered a case and are conducting a thorough investigation. Officials are gathering statements from neighbors, family members, and eyewitnesses to piece together the sequence of events leading to the crime. Authorities are also examining whether the attack was premeditated. The police are waiting for Arundathi's condition to stabilize so they can record her statement, which could provide further clarity on the case. Meanwhile, forensic teams are analyzing evidence from the crime scene. Further legal proceedings will be based on the investigation's findings.

## 11-Year-Old Girl Assaulted at Madrasa; Accused Arrested

- An 11-year-old girl was assaulted at a madrasa in Hegde Nagar on February 16.
- The accused, Mohammad Hasan, allegedly attacked the girl for spilling rice and quarrelling with other hostel girls.
- Police have arrested Hasan under the Juvenile Justice Act and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, 21

**Incident Captured on CCTV** A disturbing incident of child abuse has surfaced from a madrasa in Hegde Nagar, where an 11-year-old girl was physically assaulted by a man. The assault, which took place on February 16, was captured by CCTV cameras installed within the madrasa premises. Police confirmed the incident on Thursday, stating that they have taken necessary legal action against the accused.

**Mother's Complaint and Allegations** The victim's mother filed a complaint on Wednesday, detailing the mistreatment her daughter endured. According to the complaint, the girl was admitted to the madrasa and its hostel in July 2024. Police reports indicate that Mohammad Hasan, son of the hostel in-charge, was a regular visitor to the premises. He allegedly exerted undue influence over the hostel environment and interacted frequently with the children.

**Details of the Assault** On the afternoon of February 16, at around 4:30 PM, Hasan reportedly summoned the girl to the

office. Allegedly, he proceeded to slap and kick her as a form of punishment for spilling rice and engaging in an argument with other hostel girls while playing. The traumatic incident left the young girl deeply shaken, raising serious concerns about the safety and supervision of children in such institutions.

**Legal Action and Investigation** Upon receiving the complaint, the Kothanur police station swiftly registered a case under Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act, which pertains to punishment for cruelty to children, and Section 115 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which deals with voluntarily causing hurt. The accused, Mohammad Hasan, was taken into police custody following the registration of the case. Authorities have assured that a comprehensive investigation is underway to examine the circumstances surrounding the assault. Law enforcement officials are also reviewing the CCTV footage as evidence to ensure appropriate legal action is taken. Meanwhile, child protection organizations have expressed concerns over the safety of children in institutional settings and are urging authorities to implement stricter monitoring measures.

The incident has sparked outrage among the local community, with many demanding justice for the young victim. The authorities have pledged to take stringent measures to prevent such occurrences in the future and ensure the safety of children in educational and residential institutions.

## BMCA Slams Metro Fare Hike, Demands Transparency on City Cess

- BMCA accuses political parties of avoiding accountability over metro fare hike.
- Demands disclosure of special city cess collected for infrastructure between 1996-2003.
- Over 10,000 signatures gathered in protest; petition submitted to BMRC.
- Citizens' convention with E Sreedharan scheduled to discuss fare hike impact.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, 21

The Bangalore Metro Commuters' Association (BMCA) has strongly opposed the recent metro fare hike, asserting that Bengaluru Metro remains the costliest in the country. At a press conference on Wednesday, the association called for an immediate rollback and demanded explanations from the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation (BMRC), the state government, and the central BJP government. BMCA has also requested full transparency regarding the spe-



cial city cess collected between 1996 and 2003, intended for infrastructure projects, and criticized the government for shifting the financial burden of metro project delays onto commuters.

BMCA has submitted a petition with over 10,000 signatures to the BMRC, voicing strong public opposition to the fare increase. To further address concerns, the association has organized a citizens' convention with 'Metroman' E Sreedharan on Sunday at the Scouts and Guides Hall, Palace Road. The event will focus on fare reduction strategies and the negative impact of the hike.

The association pointed to a sharp decline in metro ridership, with over one lakh daily commuters shifting to other transport modes since the fare increase. This shift, they warned, could aggravate

Bengaluru's traffic congestion. BMCA urged authorities to implement Sreedharan's recommendation of boosting non-fare revenue and capping metro fares at 1.5 times the non-AC bus fare.

BMCA highlighted the cost escalation of Metro Phase 2 from Rs 26,205 crore to Rs 40,614 crore, with its completion deadline extended to 2026. Despite this, BMRC has recorded an operational profit of Rs 129.3 crore in 2023-24, following a Rs 108-crore surplus in 2022-23, and is projected to reach Rs 200 crore by 2025-26. The association questioned the necessity of a fare hike when the corporation continues to generate surplus revenue.

BMCA has vowed to continue pressing for fare reductions and greater transparency from the government regarding metro project finances.

## Bengaluru Family Narrowly Escapes as Building Tilts Due to Foundation Collapse

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 21

A family residing in a two-storey building in Bengaluru's Central Business District (CBD) had a narrow escape on Wednesday evening when a section of the foundation collapsed, making the structure tilt dangerously.

The incident occurred around 4:30 pm, when nearly half of the floor suddenly sank. Authorities suspect that ongoing construction at a neighboring site may have weakened the foundation, causing the structure to become unstable. The building, located opposite the Shri Veeranjaneya Swamy Temple on New Thippasandra Road, housed a handicraft and brass artefacts shop on the ground floor, while a family of four lived on the first floor.

Recalling the terrifying moment, Susheela M, a tenant, said, "For a moment, I thought it was an earthquake. We were having tea and watching TV when, all of a sudden, the building tilted. The force was so strong that the



bed shifted, knocking my son over. It all happened within seconds. Thankfully, no one was hurt." Susheela, her husband Kumar, and their two children have lived in the building for seven years. Her daughter, still in shock, added, "My hands are trembling. I can't believe we made it out safely."

The family managed to evacuate in time before the situation worsened. Neighbors also rushed out in fear, worried that the entire structure could collapse.

Soon after the incident, firefighters

and local authorities arrived at the scene. After assessing the damage, officials deemed the building unsafe for further occupancy. Firefighters prepared to demolish the structure to prevent any further risk to nearby buildings and residents.

However, the family pleaded for time to retrieve important documents and personal belongings before the demolition. Authorities temporarily halted the process to allow them to collect their essentials.

Officials have urged nearby residents to remain cautious, as investigations into the exact cause of the collapse continue. Safety inspections in surrounding buildings have also been initiated to prevent similar incidents.

The incident has raised concerns about the safety of older buildings and the impact of nearby construction projects on existing structures. Authorities are expected to take further measures to ensure proper construction protocols and prevent future mishaps.

## Bengaluru Fire Department Well-Equipped, But Gaps Remain

- Upgraded Fire Safety Measures: New fire stations, modern equipment, and skilled personnel have strengthened the department.
- Persistent Gaps in Fire Safety Awareness: Many buildings violate safety norms post-clearance, increasing fire risks.
- Technological Advancements: Firefighting robots, GPS tracking, and high-rise platforms enhance efficiency.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 21

The Bengaluru Fire and Emergency Services department has undergone significant improvements since the Carlton Towers fire in February 2010, which claimed nine lives and injured 70 people.

According to Uday Vijayan, president of Beyond Carlton, these upgrades include setting up new fire stations, acquiring modern emergency equipment, and training skilled personnel. However, the biggest challenge remains a lack of fire safety awareness among residents.

Vijayan highlighted that while buildings receive initial safety clearance, modifications made after occupancy often violate fire norms, increasing risks. To address this, the fire department has mandated biannual inspections to ensure compliance. However, he emphasized that awareness and prevention should be prioritized alongside firefighting efforts.

Former DGP of Fire and Emergency Services, Kamal Pant, revealed that the department is in the process of acquiring firefighting robots. These robots will be deployed in high-risk zones, such as cracker godowns, where human intervention is too dangerous. The robots will suppress flames, allowing firefighters to enter safely and contain the remaining fire.

Additionally, the department has introduced high-rise platforms with ladders extending up to 120 feet, high-capacity water tankers, and specialized rescue tools to tackle fires in tall buildings. Each taluk now has a fire station, ensuring a quicker response time of 10 minutes or less in emergencies. The integration of GPS and fleet management systems further enhances real-time tracking and efficient dispatch of emergency vehicles. The RA Mundkur Fire and Emergency Services Academy in Bengaluru serves as the primary training center for firefighters. The institution offers comprehensive programs on fire prevention, firefighting techniques, rescue operations, and evacuation drills.

In the event of a fire, it is crucial to remain calm and act quickly to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you. Follow established fire evacuation procedures and be aware of your surroundings at all times. Understanding basic fire safety measures can make a significant difference in preventing injuries and minimizing damage.

## Karnataka Govt Holds Strategy Meeting to Counter Opposition Allegations

TPN Correspondent |  
Karnataka, Feb 21

The Karnataka government, led by Minister Priyank Kharge, convened a high-level strategy meeting to address the growing allegations made by the opposition BJP and JD(S). The closed-door session, attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's media advisor KV Prabhakar and Information Department Commissioner Hemant Nimbalkar, was held in the conference hall of the Information Department. This meeting aimed to equip the media advisors of all ministers with a clear strategy to counter opposition claims, enhance public outreach, and effectively communicate the government's achievements. With the Congress government nearing its two-year milestone, the opposition has intensified its attacks, alleging administrative inefficiencies and slow development progress. Concerns have been raised that ministers have not been able to provide strong counterarguments to these allegations, leading to discussions on the importance of streamlined media messaging. The meeting, which was initially scheduled earlier but postponed, saw renewed urgency as BJP and JD(S) attempted to shape public perception against the ruling government. The discussions focused on multiple key aspects, including how to strategically respond to opposition criticism, what information should be shared with the media, and how to present data-driven rebuttals. Priyank Kharge and other senior officials emphasized that effective communication is essential to dispelling misinfor-

mation and ensuring that the government's policies and initiatives reach the public accurately. The meeting also explored ways to amplify the government's accomplishments, particularly in infrastructure, welfare schemes, and urban development, through various media channels, including print, television, and social media. Ministers' media coordinators were instructed to compile detailed reports showcasing department-wise achievements, which would be used to counter opposition narratives. Additionally, the officials provided insights on using official government documents to substantiate their claims and maintain transparency.

It was suggested that ministers adopt a more proactive approach in engaging with the press, addressing concerns promptly, and reinforcing public trust in the administration. The opposition's persistent allegations have created an environment where swift and clear communication is necessary, and this meeting marked a step towards streamlining the government's media outreach efforts.

As Karnataka's political landscape heats up, the Congress government aims to reinforce its position by ensuring its developmental work is well-publicized while effectively countering opposition attacks. Whether these measures will shift public perception remains to be seen, but the ruling party is determined to take a more structured and assertive stance in managing its public image and addressing criticism in the run-up to future elections.

## Bengaluru's Challenges Demand Long-Term Planning, Says DK Shiva Kumar

• **Urbanisation Challenges:** Deputy CM DK Shivakumar admitted that Bengaluru's rapid growth has made immediate improvements difficult.

• **Call for Strategic Planning:** He stressed the need for long-term planning and proper project execution.

• **Comparison with Delhi:** Shivakumar noted that Bengaluru's traffic congestion is comparable to that of the national capital.

TPN Correspondent |  
Karnataka, 21

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar acknowledged the immense challenges posed by Bengaluru's rapid urbanisation, stating that even divine intervention would not bring immediate change. "I would like to convey to the media personnel here that even if God himself descends from heaven and walks on the streets of Bengaluru, nothing will change within one, two, or even three years," he remarked. He further

emphasised the need for meticulous planning and effective implementation, saying, "The situation is extremely challenging. We need to plan properly and implement projects effectively. We are making an effort to develop a better corridor for the future."

Shivakumar also acknowledged the public's frustration, stating that people had no expectations from him or his government. He went on to say that the Congress administration was seen as a "curse" to Karnataka and Bengaluru and that many were eagerly waiting to remove the "hopeless" government. Speaking at the India Today Environment Conclave 2025 on February 4, Shivakumar highlighted the importance of sustainable urban development and environmental conservation. Despite the challenges, he asserted that Bengaluru remains ahead of many cities in terms of climate and culture.

He also reflected on the city's transformation over the past two decades, noting that Bengaluru's population has doubled from 70 lakh to 1.4 crore. This rapid growth has significantly strained infrastructure, exacerbating issues such as traffic congestion, water scarcity, and waste management.



Drawing a comparison with Delhi, Shivakumar said, "When I was in Delhi recently, I saw that traffic there is no better than in Bengaluru." His remarks suggested that urban congestion is not unique to Bengaluru but a challenge faced by major metropolitan cities across India.

As a former Karnataka Urban Development Minister, Shivakumar underlined the importance of strategic planning and effective execution to tackle Bengaluru's growing issues. He called for a comprehensive and long-term approach to ensure the city remains a viable and livable urban space for future generations.

## Karnataka Congress urges early Ramzan leave for employees like Telangana, Andhra

TPN Correspondent |  
Karnataka, Feb 21

**KPC's Request:** The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPC) has petitioned Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to grant a two-hour early leave for Muslim government employees during Ramzan.

**Precedents in Other States:** Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have already implemented similar provisions.

**No Demand for Holidays:** The petition seeks only an adjustment in work hours for Iftar and Namaz.

**Congress Urges Siddaramaiah to Approve Early Leave:** The Karnataka Congress has formally requested Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to allow Muslim government employees to leave work early during the holy month of Ramzan. The demand follows similar measures implemented in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, where Muslim employees are permitted to leave early to break their fast and offer evening prayers.

KPC Vice President ARM Hussain submitted a petition to the Chief Minister, emphasizing the significance of this request. He stated that Congress leaders would soon meet Siddaramaiah to push for approval. Clarifying that the petition does not seek additional holidays, Hussain stressed that the appeal is only for an early departure from work. "We request the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister to grant permission for people in Karnataka to leave work early during Ramzan fasting, just as it is allowed in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. We are not asking for holidays, but only for permission to leave work early to break the fast and offer prayers," he said.

Hussain highlighted that Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have already introduced policies allowing Muslim employees to leave an hour early during Ramzan. He noted that even the NDA government in Andhra Pradesh, led by Chief Minister Chan-

drababu Naidu, has granted similar permission.

Anticipating potential opposition from the BJP, Hussain remarked, "If the BJP opposes this request, they are opposing their own alliance partners."

While the request primarily addresses government employees, Hussain acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding private-sector policies. He urged authorities to consider extending similar accommodations to Muslim employees in private organizations. "We are not asking for economic benefits; we are simply requesting time to offer Namaz and practice Iftar. Muslims pray for everyone, not just for themselves," he added. With Ramzan approaching, the Karnataka Congress has intensified its efforts to secure early leave for Muslim employees. The decision now rests with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, as political and social discussions on the matter continue.

## HD Kumaraswamy Alleges Political Vendetta Over Land Survey in Ramanagara

• **Kumaraswamy Calls Land Survey Politically Motivated:** Accuses the Karnataka Congress government of targeting him.

• **Claims Decades-Old Issue is Being Revived:** Says he legally purchased the land in 1984 with earnings as a film distributor.

• **Challenges Investigation:** Asserts he has all necessary documents and welcomes any probe.

TPN Correspondent |  
Karnataka, Feb 21

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy has accused the Karnataka Congress government of using land surveys as a tool for political harassment. The issue concerns a piece of land in Ramanagara district's Bidadi-Kethagahalli area, which he claims to have purchased in 1984. Kumaraswamy alleged that the government is reviving the matter as they are unable to challenge him politically.

"Earlier, SITs were formed under IPS officers, now they are forming SITs under IAS officers as well," he remarked, mocking the state government's approach.

Speaking to the media outside his Bengaluru residence, Kumaraswamy recounted how the issue had persisted for decades. "I bought this land using

the money I earned as a film distributor. Since then, some people have had their eyes on this property," he said. He further accused the Congress government of trying to intimidate him. "Since 2012, I have been under scrutiny, but no wrongdoing was ever found. Unlike Siddaramaiah, I have not looted government land. They are now forming an SIT under IAS officers to probe this matter, but I have nothing to hide," he asserted.

Kumaraswamy recalled that in 1986, former Congress MLA CM Lingappa and Zilla Panchayat member Ramachandra had written to the then Prime Minister and Home Minister regarding the land. However, he pointed out that even in their complaint, it was mentioned that he had purchased the land and not encroached upon it. "I have been engaged in farming on this land, not in any illegal activities. I have all the necessary documents to prove my ownership," he reiterated.

Kumaraswamy also dismissed accusations made by social activist SR Hiremath of Samaja Parivartana Samudaya, stating that the claims were baseless. "This man, who pretends to protect the state's resources, has raised allegations against my land. However, I have not received any notice from the Karnataka High Court regarding this issue," he stated.

The former Karnataka Chief Minister alleged that the government was orchestrating a campaign against him. "For 40 years, no one raised objections. Now, suddenly, complainants have surfaced," he questioned.

He also criticized the way the land survey was being planned. "The SIT was preparing to conduct a survey without even serving me a notice. I called the Deputy Commissioner and the Principal Secretary of the Revenue Department and told them to issue a notice and conduct the survey properly. I even suggested they bring in global-level land surveyors. There is no illegality in the land I purchased," he insisted.

Kumaraswamy further claimed to have information on illegal land dealings by others. "In this state, there is a long history of people looting government land. I know how constitutional institutions and investigative agencies have been misused. I also have records of those involved in such land grabs," he warned.

As the Karnataka government moves forward with the land survey, Kumaraswamy maintains that he has nothing to hide and is prepared to face any investigation. However, his allegations of political vendetta add another layer to the ongoing dispute, setting the stage for further political clashes in the state.

## High Court orders recount of votes in MLC elections, increasing hardship for Council Deputy Chairman Pranesh



TPN Correspondent |  
Karnataka, Feb 21

**Gayatri Shantegowda's Petition Succeeds:** The High Court has ordered a recount of votes from the 2021 Legislative Council election. **Controversial 6-Vote Margin:** Congress candidate lost to BJP's M.K. Pranesh by just 6 votes, sparking protests.

**District Administration Prepares for Recount:** The process will be completed within a week as per court orders. **Court-Ordered Recount in Close-Call Election**

The Karnataka High Court has directed a recount of votes in the 2021 Legislative Council election from local bodies, where former MLC Gayatri Shantegowda of Congress lost to BJP's M.K. Pranesh by a narrow margin of just 6 votes. The order comes after Gayatri challenged the results, alleging discrepancies in the vote counting process.

In the closely contested election held on December 14, 2021, a total of 2,410 votes were cast, with 39 declared invalid. BJP candidate M.K. Pranesh secured 1,188 votes, while Gayatri Shantegowda received 1,182 votes. Congress workers protested the outcome, claiming errors in the counting process, but the Election Commission upheld the results. Following this, Gayatri filed a petition seeking a recount, which was initially rejected by the Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer K.N. Ramesh. However, the High Court has now intervened, mandating a fresh

tally of votes.

A key contention in Gayatri's case was the exclusion of 12 nominated members from Sringeri, Koppa, Narasimharajapura, and Mudigere town panchayats, who were allegedly denied voting rights. She argued in court that these members were entitled to vote and their exclusion affected the election's outcome. The High Court has now instructed the District Commissioner to separately verify and count these votes before submitting a detailed report. The district administration has confirmed that the ballot papers, securely stored in the treasury, will be recounted as per the court's order. The results will be submitted to the High Court in a sealed envelope, which will determine the final verdict on the election's outcome.

However, a challenge remains as the Election Commission has not provided specific guidelines for conducting a recount after such a long gap. This is a rare case where a vote recount is being conducted three years after the election. Officials are awaiting instructions from the Commission before issuing notices to candidates and proceeding with the process. The recount is expected to be completed within a week, after which the court will decide whether M.K. Pranesh retains his seat or if a revision of results is warranted. The case has sparked political interest, as its outcome could impact the balance of power in the Karnataka Legislative Council.

## Ex-Panchayat Officer Arrested in Bengaluru After Two Years on the Run

- Former Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) Yogendra was arrested at Kempegowda International Airport.
- He had been absconding for nearly two years after multiple cheating cases were filed against him.
- A Look Out Circular (LOC) had been issued, leading to his arrest upon arrival from Sri Lanka.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, Feb 21

A former Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) from Karnataka, who had evaded arrest for almost two years in multiple fraud cases, was finally apprehended upon his return to India from Sri Lanka. The accused, identified as 39-year-old Yogendra, was arrested at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, after immigration officials flagged his passport.

Yogendra, who previously worked as a PDO in Yellapur, Uttara Kannada district, fled the country when multiple cheating cases were registered against him. The first case, filed on February 12, 2023, at C K Achukattu police station in southern Bengaluru, involved allegations that he defrauded a man

named Nandeesh G from Mallathahalli of ₹17.03 lakh by falsely promising him a government job at Vidhana Soudha. After securing anticipatory bail, he violated bail conditions and failed to appear in court, leading to police efforts to cancel his bail.

While out on bail, he was accused of another fraudulent transaction. On July 3, 2023, a case was registered against him at JC Nagar police station after he allegedly cheated Rajakumar J of ₹43 lakh by attempting to sell a property with an undisclosed loan default.

The largest fraud case against Yogendra was registered at VV Puram police station on March 8, 2024. He allegedly

cheated Venugopala P B from Belur of ₹1.25 crore by promising him shares in two companies and investment opportunities in cryptocurrency.

As legal troubles mounted, an inquiry was initiated against Yogendra, resulting in his dismissal from government service. To evade arrest, he initially fled to the UAE before relocating to Sri Lanka. However, a Look Out Circular (LOC) was issued against him, leading to his arrest upon his return to India. The police are now investigating further links and possible additional fraud cases involving Yogendra. Authorities have urged the public to verify credentials before engaging in financial transactions to avoid falling victim to similar scams.

## Three Migrant Workers Killed by Train While Filming Reels in Karnataka

- Three migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh died after being hit by a train in Doddaballapura.
- The victims were reportedly recording videos for social media at the time of the accident.
- Railway police have registered an Unnatural Death Report (UDR) and informed their families.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, 21

In a shocking incident, three migrant workers lost their lives after being hit by a passenger train while filming videos for social media in Karnataka's Doddaballapura. The victims, identified as Rahul (18), Bikesh (20), and Lallan (24), were carpenters from Uttar Pradesh who had been working in the region. The accident occurred on Monday evening when the workers were returning home after their day's labor.

According to the police, the three victims had taken an autorickshaw and alighted near the railway tracks before proceeding on foot towards their residence. It was during this time that they began recording videos, likely for social media reels. Investigations suggest that they were so engrossed

in filming that they failed to notice an approaching passenger train. Tragically, they were struck by the train and died on the spot. Eyewitnesses reported that despite the loud sound of the approaching train, the workers remained unaware of the impending danger. By the time the train driver noticed them and applied brakes, it was too late to prevent the accident. The impact was fatal, and all three succumbed instantly to their injuries.

The railway police were alerted soon after the accident, and an Unnatural Death Report (UDR) was registered. The victims' bodies were shifted to a nearby morgue, and their families were immediately informed of the tragic incident.

Authorities have expressed concern over the increasing number

of accidents involving individuals distracted by mobile phones, particularly while creating social media content. They have urged the public to be cautious and avoid risky activities near railway tracks.

Railway officials and the police have also emphasized the need for awareness campaigns to educate people about the dangers of filming videos in hazardous locations. The incident serves as a grim reminder of how social media trends can sometimes lead to fatal consequences when safety is ignored. This tragedy has sparked discussions about the growing obsession with social media and the risks people take to create viral content. Law enforcement officials are now considering stricter measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

## NCB Arrests Five for Smuggling Hydroponic Weed from Thailand at Bengaluru Airport

- NCB Bengaluru arrested five individuals at Kempegowda International Airport for drug smuggling.
- 20 kg of hydroponic cannabis, smuggled from Thailand, was seized from them.
- The accused were allegedly used as drug mules by an international trafficking syndicate.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, 21

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Bengaluru Zone, has arrested five individuals at Kempegowda International Airport for attempting to smuggle 20 kg of hydroponic cannabis into India. The high-grade contraband was allegedly being transported from Thailand as part of an organized smuggling operation. During questioning, the accused, aged between 25 and 35, revealed that they were unknowingly used as drug mules by an international

drug syndicate. According to NCB officials, these traffickers promised the individuals free leisure trips to Thailand in exchange for carrying bags on their return journey to India. The arrested persons were misled into believing that cannabis trade was not an offence in India and were assured that, in case of legal trouble, arrangements would be made for their release.

The NCB has stated that possession and trafficking of cannabis are serious criminal offences in In-

dia, punishable by up to 20 years in prison under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Authorities have urged the public to remain vigilant and avoid carrying baggage for others without verifying its contents, as drug traffickers often deceive unsuspecting individuals into illegal activities.

The investigation is ongoing to identify and apprehend members of the transnational drug syndicate operating behind the scenes.

## Five MBBS Students Arrested for Ragging Kashmiri Junior in Karnataka



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru, 21

The Karnataka Police arrested five senior MBBS students in Vijayapura district on Wednesday for allegedly ragging and assaulting a second-year student from Kashmir. The incident

occurred at Al-Ameen Medical College on Tuesday after a dispute between the 2019 and 2022 MBBS batches during a cricket match.

The arrested students have been identified as Mohammed Zainul (23), Sa-

meer (24), Shaik Sawood (23), Mansoor Bhasha (24), and Muzzaffer alias Mujeeb Jamadar (23). They have been booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Karnataka Education Act, 1983.

According to the complaint filed by the victim, Hamim Ghulam Bhat, he had gone to watch the cricket match when his seniors allegedly ordered him to leave the ground. Upon his refusal, they reportedly forced him to perform humiliating acts, such as dancing and saluting, while verbally abusing him.

Later that night, a group of senior students allegedly stormed into Bhat's hostel room, assaulted him, and forced him to record an apology video. They also issued death threats and warned him against participating in cricket for the next four years. Bhat stated that they threatened to make his stay at the college unbearable if he resisted.

Following Bhat's complaint, the Vijayapura rural police launched an investigation and arrested the accused. They are currently in police custody, awaiting further legal proceedings.

The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) has strongly condemned the incident and urged Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to take strict action against the ac-

cus. Nasir Khuehami, the national convenor of JKSA, stated that this was not an isolated case but part of a disturbing pattern of harassment faced by Kashmiri students in various institutions. "This is not just about ragging—it is a serious student safety issue and an institutional failure. Stronger anti-ragging measures must be enforced, and the accused should face strict legal consequences," Khuehami said.

The association has also called on the Karnataka government and the college administration to ensure the safety of non-local students and implement preventive measures to stop similar incidents in the future.

# Rekha Gupta: BJP's Chief Minister Choice Reflects a Decade-Long Strategy



By appointing Rekha Gupta, a first-time MLA, as the Chief Minister of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the BJP leadership has continued a well-established pattern that has been fine-tuned over the last decade by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The BJP has consistently chosen relatively younger leaders, in their 40s or 50s, who are committed to the party's ideology, have proven organizational capabilities, and are seen as capable of managing the state's affairs for the long term. Rekha Gupta, known for her approachable and friendly demeanor, may not have been as widely recog-

nized as some of her colleagues in the party, but her rise to leadership speaks volumes about her dedication and political acumen. She does not exhibit the typical aura that one might expect from a high-profile politician, which sets her apart. However, her extensive background in party work and leadership has earned her respect within the BJP. Her political journey began in student politics, where she first gained prominence as the General Secretary of the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) in 1995, a position she won as a nominee of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the RSS. Despite facing

setbacks, including a loss in the 2015 assembly elections and the Mayor's election to AAP, Rekha Gupta did not back down. She remained persistent and continued her work in various capacities, including as the Chairperson of different municipal committees, Vice President of the BJP's National Mahila Morcha, and General Secretary of the party's Delhi unit. In the 2025 assembly election, she triumphed with a significant margin of nearly 30,000 votes, which is remarkable by Delhi's standards. Rekha Gupta has been widely praised as an excellent choice to lead Delhi, a rare consensus in today's polarized political climate. With no baggage from the past and a spotless track record, she represents a refreshing change. Her identity as a woman and her roots in the Vaishya community, two key social support bases for the BJP, are additional advantages. In terms of leadership style, Gupta brings a contrast to the aggressive and confrontational politics of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), particularly the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal and his close associate Atishi. Her style is one of poise and conciliation, signaling a potential shift toward a more cooperative approach. For voters seeking change, Rekha Gupta embodies this new direction. Gupta has also assembled a promising cabinet, including key leaders such as Pravesh Sahib Singh Verma, Ashish Sood, Majinder Singh Sirsa, Kapil Mishra, Ravindra Indraj Singh,

and Pankaj Kumar Singh. These individuals represent different regions of Delhi and various social segments, ensuring broad representation within the government. The broader goals and expectations for the new BJP government in Delhi were outlined by PM Modi during his address to party workers at the national headquarters following the election results. With the BJP now in power both in Delhi and at the Centre, there is hope that the tensions between the Delhi Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Minister, which had become a daily feature under AAP's rule, will finally subside. The new government is expected to work in harmony with the Centre to deliver effective governance.

Even before Gupta's swearing-in, efforts to clean the Yamuna River had already begun, with images of machines being used to clean the water going viral. Additionally, repair work on damaged roads in certain areas has already started.

In line with her promises, Gupta's first major announcement as Chief Minister was to transfer ₹2,500 as monthly assistance to eligible women's bank accounts by March 8, International Women's Day. While Gupta faces significant challenges, the resources and support from the Modi government offer her a unique opportunity to transform Delhi into a model city known for its hygiene, infrastructure, and governance.



# Congress Reshuffle: Rahul Chooses His Inner Circle, But Can They Deliver?



The Congress party has recently carried out a long-awaited reshuffle in its secretariat, but it appears to be a half-hearted effort, especially coming after three consecutive state poll defeats. The reshuffle includes the appointment of two new general secretaries and a handful of changes to the party's state in-charges. The central question is whether this new team can strengthen Rahul Gandhi, who, after reaching a high point last year with 99 seats in the Lok Sabha, is now facing a challenging period. **Rahul's Inner Circle** It is clear that Rahul Gandhi has carefully chosen his inner circle, promoting trusted allies who have been working behind the scenes. One common criticism of Gandhi has been that he fails to bring the party along with him and often operates independently. However, with his close associates now in prominent positions, that perception could change. The new appointments are strategic,

with many of them being leaders from marginalized or minority communities. Bhupesh Baghel, former Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, has been appointed as general secretary for Punjab, while Syed Naseer Hussain will handle Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Other key appointments include Ajay Kumar Lallu for Odisha, B.K. Hariprasad for Haryana, and Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka for Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura, and Nagaland. Former MP Meenakshi Natrajan will handle Telangana, and K. Raju will take over Jharkhand. **Can This Reshuffle Change Congress's Fate?** The reshuffle raises the question: Can this team change the Congress's fortunes? That remains uncertain. Although Mallikarjun Kharge holds the position of Congress President, K.C. Venugopal, the General Secretary for Organization, continues to be the true power broker behind the scenes, largely due to his strong ties to the Gandhi family. Priyanka

Gandhi Vadra also holds a significant role, though her exact function in the party remains ambiguous. One notable aspect of the reshuffle is that the "old guard" has been largely sidelined, with many experienced leaders passed over in favor of younger figures. This could be seen as Rahul Gandhi's attempt to reassert control and break away from the legacy of senior leaders whose authority he may find limiting.

#### Focus on Bihar and Punjab

Two key regions stand out in the reshuffle: Punjab and Bihar. Baghel's appointment to Punjab is curious, given his recent track record of failure in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. With BJP, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), and AAP all vying for influence in Punjab, it remains to be seen if Baghel's leadership will help Congress regain ground. In Bihar, the Congress continues to play second fiddle to the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The appointment of Krishna Allavaru, a relatively low-profile leader, as the in-charge for Bihar, suggests that the Congress is content with its junior status within the alliance. This aligns with Rahul Gandhi's recent efforts to strengthen ties with Lalu Prasad Yadav and his son, Tejashwi, further signaling Congress's dependence on regional parties in key states like Bihar and Puducherry.

#### A Deeper Issue: Lack of Soul-Searching

The Congress party's primary issue is that it has not engaged in any serious soul-searching since its near-collapse in the 2014 general elections. The formation of the INDIA bloc—an alliance of opposition parties—is essentially an admission that Congress cannot defeat the BJP alone.



The reshuffle, which includes two new general secretaries and nine new in-charges, is unlikely to energize party workers or address the party's deep-rooted challenges. Although the new appointees are trusted by Rahul Gandhi, their effectiveness remains to be seen, especially as the future of the INDIA bloc is uncertain. Furthermore, Congress continues to face an existential crisis in states like Tamil Nadu and

West Bengal, where it struggles to maintain relevance.

In conclusion, the success of this reshuffle hinges more on Rahul Gandhi's leadership than on the new team itself. It remains to be seen if this team can deliver the much-needed revitalization for Congress, or if it will simply be another chapter in the party's ongoing struggle.



# PM Modi, Murmu and Amit Shah greet people of Arunachal, Mizoram on statehood day

- Hails Mizoram's traditions, Arunachal's biodiversity
- Calls both states symbols of India's rich cultural heritage
- Emphasizes unity, development, of the states

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Droupadi Murmu, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah extended their heartfelt greetings to the people of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram as both states marked their Statehood Day.

Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram attained the status of states on February 20, 1987. Prime Minister Modi took to social media to share warm wishes with the people of Mizoram, highlighting the state's breathtaking landscapes, deep-rooted traditions, and the warmth of its people. "Warm greetings to the people of Mizoram on their



Statehood Day! This vibrant state is known for its breathtaking landscapes, deep-rooted traditions and the remarkable warmth of its people," PM Modi wrote. He further lauded the Mizo culture, calling it a beautiful blend of heritage and harmony. The Prime Minister wished for Mizoram to continue to prosper and achieve even greater heights in the future.

In a separate post, PM Modi also greeted the people of Arunachal Pradesh, emphasizing the state's rich traditions and its close connection to nature. He praised the hardworking and dynamic people of the state for their contributions

to India's growth. Modi noted that Arunachal Pradesh's vibrant tribal heritage and stunning biodiversity made the state truly special. "May Arunachal Pradesh continue to flourish, and may its journey of progress and harmony continue to soar in the years to come," he added.

President Droupadi Murmu also conveyed her warm greetings, acknowledging both states as being blessed with abundant natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. In her message, she described Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram as exemplifying the best of India. She expressed her belief that both states represent the diverse and vibrant fabric of the nation.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah joined in the celebrations, recognizing the importance of these states in the national landscape. His greetings echoed the sentiments of unity, development, and progress, highlighting the significant role that Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram play in India's growth and success.

As Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram celebrate their Statehood Day, the leaders' messages reflect a commitment to continued development, harmony, and the celebration of the unique cultural identities of these two states.



**Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Recuses Himself from R.G. Kar Rape and Murder PIL Case**  
TPN Correspondent | J&K

Calcutta High Court Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam recused himself on Thursday from hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed in connection with the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College & Hospital in August last year. The PIL had been filed against former Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Kumar Goyal, alleging that he revealed the victim's identity while interacting with the media, which led to nationwide protests.

As the case came before the division bench of Chief Justice Sivagnanam and Justice Chaitali Chatterjee, the Chief Justice expressed his desire to step down from the case for personal reasons. He directed the court authorities to remove the matter from the cause list, and it will now be referred to another division bench for hearing.

The PIL, filed in November last year during the height of protests following the tragic incident, sought the registration of an FIR against Goyal. The division bench had earlier directed the Union Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT) to be included as a party in the case, as it is the cadre-control authority for all Indian Police Service (IPS) officers like Goyal. The court sought an affidavit from DOPT explaining what action could be taken against any all-India service officer for breaching the law.

The Union government had informed the Calcutta High Court that there were no restrictions preventing the West Bengal government from taking action against Goyal. It also mentioned that the petitioner could make a fresh appeal if the state government failed to act.

Goyal, who is currently the Additional Director General of the West Bengal Police's Special Task Force (STF), faced widespread criticism for his handling of the initial investigation. Junior doctors had demanded his removal, and the Chief Minister eventually replaced him with Manoj Kumar Verma. The investigation was later transferred to the CBI.

Both the Supreme Court and the Calcutta High Court had previously made strong observations about the revelation of the victim's identity. It remains to be seen which division bench will now hear the case.



## Maharashtra Minister Manikrao Kokate Gets 2-Year Jail In Cheating Case

TPN Correspondent | Nashik

Maharashtra Agriculture Minister and NCP leader Manikrao Kokate was sentenced to two years in prison by a Nashik court on Thursday in connection with a 1995 case. The case involved charges of submitting fake documents to obtain flats under a government quota meant for the Low Income Group (LIG).

Following the conviction, Kokate told reporters that the court had granted him bail, and he planned to challenge the judgment by filing an appeal in the High Court.

The court also convicted Kokate's brother, Sunil Kokate, in the same case, imposing a fine of Rs 50,000 each on both brothers. However, two other individuals involved in the case were acquitted by the court. The case was originally filed in 1995 based on a complaint by former minister, the late T. S. Dighole, who had political differences with Kokate.

According to the prosecution, the Kokate brothers had been allotted two flats in the Yeolakar Mala area of Nashik under the Chief Minister's 10% discretionary quota, which was meant for LIG citizens. The brothers allegedly misrepresented their eligibility by falsely claiming to belong to the LIG category and denying ownership of any property in the city.

The case was brought to light when Dighole lodged a complaint, prompting a police investigation. The Kokate brothers were charged with cheating, forgery, and other offenses under the Indian Penal Code.

The ruling has sparked political reactions, with the rival NCP (SP) calling for Kokate's resignation following the verdict. Kokate's situation could also lead to his disqualification as an MLA if he does not receive relief from the High Court.

This case adds to the challenges facing the NCP, as Kokate is the second minister in the Ajit Pawar-led NCP faction of the BJP-led state government to face legal troubles. Cabinet Minister Dhananjay Munde is currently under scrutiny following his aide's arrest in an extortion case linked to a village sarpanch's murder in Beed district in December 2024.

## Week After President's Rule, Manipur Governor's 7-Day Arms Ultimatum

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla has called on people from all communities in the state to surrender any looted or illegally held weapons and ammunition within the next seven days. In a statement issued today, Governor Bhalla emphasized that no punitive action would be taken against those who comply with this directive before the deadline. However, he warned that strict legal measures would follow for those who fail to return illegal weapons after the seven-day period.

This announcement comes as Manipur continues to grapple with the aftermath of violent ethnic clashes between the Meitei community and the Kuki tribes that have disrupted the region for nearly two years. These tensions, compounded by the state's open border with Myanmar, have led to significant unrest, forcing the government to take drastic measures. Currently, Manipur is under President's rule, following the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh and his council of ministers on February 9. The state assembly is now in suspended animation, with elected members no longer holding power.

Governor Bhalla's call for disarmament is part of an effort to restore peace and normalcy in a region that has endured immense hardship over the past



20 months. The violence, which has deeply affected both the valley and hill areas of the state, has disrupted daily life and led to the loss of numerous lives. In his statement, the Governor urged all communities, whether from the valley or the hills, to actively participate in ceasing hostilities and working towards maintaining peace and order.

The appeal for the voluntary surrender of weapons aims to defuse ongoing tensions and create a more secure environment for the people of Manipur. While the Governor expressed understanding for the suffering endured by the people, he stressed the importance of collective responsibility in ensuring the restoration of harmony. The state's leadership, now under President's rule, is hoping this initiative will help bring an end to the violence and allow residents to return to their normal lives.

## UGC draft regulations 2025 aimed at sidelining states from higher education: Kerala CM

TPN Correspondent | Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan strongly criticized the draft University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations of 2025 on Thursday, stating that they significantly diminish and even sideline the role of state governments in higher education. Speaking at a National Convention on the draft UGC regulations, attended by ministers from neighboring states like Telangana, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, Vijayan expressed concerns about the implications for state autonomy.

Vijayan pointed out that under the draft regulations, the appointment of Vice Chancellors (VCs) would be under the control of Chancellors, who are typically Governors appointed by the central government. He warned that this could lead to politically motivated selections that would harm the quality of higher education. The Kerala CM highlighted what he called "gubernatorial excesses" experienced in opposition-ruled states, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Punjab, where Governors have interfered in university affairs.

He also referenced the state's previous experience with former Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, who had withheld assent to bills related to university administration, forcing the state government to approach the Supreme Court. Vijayan further criticized the draft regulations for introducing "new and arbitrary criteria" for the promotion of academic staff, describing these changes as an infringement on the autonomy of states.



## Maharashtra Dy CM Eknath Shinde receives death threat; email warns of blowing up his car



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde received a death threat via email on Thursday, February 20, which warned of an explosion targeting the Shiv Sena leader's car. Along with Shinde, the Goregaon and JJ Marg police stations and the Mantralaya (state secretariat) also received similar threatening messages.

Mumbai Police, along with the Crime Branch, have launched a detailed investigation to trace the sender's IP address and identify those responsible for the threat. In response to the incident, security around Shinde has been bolstered to ensure his safety.

Shinde is currently in Delhi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Rekha Gupta as Delhi's Chief Minister. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed his joy, stating, "It is a matter of joy that our 'Ladli Behna' (beloved sister) will take the oath in Delhi... We thank PM Modi for this." The ceremony was attended by various political leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and other key Union Ministers and NDA Chief Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

This is not the first time that Shinde has faced a death threat. Earlier, in February 2024, a 19-year-old college student had issued similar threats to Shinde and his son, MP Shrikant Shinde, via social media. The accused student, identified as Shubham Warkad, was arrested by the Mumbai Crime Branch from Pune on February 16, 2024. He had posted the threats on the social media platform X, prompting immediate police intervention.

Authorities had charged Warkad under sections 506(2) and 505(1)(B) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The police investigation into the recent death threat continues, with heightened vigilance around the Deputy CM's security.

## Indian Man Arrested For Balloon Explosion That Injured Nepal Deputy PM Bishnu Paudel



TPN Correspondent | Kathmandu

An Indian national, Kamlesh Kumar, has been arrested in Nepal in connection with an incident during the inauguration of the 'Visit Pokhara Year 2025' tourism event, where Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Paudel sustained minor burn injuries. Police revealed that Kumar was responsible for filling hydrogen gas into balloons, which later exploded during the ceremony.

The explosion occurred on February 15, shortly after Paudel and Pokhara Metropolitan City Mayor Dhanraj Acharya released the hydrogen gas-filled balloons along with a banner. This was part of a symbolic gesture that included lighting candles through an electric switch. The balloons caught fire when the flames from the candles were too close, causing them to explode. Both Paudel and Acharya suffered burns and were airlifted to Kathmandu for medical treatment.

Following the incident, a case was filed against the 41-year-old Kumar in Kaski district court, as confirmed by Deputy Superintendent of Police Basanta Sharma. The explosion was reportedly triggered by a spark from the automatic switch that ignited the hydrogen-filled balloons.

The incident was captured on video by numerous social media users, with footage showing the balloons bursting into a large explosion and injuring those nearby. Paudel, who also serves as Nepal's finance minister, and Acharya suffered burns on their hands and faces. Paudel was discharged from Kirtipur Burn Hospital in Kathmandu on Monday after receiving treatment, while Acharya remained under medical care for a few more days.

In response to the incident, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak quickly formed an investigation committee to look into the matter and determine the cause and responsibility for the explosion. The event, which was meant to highlight tourism in Pokhara, turned tragic due to the mishandling of hazardous materials.



## Russia Holds "The Cards" In Peace Talks With Ukraine: Trump

TPN Correspondent | Russia

US President Donald Trump has stated that Russia holds a significant advantage in the ongoing peace talks regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, as they control a large portion of Ukrainian territory. In comments reported by the BBC, Trump expressed his belief that Russia has the upper hand in negotiations due to their territorial gains. "I think the Russians want to see the war end, I really do. I think they have the cards a little bit, because they've taken a lot of territory. They have the cards," he said.

This statement comes in the wake of a high-level meeting between US officials, led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and top Russian diplomats in Saudi Arabia on February 18. Ukraine was notably absent from the talks, prompting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to cancel his planned visit, which had been scheduled for Wednesday.

Trump addressed the situation at a press conference at his residence in Florida, questioning Ukraine's absence from the discussions. "Today I heard, 'Oh, well, we weren't invited.' Well, you've been there for three years. You should have ended it three years ago. You should have never started it. You could have made a deal," Trump remarked.

In response to the US-Russia talks, Zelensky criticized Trump, stating that the former president was operating in a "disinformation space." He expressed his disapproval of Trump's stance, suggesting that it lacked understanding of the situation's complexity.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Russia is open to continuing discussions with the US on all fronts. Peskov stated that Russia "absolutely agrees with the American administration" that negotiations are essential to achieve peace and end the conflict as soon as possible.

## Germany Prepares for Critical Federal Election: A Race Between Scholz, Merz, and Weidel

- Germany votes on February 23 to elect a new chancellor
- Scholz, Merz, and Weidel lead a highly competitive race
- CDU leads in polls; coalition talks expected post-election

TPN Correspondent | Berlin

Germany is set to hold its crucial federal election on Sunday, February 23, with voters choosing the next chancellor to shape the future of the country and its role within the European Union. The election follows the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government at the end of 2024, prompting snap polls to determine Germany's leadership. Scholz, seeking a second term, faces strong opposition from Friedrich Merz, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and Alice Weidel, a far-right candidate from the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Top Contenders

**Olaf Scholz:** The 66-year-old incumbent from the Social Democrats (SPD) has served as chancellor since December 2021. Scholz is seeking re-election after leading efforts to modernize Germany's military, supply weapons to Ukraine, and tackle energy shortages. However, his three-party coalition suffered infighting, leading to its collapse in November 2024.

**Friedrich Merz:** At 69, Merz is the leader of the CDU and the front-runner in the race, according to recent polls. A conservative voice, Merz has made curbing immigration a central issue. Though he lacks direct government experience, his leadership has brought the CDU to prominence after Angela Merkel's tenure.



**Robert Habeck:** The 55-year-old co-leader of the Green Party, currently serving as vice chancellor and economy and climate minister, is another key contender. Habeck's tenure has been marked by his role in managing energy issues and spearheading environmental policies, though his ministry's proposals on heating systems have been divisive.

**Alice Weidel:** The 46-year-old economist is leading the far-right AfD in a historic bid for chancellor. Though the AfD is unlikely to form a government, Weidel's candidacy highlights the growing influence of far-right politics in Germany.

Election Outlook and Coalition Dynamics

Election results are expected to be confirmed by Sunday evening, though final outcomes may take longer due to post-election vote counting. Germany's proportional voting system often leads to coalition governments, making post-election negotiations crucial. Given the fragmentation in German politics, coalition talks could extend for months.

With no party likely to win an outright majority, the key to forming a stable government will lie in alliances between the SPD, CDU, Greens, and possibly the AfD. Recent polls show the CDU leading with 30%, followed by the AfD at 20%. Scholz's SPD has dropped to third with just 16%, highlighting the shifting political landscape in Germany.

## India Responds After Illegal Migrants Deported By US Seek "Help" In Panama



TPN Correspondent | Panama City

India is working closely with Panamanian authorities to ensure the safety and well-being of Indian migrants who were recently deported by the United States to Panama. According to the Indian embassy in Panama, the deportees are currently safe and secure at a hotel where they are being detained. The embassy confirmed that the migrants have access to essential facilities, and a consular team has been granted access to provide assistance.

"Panamanian authorities have informed us that a group of Indians have reached Panama from the US. They are safe and secure at a hotel with all essential facilities. Embassy team has obtained consular access. We are working closely with the host Government to ensure their well-being," the embassy said in a statement on X (formerly Twitter).

This announcement follows reports that nearly 300 migrants, including individuals from India, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, were being held in

Panama after being deported from the United States under former President Donald Trump's administration. Some deportees were seen displaying desperate messages through their hotel room windows, pleading for help and stating, "We are not safe in our country."

In response, Panama's authorities have denied claims that the migrants are being detained against their will. Panamanian Security Minister Frank Abrego stated that these deportees are receiving medical care and food as part of a migration agreement between Panama and the United States. However, they are not allowed to leave the hotel until arrangements are made for their repatriation to their countries of origin.

The United States has been using Panama as a transit point for deportees due to logistical challenges in deporting individuals directly to certain countries. Costa Rica is also expected to receive a similar flight carrying third-country deportees. The US has adopted a tough stance on undocumented migration under President Trump, with plans to deport large numbers of individuals as part of his administration's immigration policies.

## Why Would One Be Afraid?: Mexican President On Donald Trump's Threats

TPN Correspondent | Mexico

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has expressed confidence in the face of US President Donald Trump's threats of mass deportations, trade tariffs, and military intervention to combat drug cartels. Sheinbaum, speaking at a daily press conference, stated that she does not fear Trump's warnings because she has the support of the Mexican people.

When asked about Trump's recent comments, Sheinbaum confidently responded, "No. I have the support of the people. When one has certainty and conviction and knows what one's principles are, why would one be afraid?" She emphasized that Mexico's sovereignty would never be violated, and if it were, the entire country would stand together to defend it.

Sheinbaum's remarks followed Trump's



statement that Mexico is "run by drug cartels" and his accusations that Mexican authorities were allowing millions of people to enter the United States illegally. Trump also offered his "help" to curb the flow of immigration.

Sheinbaum allayed concerns over Trump's actions by noting that there is ongoing dialogue between the two governments. She stressed that while Mexico does not support

drug cartels or organized crime, it firmly defends its sovereignty and would not accept any "extraterritorial measures" resulting from the US designating drug cartels as terrorist organizations.

The tension escalated earlier this month when Trump threatened, but later postponed, a 25% tariff on Mexican imports, aimed at pressuring Mexico to take stronger action against its drug cartels. Trump had also ordered the designation of some Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, a move that is expected to be finalized soon.

In response to Trump's tariff threat, Mexico deployed 10,000 National Guard troops to its northern border. Meanwhile, the Mexican Defense Secretary, Ricardo Trevilla, addressed the issue of US military flights, stating they had not entered Mexican airspace, although their purpose remained unclear.



# Domestic Markets Consolidate as Metals, Energy & Auto Support Recovery Amid Global Uncertainty

Domestic stock markets closed slightly lower on Thursday. Consolidation is underway in the benchmark and broad indices. If the respective sectoral indices rebound for a few more days, a direction will emerge for the markets. The indices fell in the morning due to mixed signals from Asian and international markets and FIIs leaving. Later, investors bought attractive shares and found support from metal, energy and auto shares, leading to a recovery. Nifty 18 and Sensex lost 203 points.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 75,939 in the previous session, opened at 75,672 on Thursday. It touched an intraday low of 75,463. It reached an intraday high of 75,794. It finally closed at 75,735, down 203 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,821, touched a low of 22,812 and a high of 22,923. It closed at 22,913, down 19 points. The Nifty Bank fell 235 points to settle at 49,334.

In the Nifty50, 28 companies gained while 22 lost. Shares of auto, media, metal, PSU bank, realty, oil and gas sectors rose. Bank, finance, IT, and private bank shares faced selling pressure. Shriram Finance, NTPC, M&M, BEL, and Adani Ports were the top gainers. HDFC Bank, Maruti, TechM, Tata Consumer, and HCL Tech were the top losers.



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

Market breadth in the NSE today turned in favor of buyers. Of the 2,904 shares traded, 1,998 gained and 830 lost. 22 shares hit 52-week highs. 106 hit 52-week lows.

SEBI chief Madhabipuri Buch said that the key performance indicators for IPOs will be completely changed. The rupee strengthened by 28 paise to settle at 86.66 against the dollar. Experts estimated that the impact of Trump's retaliatory tariffs on Indian pharma companies will be minimal, while the US will suffer the most. India Vicks closed down 4.5% today at 14.71. Sri Lankan cabinet has approved NTPC to set up two solar power plants

in Sampur. Goldman Sachs estimates that the impact of Trump's tariffs on India's GDP will be only 0.1 to 0.6 percent. The Indian Defense Ministry has signed a contract worth Rs 1220 crore with Bharat Electronics. Motilal Oswal has given a buy rating to JSW Steel for Rs 1150 crore. It is learnt that LT Minerals has received orders worth Rs 2500-5000 crore from the steel and aluminum sectors. 10 lakh shares have changed hands in Vedanta.

**1. BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange)**  
The Bombay Stock Exchange is one of Asia's oldest and most established stock exchanges. It provides trading, clearing, and settlement services to a wide range



of securities and plays a pivotal role in the Indian capital market. Strong brand reputation and technological upgrades. Beneficiary of increased investor participation and digital trading initiatives. Outlook depends on overall market sentiment and regulatory developments.

**2. Shriram Finance**  
Shriram Finance is a leading NBFC focused on commercial vehicle financing, consumer loans, and other asset-based lending. It is part of the well-regarded Shriram Group. Consistent revenue and profit growth driven by a robust loan portfolio. Solid asset quality with controlled NPAs and strong returns on equity. Positioned well to benefit from rising credit demand and expanding retail finance.



**3. Tata Steel**  
Tata Steel is one of the world's largest steel producers, operating in both domestic and international markets with a diversified product mix. Historically strong revenue growth, though subject to commodity cyclicity. Focus on cost optimization and sustainable practices supports long-term competitiveness. Global steel market trends and infrastructure demand remain key growth drivers.



**4. NTPC**  
NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) is India's largest power utility, primarily engaged in thermal power generation and increasingly investing in renewable energy projects. Stable revenue stream due to long-term power purchase agreements and regulated tariffs. Consistent cash flows and a strong asset base supported by government backing. Expansion into renewable energy enhances its long-term growth outlook.



**5. IGL (Indraprastha Gas Ltd.)**  
IGL is a leading city gas distribution company in the National Capital Region, supplying natural gas to residential, commercial, and industrial consumers. Benefits from the growing demand for cleaner fuels and government initiatives to increase urban gas distribution. Consistent revenue and earnings growth with a robust customer base. Profitability can be influenced by regulatory changes and fuel price volatility.



tion, supplying natural gas to residential, commercial, and industrial consumers. Benefits from the growing demand for cleaner fuels and government initiatives to increase urban gas distribution. Consistent revenue and earnings growth with a robust customer base. Profitability can be influenced by regulatory changes and fuel price volatility.

## Indian Auto Component Industry Set for Moderate Growth Amid Challenges

The Indian auto component industry is expected to see an 8-10 percent growth in revenue in the financial year 2025-26, according to a report from rating agency ICRA. This follows a more moderate growth projection for the current year, 2024-25, where revenues are forecast to rise by only 7-9 percent, down from the high growth rate of 14 percent witnessed in 2023-24.

Despite this slowdown in growth, ICRA's report indicates that operating margins for the sector are likely to remain stable, hovering between 11-12 percent in both 2024-25 and 2025-26. This stability is expected to be supported by operating leverage, which allows companies to better manage fixed costs as they scale up production, along with an increase in the content per vehicle and added value from the components produced.

However, there are significant challenges facing the industry, particularly in the form of rising ocean freight rates. The ongoing disruptions along the Red Sea route have caused a surge in shipping costs, with rates jumping 2-3 times higher in 2024 compared to the previous year. This surge in ocean freight rates could potentially impact the margins of auto component suppliers, especially those with substantial exports or imports. A further increase in these rates could lead to additional financial strain for businesses that rely heavily on global supply chains.

Looking ahead, ICRA estimates the auto component industry will incur capital expenditures (Capex) of Rs 25,000-30,000 crore in 2025-26. These investments will be directed towards capacity expansion, localisation efforts, and technological advancements, including the development of electric vehicles (EVs). At present, only 30-40 percent of the EV supply chain in India is localised, with progress made in areas such as traction motors, control units, and battery management systems. However, battery cells, which account for 35-40 percent of the vehicle cost, remain fully imported, indicating a continued dependency on global supply chains in the short term.

Overall, while the Indian auto component industry faces a moderate growth outlook and some external challenges, its focus on expanding capacity and localising supply chains—especially in the EV sector—presents opportunities for long-term stability and growth.



## India's Economic Outlook Remains Strong Amid Global Uncertainty

India's economic activity is expected to gain momentum in the second half of 2024-25, according to the latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) monthly bulletin, which highlights the country's resilience despite global challenges. High-frequency indicators point to a recovery in various sectors, with the economy on track to maintain its position as the fastest-growing major economy in the world during 2025-26, with GDP growth estimates of 6.5% from the IMF and 6.7% from the World Bank.

The report underscores that the Union Budget for 2025-26 has struck a balanced approach, prioritizing fiscal consolidation while supporting growth through continued focus on capital expenditure (Capex). The budget also includes measures to boost household incomes and consumption. The effective capital expenditure/GDP ratio is projected to rise to 4.3% in 2025-26 from 4.1% in the previous year, reflecting the government's commitment to long-term infrastruc-



ture development. Retail inflation has moderated to a five-month low of 4.3% in January, driven by a sharp decline in vegetable prices due to the arrival of winter crops. This has helped alleviate cost pressures for consumers. Furthermore, high-frequency indicators indicate a recovery in industrial activity and overall economic momentum during the latter half of 2024-25, after a slower first half.

Sector-specific indicators reflect this recovery: tractor sales, fuel consump-

tion, and air passenger traffic all show positive trends. Rural demand remains robust, buoyed by higher farm incomes, with FMCG sales in rural areas growing by 9.9% in Q3:2024-25, compared to 5.7% in Q2. Urban demand also saw improvement, with a 5% growth in Q3, almost double the growth in the previous quarter.

Investment intentions from the private sector remain stable, with substantial projects sanctioned by banks and financial institutions, totaling nearly ₹1 lakh crore in Q3:2024-25. External Commercial Borrowings and Initial Public Offerings for capital expenditure also showed an uptick.

Despite global uncertainties, including trade tensions and geopolitical risks, India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals have helped cushion the impact, according to the RBI bulletin. The report emphasizes that global trade patterns may undergo a long-term shift due to these uncertainties.

## India set to become high-income country by 2047 buoyed by services sector

India is on track to emerge as a high-income country by 2047, with projections indicating its GDP could reach between USD 23 trillion to USD 35 trillion. The services sector will play a significant role in this transformation, contributing around 60 percent to India's GDP by the target year, according to a report by Bain & Company and Nasscom.

Manufacturing will also make a major contribution, expected to account for approximately 32 percent of the GDP. These two sectors—services and manufacturing—are seen as key drivers of India's future economic expansion.

A crucial element in this shift will be the addition of nearly 200 million individuals to the workforce, which presents India with a unique opportunity to create high-value jobs. This demographic change could unlock substantial eco-

nom potential, positioning the country to harness the benefits of a growing, skilled labor force.

The report emphasizes that a sectoral technology roadmap could be instrumental in fueling this transformation. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI)-driven chip design, touchless manufacturing, and backward integration into component manufacturing are expected to make Indian industries more cost-competitive and innovative. As a result, India's technology export share could rise from the current 24 percent to 45-50 percent by 2047, while the sector's contribution to the GDP could grow from 3 percent to between 8-10 percent.



The combination of these factors—economic growth driven by services and manufacturing, a burgeoning workforce, and technological advancements—could position India as a leading global economic powerhouse by mid-century.



## WhatsApp Bans Over 8 Million Accounts in a Month



WhatsApp, India's largest social media platform, has banned more than 8.4 million accounts in a single month to curb fraudulent activities and ensure user safety. The move, announced by Meta—the parent company of WhatsApp—comes amid rising concerns about scams and suspicious activities on the platform.

According to Meta's Transparency Re-

port, this mass ban was a direct response to increasing reports from users about fraudulent behavior, prompting the company to take swift action to maintain the integrity of the platform. The banned accounts, totaling approximately 8.45 million, were identified as violating the provisions of Section 4(1)(d) and Section 3A(7) of the Information Technology Act. These measures were part of Meta's ongoing

efforts to uphold safety and compliance within India's digital ecosystem.

The bans took place between August 1 and August 31, with Meta detailing the types of accounts affected. Of the total number, 1.66 million accounts were immediately blocked due to serious violations, while the remaining accounts were banned after thorough investigations revealed suspicious activities. Interestingly, over 1.6 million of these accounts were flagged and banned proactively during routine monitoring, even before receiving specific user complaints. These accounts were found to be engaged in misuse, underlining the importance of early detection in maintaining a safe environment for WhatsApp users.

Meta's aggressive approach reflects its commitment to addressing concerns over fraud on its platforms and improving monitoring systems. The company's actions also serve as a reminder of the increasing responsibility social media platforms have in curbing online scams and providing users with a secure digital experience.

## Uber Ditches Commissions for Auto-Rickshaw Drivers Introduces Subscription Model

Uber has announced a major change for auto-rickshaw drivers in India, eliminating its commission fees and replacing them with a subscription model. In a blog post on Tuesday, February 18, the ride-hailing giant revealed that drivers will now keep 100% of the fares earned through the platform.

Previously, Uber charged a commission on each fare, which resulted in drivers receiving only a portion of the total fare. However, with this new model, drivers will no longer face deductions from Uber. Instead, the company will charge a subscription fee for using the platform, allowing drivers to retain the full fare amount paid by passengers.

The shift to a subscription-based structure is designed to offer more earnings stability for auto-rickshaw drivers, particularly during times of fluctuating demand. Uber's move comes as part of its broader efforts to improve relationships with drivers and enhance the overall driver experience.

Uber's decision to move away from com-



missions is seen as a positive step by many auto-rickshaw drivers who often struggled with the impact of commission deductions on their earnings. Now, they will benefit from a predictable cost structure that allows them to keep the entire fare for their services.

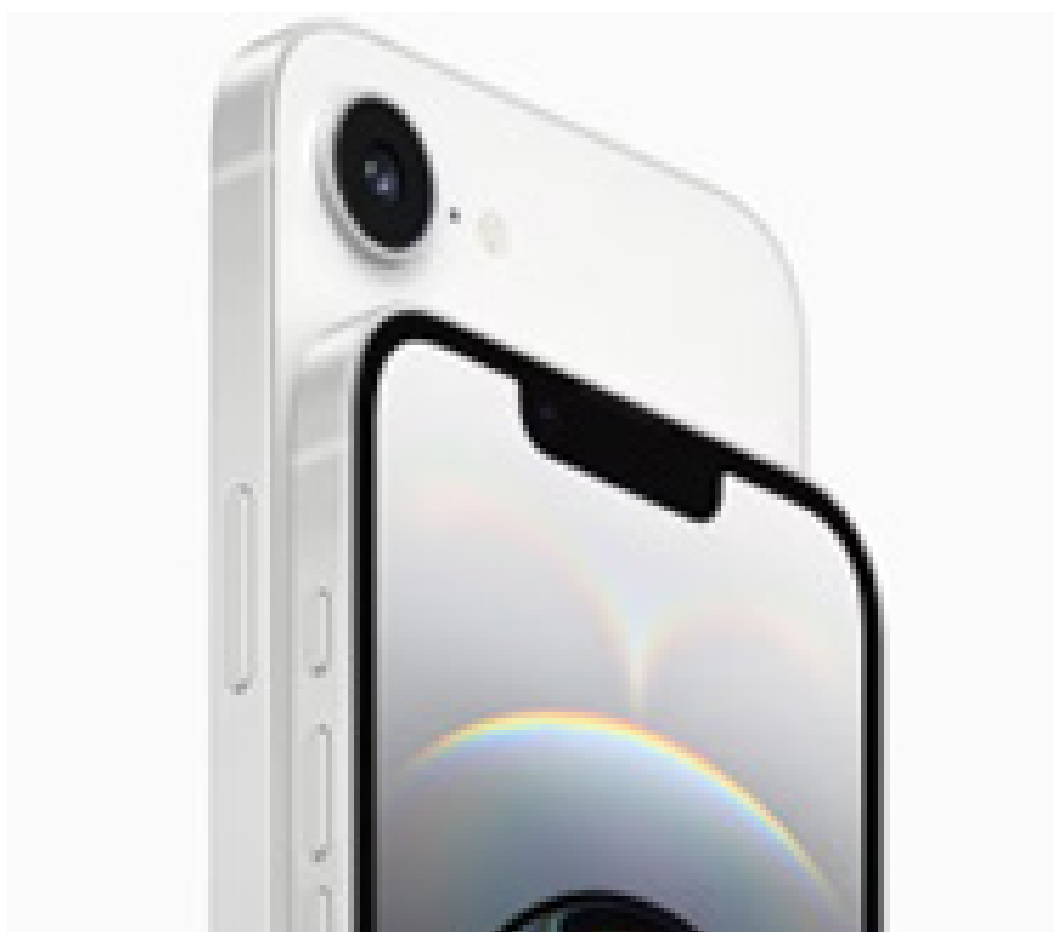
The change is expected to have a signifi-

cant impact on Uber's presence in India's auto-rickshaw market, where it competes with local ride-hailing services. By giving drivers greater financial control, Uber hopes to foster better relations with its driver community while ensuring the platform's long-term growth in the Indian market.

## Apple iPhone 16e is here with eye on price

Apple introduced the entry-level iPhone 16e on Wednesday, expanding its iPhone 16 lineup with a more affordable model aimed at price-sensitive markets, particularly in regions like India and China. The new iPhone 16e provides nearly identical performance to its higher-priced counterparts but comes at a lower starting price of Rs 59,900. Pre-orders will begin this Friday on Apple's website, with sales set to start on February 28.

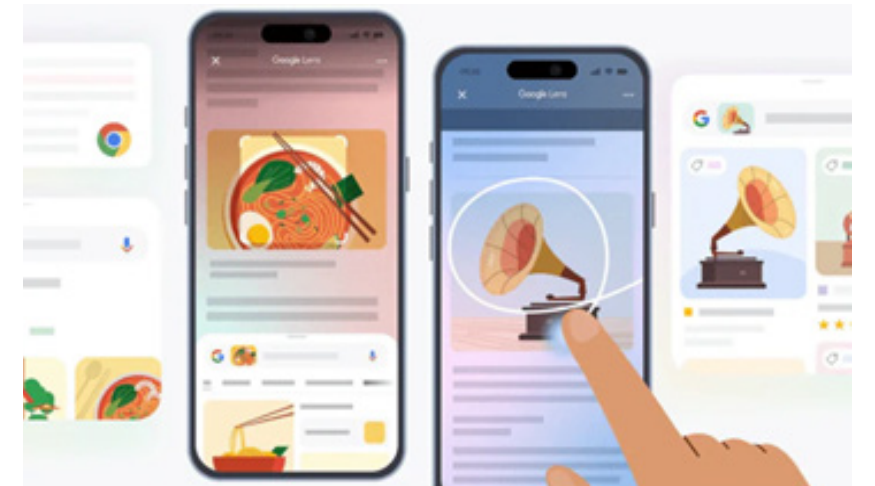
The iPhone 16e is equipped with the powerful A18 chip, the same processor found in the flagship iPhone 16 models, ensuring fast and efficient performance. The device also boasts a 6.1-inch OLED display, consistent with the rest of the iPhone 16 series. It includes features like Face ID within a display notch, a customizable Action Button, and a USB-C port, which was first introduced with the iPhone 15. In terms of design, the iPhone 16e has a look reminiscent of the iPhone 14, maintaining a sleek and modern appearance. Notably, the new model is the most affordable iPhone to incorporate Apple's AI capabilities, supporting Apple Intelligence and offering users access to cutting-edge Gen AI features. The iPhone 16e comes with a single-lens 48-megapixel camera, whereas the more expensive iPhone 16 models feature a dual-lens system for enhanced photography. By offering the iPhone 16e, Apple aims to



attract a broader audience, tapping into emerging markets where cost-effective smartphones are in high demand, without compromising on the features that make the iPhone brand so appealing. The

new model delivers a high-quality user experience at a more accessible price, making it an appealing choice for consumers looking for an affordable iPhone with the latest technology.

## Google Launches 'Search Screen with Google Lens' for iPhones



In 2024, Google launched an innovative feature called "Circle to Search" for Android users, allowing them to search anything displayed on their screen with a simple gesture. Now, the tech giant has extended this functionality to Apple iPhones with a new feature called "Search Screen with Google Lens."

This enhanced mobile search feature enables iPhone users to search content on their screens without needing to take a screenshot or open a new tab. By using intuitive gestures, such as drawing or highlighting the content they want to search for, users can instantly access search results powered by Google Lens. This allows for a seamless and more efficient search experience.

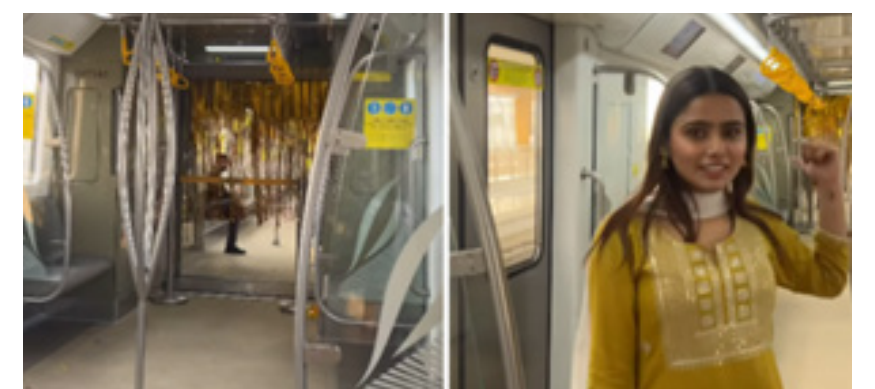
The "Search Screen with Google Lens" feature operates similarly to the Android version, where a user can circle, highlight, or tap text, images, or any other on-screen content. Once the action is performed, Google Lens will instantly analyze the selected content and display rel-

evant search results, making it easier to get more information about anything on the screen in real-time. Additionally, the feature also provides AI-generated overviews, enriching the search experience further.

For example, if users are viewing a foreign language text or an image of an object, they can quickly draw a circle around it, and Google Lens will provide immediate translations or details about the object. This feature brings a new level of convenience to iPhone users by integrating powerful AI technology with mobile search in an interactive way.

This new addition to iOS is part of Google's continued effort to improve and enhance its mobile search capabilities, making it faster, smarter, and more accessible across different platforms. As the search landscape evolves, this feature on iPhones aligns with the growing demand for more efficient, context-sensitive search tools that make information more accessible with minimal effort.

## Influencer Claims Haldi Ceremony Took Place Inside Agra Metro Train



A social media influencer has sparked a viral debate after claiming she witnessed a Haldi ceremony taking place inside an Agra Metro train. Divyata Upadhyay, who shared the video on her Instagram account, filmed the unusual event inside a cordoned-off coach of the metro. In the video, Upadhyay pointed out a yellow sparkly curtain hanging at the entrance of the coach, which was allegedly used to separate the designated area for the ceremony. While the exact details inside the coach remained unclear, the influencer claimed that a Haldi function was being organized inside the train.

Upadhyay, sharing her experience with her followers, commented, "Delhi Metro has crowds, we have haldi ceremonies." She explained that, during her journey, she noticed that there were only a few passengers aboard the train, which led her to believe that the authori-

ties may be renting out coaches for private events like these. "It seems like they are renting out coaches for functions," she said. However, the influencer also raised questions regarding the rules of the metro. She pointed out the apparent contradiction, saying, "I have also heard that no eatables are allowed inside the train." The notion of hosting a ceremonial event, which typically involves food and other activities, in a metro train has raised concerns about the logistics and the regulations of the metro system.

While it is unclear whether the event was officially sanctioned, the video sparked widespread attention online, with many users questioning the appropriateness of such an event taking place on public transport. The viral video has since garnered various reactions, with some expressing amusement, while others debated the potential impact on metro operations.

## Gill's Century, Shami's Five-Wicket Haul Guide India to Six-Wicket Win Over Bangladesh



Shubman Gill's brilliant century, coupled with Mohammed Shami's career-best five-wicket haul, led India to a comfortable six-wicket victory over Bangladesh in their ICC Champions Trophy opener in Dubai on Thursday. Gill remained

unbeaten on 101 off 129 balls, guiding India to a target of 229 with 3.3 overs to spare. Bangladesh, after opting to bat first, collapsed to 35 for 5 before Towhid Hridoy's fighting 100 (118 balls) lifted them to 228 all out. Shami was the

star with the ball, picking up five wickets for 53 runs and becoming the fastest Indian to reach 200 ODI wickets. India's chase was steady, with Rohit Sharma contributing 41 before falling to Taskin Ahmed. Gill's controlled innings,

alongside important middle-order contributions, ensured India's dominance as they finished at 231 for 4 in 46.3 overs, ahead of their high-stakes match against Pakistan on February 23.

## Rohit Sharma Becomes Second Fastest to Complete 11,000 ODI Runs



India's captain, Rohit Sharma, achieved another milestone on Thursday by becoming the second fastest batter to reach 11,000 runs in One-Day Internationals. The milestone came during India's chase of 229 against Bangladesh in their ICC Champions Trophy match, when

he hit Mustafizur Rahman for a boundary in the fourth over. Rohit reached the 11,000-run mark in 261 innings, making him the second fastest behind Virat Kohli, who did it in 222 innings. Rohit is now the fourth Indian and the 10th player overall to achieve this feat.

With 32 centuries and 52 half-centuries, Rohit averages nearly 50 in ODIs and is second on the list of most sixes hit in the format. He follows Sachin Tendulkar (18,246 runs) and is now placed behind Sourav Ganguly (11,363 runs) in the overall ODI run tally.

## Fakhar Zaman Ruled Out of ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Due to Injury



In a major blow to Pakistan's ICC Champions Trophy campaign, opener Fakhar Zaman has been ruled out of the remainder of the tournament due to a serious injury. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed the news on Thursday.

Zaman sustained a muscular strain while fielding against New Zealand on February 19 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium. The injury occurred when he sprinted to intercept a shot from New Zealand's Will Young and felt discomfort in his lower back. Despite initially walking off the field with the team physio, he later returned after New Zealand lost their second wicket. Zaman had made 24 off 41

balls before the injury. The PCB stated that Zaman would not travel with the squad to Dubai for their next match, and further medical assessments would be conducted. This injury comes after Saim Ayub was also ruled out of the tournament due to an ankle fracture.

## Mohammed Shami Becomes Fastest Indian to Take 200 ODI Wickets



Mohammed Shami etched his name in the record books by becoming the fastest Indian bowler to reach 200 One-Day International wickets during India's ICC Champions Trophy match against Bangladesh in Dubai on Thursday.

Shami achieved this remarkable milestone by taking three wickets in just his 103rd innings, surpassing Ajit Agarkar's previous record of 133 innings. Shami's achievement adds to his growing stature as one of India's

premier fast bowlers, and his five-wicket haul in the same match further solidified his position. Shami's ability to break records and perform consistently under pressure is a testament to his skill and commitment to the game.

## Mohammed Shami Becomes Fastest Indian to Take 200 ODI Wickets



India's 17-year-old tennis prodigy Manas Dhamne, alongside experienced players Ramkumar Ramanathan and SD Prajwal Dev, has been granted wild card entries into the singles main draw of the 2025 Bengaluru Open. The ATP Challenger 125 event will take place at the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA) courts in Cubbon Park from February 24 to March 2. Dhamne, a rising star in Indian tennis, recently won his first major title at the M15 Monastir in Tunisia and

made history by becoming the youngest player to win a first-round match at the junior Australian Open. Ramanathan, a key player for India's Davis Cup team, and Prajwal Dev, a seasoned ATP Challenger competitor, will bring their vast experience to the competition. In addition, Kriiish Tyagi and Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha will compete in the qualifiers, aiming for spots in the main draw. The doubles event will also feature 16 teams, including top-ranked Indian and international pairs.

## Champions League: Real Madrid and Man City Face Do-or-Die Clash

Defending Champions League holders Real Madrid are set for a crucial second-leg showdown against Manchester City in the round of 16. Madrid holds a slender 3-2 lead heading into the return fixture at home, making it a do-or-die situation for both teams. Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola initially suggested his side had just a 1% chance of progressing, but later backtracked, with Madrid's Carlo Ancelotti also dismissing the claim. This marks the fourth consecutive year that these two sides meet in the knockout stages, with the winner advancing to lift the prestigious trophy each time. The stakes are high, as both teams, past champions, face elimination before reaching the quarterfinals. Elsewhere, Paris Saint-Germain and Borussia Dortmund are in command-



ing positions with 3-0 leads over Brest and Sporting Lisbon, respectively. Juventus leads 2-1 going into their second leg against PSV Eindhoven.



## Chiranjeevi and Surekha Celebrate Wedding Anniversary on Flight to Dubai



Megastar Chiranjeevi and his wife Surekha recently celebrated their wedding anniversary in a unique and memorable way — on a flight to Dubai. The couple shared the special moment with close friends, including Akkineni Nagarjuna, Amala, Namrata Shirodkar, and others, who were also onboard. Chiranjeevi took to social media to share photos from the celebration, which quickly went viral. In his heartfelt post on 'X' (formerly Twitter), he expressed his deep affection for Surekha, calling her his "dream partner" and acknowledging how lucky he feels to have her by his side. He went on to say, "Her presence is a

constant source of comfort. A great inspiration. She is my motivator." The actor also expressed gratitude to his friends, family, fans, and well-wishers for their warm wishes on their special day. His post read, "Thank you, soulmate. Thank you to all my friends, fans, family, and well-wishers for your wonderful wishes! Bless you!" The beautiful photos of the couple and their friends from the flight have been widely shared, adding to the warmth and joy of their anniversary celebration. Chiranjeevi and Surekha's loving relationship continues to inspire many, showcasing a deep bond that has lasted for decades.



## Srileela Charges Rs. 1.75 Crore for Bollywood Debut, Rs. 3 Crore for Telugu Films

Srileela, who made her mark in Tollywood with the film Pelli Sandadi and became a popular face in the industry, is known for charging Rs. 3 crores for each Telugu film. However, for her Bollywood debut, the actress has reportedly agreed to a much lower remuneration of Rs. 1.75 crores. This adjustment in her fee is attributed to her first venture into Bollywood, where she likely accepted a lower pay to establish herself in the new industry. Srileela's career has

seen a mix of successes and challenges, with her pace slowing down due to some flops in between. However, she made a significant comeback with an item song in Pushpa 2, which brought in new opportunities and offers her way.

In contrast, Rashmika Mandanna, another popular actress, is reportedly charging Rs. 4 crores for her Bollywood film Chavaa and is receiving similar pay in the South film industry as well.



## Rakul Preet Singh: Comfort Over Luxury, Wedding Simplicity was the Key



Rakul Preet Singh, who recently married Bollywood producer Jackie Bhagnani, opened up about their decision to keep their wedding simple and intimate. The couple chose to have a private ceremony with only close friends and family in attendance. One of the unique features of the wedding was the no-phone rule, which sparked rumors that they were concerned about photos and videos leaking. However, Rakul clarified in a recent interview that there was no truth to this speculation. According to Rakul, the intention behind not allowing phones was

to ensure that the guests could fully enjoy the moment without distractions. The actress emphasized that for her, comfort was more important than luxury. She further explained that they wanted to keep the wedding personal and relaxed, focusing on the joy of the occasion rather than on extravagant celebrations. After the ceremony, Rakul shared the wedding photos with the media. On the work front, Rakul is gearing up for the release of her latest film, Mere Husband Ki Biwi, which is set to hit the screens on the 21st of this month.

## Did Netflix Actually Remove Urvashi Rautela's Scenes from 'Daku Maharaaj'?



Recent rumors suggested that Netflix had removed Urvashi Rautela's scenes from the Telugu-language action-drama Daaku Maharaaj ahead of its streaming release. However, these claims have been debunked by a reliable source, who clarified that the streaming platform will release the film exactly as it was shown in theaters. Netflix announced that Daaku Maharaaj, starring Nandamuri Balakrishna, would be available for streaming starting February 21, 2025. However, the release poster sparked confusion, as it featured actors like Bobby Deol, Pragya Jaiswal, and Shradha Srinath but omitted Urvashi Rautela, despite her having a significant role in the film. Fans quickly noticed the omission and expressed their surprise online. In response to the backlash, Netflix shared individual character slides later, which included Urvashi's photo, seemingly to address the earlier oversight and acknowledge her presence. Despite the controversy surrounding the poster, the film will stream in its entirety without any alterations, remaining true to the original theatrical cut. Daaku Maharaaj, directed by Bobby Kolli, also stars Rishi, Chandini Chowdary, Pradeep Rawat, and others. The film was released in theaters on January 12, 2025, and will now be available to watch on Netflix.

## Ibrahim Ali Khan's Debut Film 'Nadaanian' Set for March 7 Release on Netflix

Ibrahim Ali Khan, son of actors Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, is all set to make his debut in the film industry with Nadaanian, which will be released on Netflix on March 7, 2025. The romantic drama also stars Khushi Kapoor and is backed by Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital arm of Dharma Productions, helmed by filmmaker Karan Johar.

Directed by Shauna Gautam, Nadaanian follows the story of a South Delhi diva, a middle-class overachiever boy, and an outrageous plan that unravels as they navigate unexpected emotions. Ibrahim plays the role of Arjun Mehta, while Khushi Kapoor stars as Pia Jai Singh. The official synopsis reads: "Hire him as her fake boyfriend to save her squad. But when

real feelings crash their party, can they handle the mess of falling in love?" In addition to Ibrahim and Khushi, the film features an ensemble cast that includes Mahima Chaudhary, Suniel Shetty, Dia Mirza, and Jugal Hansraj. Karan Johar, along with Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra, serves as the producer.

