



**Weather Forecast**

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

# Bhatti Vikramarka: “We Can’t Control Education from Delhi” – Criticizes New UGC Rules

**Bhatti Vikramarka Criticizes UGC’s Top-Down Approach on Education**

**Deputy CM Warns Against Removing State’s Role in Education Policy**

**Mandatory Entrance Exams for UG Courses Could Harm Backward Students**



**TPN , Correspondent Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a fiery address at the National Convention on Draft UGC guidelines in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Bhatti Vikramarka, criticized the new rules proposed by the University Grants Commission (UGC). He emphasized that education is not a central government monopoly but a subject listed under the concurrent list, and therefore, the central government must consult with state governments. Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the education system cannot be controlled remotely from Delhi, stressing that policies must be designed in accordance with the unique circumstances and needs of each state.

He further pointed out that the new UGC guidelines are akin to a situation where “you must pay the bill, but you cannot order your food,” reflecting the restrictive and top-down nature of the proposed changes. The Deputy CM also expressed concerns about the implications of the UGC’s new directives. If implemented, he warned that states would only be able to participate in symbolic activities like ribbon-cutting ceremonies during the inauguration of new educational buildings. He highlighted the role Telangana is playing in the education sector, noting the state’s emphasis on establishing integrated residential schools and the Young India Skill University. Bhatti Vikramarka also raised

alarms over the UGC’s move to remove the state government’s role in the selection committees for university vice-chancellors and the change in the eligibility criteria for the position. This, he said, could have far-reaching consequences. Additionally, the mandatory entrance exams for undergraduate courses would make higher education more inaccessible to students from backward classes, he warned. Asserting the importance of state autonomy in the education sector, Bhatti Vikramarka urged the central government to reconsider these changes, highlighting that improper decisions could lead to serious repercussions for the educational landscape of the country.

# BioAsia 2025: A Global Forum for Healthcare Innovation

**Global Leaders to Convene at BioAsia 2025 for Healthcare Innovation**

**Telangana Positioned as a Hub for Life Sciences at BioAsia**

**BioAsia 2025 to Showcase AI-driven Healthcare and Personalized Medicine**



**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** BioAsia, Asia’s leading life sciences and health tech forum, is set to take place on February 25-26, 2025, in Hyderabad. This high-profile event will bring together industry leaders, policymakers, startups, and MSMEs to drive transformative innovation in healthcare. With a focus on advancing life sciences, AI-driven healthcare, clinical research, and personalized medicine, BioAsia 2025 aims to strengthen India’s position as a global leader in the healthcare and life sciences sectors. The event will feature notable dignitaries including Telangana Chief Minister Mr. A. Revanth Reddy, Hon’ble Governor of Queensland Dr. Jeannette Young, G20 Sherpa Mr. Amitabh Kant, and Hon’ble Minister of Industry and Supplies, Government of India, Mr. Piyush Goyal. They will be joined by top

executives from renowned global organizations such as Amgen, MSD, and Medtronic. Notable speakers include Robert A. Bradway, Chairman & CEO of Amgen; Prof. Patrick Tan, Executive Director of Genome Institute of Singapore; Dr. Ken Washington, CTO of Medtronic; and Dr. Boris Stoffel, Managing Director of Miltenyi Biotec. The CEO Conclave on February 25 will focus on life sciences opportunities and challenges, featuring leaders such as Dr. S. Somanath, former

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# BJP Leader Bandi Sanjay Accuses KCR of Betrayal Over Krishna Water Allocation

**Bandi Sanjay Slams KCR for Betraying Telangana Over Krishna Water**

**BJP Leader Demands Apology from Congress and BRS for SLBC Project Delay**

**Political Tensions Escalate as BRS and Congress Face Allegations from BJP**



**TPN , Correspondent Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a recent statement, Union Minister Bandi Sanjay accused Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) of betraying the state by forming an alliance with Andhra Pradesh over the Krishna river water allocation. Sanjay alleged that KCR, by siding with Andhra Pradesh, has caused injustice to the people of Telangana. He further claimed that both the Congress and BRS parties are responsible for the delay in the construction of the SLBC project, a significant water project for Telangana, and called for an apology from both parties to the people of Telangana for their negligence. Sanjay emphasized that it was the BJP that raised the issue of injustice over Krishna water distribution, highlighting the impor-

tance of securing Telangana’s rightful share of the river’s water. The BJP leader also criticized the BRS party for failing to present suitable candidates for the upcoming MLC elections, questioning the party’s commitment to the people of the state. Accusing the BRS and Congress of being “dark allies,” Sanjay took a dig at KCR’s alleged compromise with Congress in Delhi, referring to past controversies including the Kaleshwaram project, drug cases, and phone tapping. He further alleged that KCR had struck a secret deal with Congress to thwart BJP’s progress in Telangana. The political tension in the state continues to rise as the parties engage in accusations and counter-accusations over key issues.

# CM Revanth Reddy to Lay Foundation for Indiramma Houses Tomorrow in Narayanapeta

**CM Revanth Reddy to Launch Indiramma Houses Foundation Tomorrow**

**Indiramma Houses: CM Revanth Reddy Begins First Phase in Narayanapeta**

**Telangana Government Initiates Construction of 72,045 Indiramma Houses**



**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a significant move for the people of Telangana, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will lay the foundation for the much-anticipated Indiramma Houses tomorrow. These homes were a key promise in the Congress party’s election manifesto, aimed at providing affordable housing for the underprivileged. After thorough screening, the government has finalized the list of eligible beneficiaries for the project. During his visit to Narayana-

peta district, the Chief Minister will perform the groundbreaking ceremony at Appakapalle in Narayanapeta Mandal. This marks the beginning of the first phase of construction for the Indiramma Houses. A total of 72,045 houses have been approved across the state, and the foundation-laying

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# Harish Rao Criticizes CM Revanth for Ignoring Telangana’s Water Needs

**Rao Accuses CM Revanth of Neglecting Telangana’s Water Issues**

**Illegal Water Diversion: Harish Rao Slams Andhra for Excess Water Usage**

**CM Revanth’s Inaction on Water Crisis Criticized by Harish Rao**



**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a sharp critique, former Minister Harish Rao slammed Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for his failure to secure water for Telangana, while allowing Andhra Pradesh to take more than its share. Harish Rao questioned Revanth’s commitment to the state, asking if he prioritized Andhra Pradesh’s water usage over Telangana’s needs. He accused the Chief Minister of turning a blind eye

to the illegal diversion of water from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh. Harish Rao pointed out that Andhra Pradesh is allowed only 666 TMC (Thousand Million Cubic feet) of water, but has already used 657 TMC, leaving just 9 TMC. Meanwhile, Telangana is entitled to 343 TMC of water but has

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# Former CM KCR Visits AIG Hospital for Regular Checkup



**Former CM KCR Visits AIG Hospital for Routine Checkup**

**KCR Undergoes Regular Checkup at AIG Hospital in Hyderabad**

**KCR’s Hospital Visit Sparks Interest Amid Political Plans**

**TPN , Correspondent**

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a big development, former Chief Minister and BRS leader K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) visited the AIG Hospital in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, on Thursday morning for a regular checkup. According to BRS sources, this visit was part of his routine medical care. It is notable that KCR had previously suffered an injury at his farmhouse shortly after the assembly elections, resulting in a broken bone. Following the injury, KCR underwent surgery and took full rest for several

months, distancing himself from active politics for almost a year. Recently, KCR addressed a gathering at his Eravalli farmhouse, stating that he was closely monitoring the actions of the Congress government. He also revealed plans to hold a BRS party meeting at the end of this month to expose the failures of the current government. This visit to the hospital, though routine, has sparked interest among political circles as KCR’s health and political activities continue to be closely watched.

## Telangana Government Extends Kaleshwaram Commission Deadline

Telangana Extends Kaleshwaram Commission Deadline Until April 30

**Kaleshwaram Commission's Inquiry Deadline Extended by Telangana Govt**

**Justice PC Ghosh Commission to Continue Investigation Into Kaleshwaram Scheme**

TPN , Correspondent  
Hyderabad , Feb 21 : The Telangana government has made a significant decision by extending the deadline for the Kaleshwaram Commission. The state government had previously set up the Justice PC Ghosh Commission to investigate irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme, which was carried out



during the previous BRS government's tenure. The extension was announced as Justice PC Ghosh is scheduled to visit Telangana on February 23.

The new order from the Telangana Water Resources Department extends the commission's deadline to April 30. The commission is expected to complete the remaining investigations and cross-examinations during this period. Reports suggest that senior engineers, officials, contractors, and some prominent leaders from the previous government may be

called for questioning. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme, which was a key project during the BRS government's rule, faced major issues, with the Medigadda Barrage collapsing after construction. Following the Congress government's formation, a one-member commission led by Justice PC Ghosh was established to conduct a full-scale inquiry into the incident. The ongoing investigation continues to attract significant political and public attention.

## Revanth Reddy Orders CID Probe into Rajalingamurthy Murder Case

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 21 : Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has reportedly initiated an inquiry into the brutal murder of Rajalingamurthy, which occurred in Bhupalapalli. The CM is said to have sought details from senior officials regarding the case and may direct the CID (Crime Investigation Department) to take over the investigation.

The murder, initially linked to BRS leader Gandra Venkataramana Reddy, was later determined by the police to be a result of land disputes. The police have registered an FIR against five individuals, including Renukuntla Sanjeev, Pingali Sri-manth, More Kumar, Kotturi Kumar, and Renukuntla Komurayya, based on a complaint filed by the deceased's wife. These suspects are currently under investigation. Meanwhile, former CM KCR and Minister Harish Rao had previously raised allegations of corruption related to the Medigadda Barrage, suggesting that Rajalin-



gamurthy's murder was connected to his involvement in exposing these issues. However, the police have not confirmed these claims, and investigations continue. This case has garnered significant political attention, with accusations flying between opposition and ruling parties. The outcome of the CID investigation is eagerly awaited to uncover the truth behind the murder.

## TPCC to Hold Key Executive Meeting on February 23

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 21 : The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) will hold a comprehensive executive meeting at the Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad on February 23. The meeting will be chaired by TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud. This crucial session will see the participation of several prominent leaders, including Meenakshi

Natarajan, the newly appointed in-charge of state Congress affairs, CM Revanth Reddy, Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, and AICC secretaries, who will attend as special guests.

The meeting will include MPs, MLAs, MLCs, DCC Presidents, PAC, PEC members, Vice Presidents, General Secretaries, chairper-

sons of affiliated organizations, corporation chairpersons, and candidates who contested elections at the constituency level. The discussion will focus primarily on the state and national political strategies and organizational issues of the Congress party, with a strong emphasis on shaping future political directions in Telangana.



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## BioAsia 2025: A Global Forum for Healthcare Innovation

ISRO Chairman, and Dr. Krishna Ella, Chairman & MD of Bharat Biotech.

Telangana has become a significant hub for biotechnology, medical research, and pharmaceuticals, making it an ideal venue for BioAsia 2025. The event will showcase the state's role in fostering industry growth, cutting-edge research, and attracting global investments in life scienc-

es. Government leaders, including Mr. Sridhar Babu and Mr. Jayesh Ranjan, have expressed their excitement about BioAsia 2025's potential to shape the future of healthcare. This forum will serve as a valuable platform for collaboration, innovation, and investment, propelling India further into the spotlight as a global leader in life sciences.

## CM Revanth Reddy to Lay Foundation for Indiramma Houses Tomorrow in Narayanapeta

process will begin for all of them tomorrow.

As part of the government's commitment to ensuring that every family has a home, the scheme offers financial assistance to beneficiaries. The state will provide a full subsidy of Rs. 5 lakh for constructing each house. Additional-

ly, beneficiaries will receive Rs. 1 lakh directly into their accounts when they begin building the basement, supporting them in their journey to owning a home. This initiative reflects the government's dedication to improving the living conditions of Telangana's people.

## Harish Rao Criticizes CM Revanth for Ignoring Telangana's Water Needs

only received 220 TMC, with a shortage of 123 TMC. Despite this, Harish Rao claimed that Andhra Pradesh is continuing to illegally divert water from critical reservoirs like Nagarjuna Sagar and Srisail-

am, which only have 100 TMC combined. He demanded to know how CM Revanth Reddy plans to meet Telangana's water requirements under these circumstances.

## Nampally Court Grants Bail to Three Accused in Phone Tapping Case

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 21 : In a significant development, the Nampally Court has granted bail to three accused in the high-profile phone tapping case. The accused—Vamsikrishna, Santosh Kumar, and Parashuramul—who were previously lodged in Chanchalguda Jail, have been released on bail. The court has set a bond amount of 20,000 rupees and instructed the accused to submit two sureties.

This ruling comes after the accused's lawyer, Lakshman, submitted an interim stay order from the High Court to the Nampally Court, allowing them bail. The case revolves around allegations of phone tapping, where real estate businessman



accused for their role in the illegal activity.

The investigation has revealed that the accused used farmer documents to buy SIM cards and made threatening calls to Goud, demanding money. Harish Rao and Radhakrishnan Rao have been named as key figures in the case, with Harish Rao listed as Accused 1 and Radhakrishnan Rao as Accused 2.

Meanwhile, the Telangana High Court has placed a stay on the investigation until March 3, after Harish Rao

and Radhakrishnan Rao filed petitions to quash the case. The court has also instructed Panjagutta Police to halt further investigation until that date.

## Uttam Kumar Reddy Accuses BRS of Spreading Falsehoods to Defame Congress Government

TPN , Correspondent

Hyderabad , Feb 21 : Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt N Uttam Kumar Reddy accused the BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samithi) leadership of spreading false claims to defame the Congress government and mislead the public. In a press conference held at Jala Soudha, Reddy criticized the BRS government for failing to protect Telangana's water rights and causing massive damage to the state's irrigation sector.

Reddy pointed out that during the BRS regime, the irrigation sector was riddled with scams. He highlighted how the Kaleshwaram project, which cost over Rs 1 lakh crore, was plagued by faulty designs and poor maintenance. He also emphasized that critical irrigation projects like Palamuru-Rangareddy and Si-



tarama Lift Irrigation had seen huge investments without delivering results, with many projects left incomplete. Reddy accused the BRS government of borrowing high-interest loans that increased Telangana's financial burden while failing to achieve significant agricultural benefits. He further criticized the BRS for enabling Andhra Pradesh's

excessive water withdrawals from the Krishna River, thus depriving Telangana of its rightful share.

The Congress leader also exposed how the BRS government had failed to act when Andhra Pradesh occupied crucial parts of the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam and illegally released water, harming Telangana's irrigation needs. He assured that the Congress government would prioritize the completion of pending projects and fight for Telangana's

rightful water share. Reddy also vowed that under the Congress government, Telangana's water rights would be protected, and necessary actions would be taken to monitor illegal withdrawals from the Krishna and Godavari rivers. He assured the public that Telangana's future in terms of water security would be safeguarded.

## MLC Kavitha's Strong Criticism on SC Classification and Dalit Issues

**Kavitha Slams CM Revanth Over SC Classification Delay**  
**Kavitha Criticizes Government on Dalit Welfare and Ambedkar Tribute**  
**MLC Kavitha Demands Action on SC Classification, Accuses Govt of Betrayal**



Kavitha also lashed out at Revanth Reddy for allegedly using SC Classification as a political tool to deceive Dalit communities. She accused the CM of making empty promises related to job opportunities and financial benefits without taking any substantial action. Kavitha expressed her frustration over the delay in fulfilling these promises, even after six months had passed since the Supreme Court ruling. Furthermore, Kavitha expressed concern over the financial mismanagement of the state under Revanth Reddy's leadership. She accused the current government of failing to keep its promises to Dalit families, particularly in relation to the Dalit Bandhu scheme, where funds for the empowerment of Dalits had not been adequately released. Kavitha demanded that the funds be disbursed before the state budget was introduced.

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a significant press statement made at her residence in Hyderabad on Thursday, MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha raised serious allegations against Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the Congress government regarding the SC Classification issue. Kavitha claimed that neither CM Revanth Reddy nor Prime Minister Modi had made any meaningful contributions toward advancing the SC Classification process. She pointed out that despite the Supreme Court's verdict allowing for classification, there had been no action from the state government to implement it. Kavitha demanded that the government immediately implement the Shamin Akhtar Commission's report on SC Classification.

She also strongly criticized the government for neglecting Dr. Ambedkar's legacy. Kavitha claimed that the BRS government had not honored the 125-foot Ambedkar statue, located in the state, by failing to pay respects to it on important occasions like Ambedkar Jayanti. She threatened that if the government did not act, they would "break the gates" to pay homage to Ambedkar themselves. Despite these criticisms, Kavitha expressed confidence in BRS's future, assuring party leaders and supporters that the party would return to power in the coming years. She encouraged the public and party members not to be worried about the current political climate.

## CPI(M) Demands Cancellation of Dumping Yard in Pyanagar



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In Sangareddy district, the local people are demanding the cancellation of the new dumping yard that is proposed to be set up by the GHMC in Pyanagar. Under the leadership of CPI(M), a massive rally was conducted from K.K. Bhavan to the Collectorate, followed by a protest in front of the Collectorate. Thousands of people from Gummadidla, Nallavalli, and Pyanagar participated in the protest. CPI(M) leaders, including Chukka Ramulu, strongly criticized the decision to set up the dumping yard, as it was taken unilaterally without considering the local people's views.

They argued that the area is rich in green farms and crops, which supply vegetables to Hyderabad. The authorities ignored the environmental concerns, including the presence of forests and an Air Force station nearby, while planning the location for the dumping yard. They also highlighted that 40,000 people from 17 villages are vehemently opposing the dumping yard, and people from different areas have been protesting for the last 16 days. Despite this, the district collector has not responded to their concerns. CPI(M) members also expressed their frustration with the police pres-

ence in the area, which they claimed was used to intimidate the protesting public. The protesters are demanding the immediate removal of the police picket and a halt to the construction of the dumping yard. They also urged the government to survey the land in Pyanagar and rethink their decision. If the government fails to address the issue, the protesters vowed to escalate the movement to Indira Park. CPI(M) leaders emphasized that they will continue their struggle until their demands are met and assured that they would not back down in the face of repression.

## Konda Surekha Highlights Importance of Biodiversity Conservation at National Conference

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Minister Konda Surekha attended the National Biodiversity Conference 2025, organized by the Telangana Biodiversity Board at Kanja Shanti Vanam, Rangareddy District, on February 20, 21, and 22. The three-day conference aimed at promoting biodiversity conservation, research, and education, with the participation of students, young scientists, and environmental experts. Minister Surekha emphasized the urgent need for everyone to actively engage in biodiversity conservation, highlighting that protecting the environment, water, and land is crucial for the well-being of future generations. She underlined



that the conference would be beneficial for research, studies, and efforts related to biodiversity conservation. Telangana, known for its diverse natural habitats, forests, wetlands, plants, and wildlife, was cited by the minister as a region rich in biodiversity. She stressed the responsibility of preserving this ecological bal-

ance, pointing out that human activities have contributed significantly to the destruction of species across the globe. According to her, the extinction of a species means the loss of genetic wealth, which is irreplaceable. Minister Surekha called for collective efforts in safeguarding biodiversity, recognizing the contribution of various state governments and organizations involved in this cause. She urged the young participants at the conference to work diligently for the preservation of biodiversity, emphasizing the importance of collaborative conservation efforts at local, national, and global levels.

## Minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy Condemns Murder of Rajalingam Murthy

**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy strongly condemned the murder of social activist Rajalingam Murthy, calling it a result of the political environment fostered by the TRS over the past 15 years. He accused the BRS (TRS) party of nurturing a culture of political violence, leading to Rajalingam Murthy's killing. Rajalingam, who had previously filed a case in court against KCR and five others for their involvement in the Kaleshwaram Project, had been vocal about corruption within the BRS government. Minister Komatireddy held the ruling party responsible for the murder, stating that it

was an attempt to silence Rajalingam for questioning their corrupt practices. He pointed out that Rajalingam's family, including his daughter and wife, had accused KCR and KTR of orchestrating the killing. Komatireddy also referred to past incidents of political violence, including the murder of an MPDO in Warangal and attacks on officials like the District Collector in Kodangal. He alleged that such incidents were orchestrated by BRS leaders, aiming to prevent development in Telangana. The minister demanded a fast-track investigation and immediate arrests by the CID within 24 hours. He urged the government to take this murder seriously and ensure justice.



In his address, Komatireddy emphasized the necessity of protecting individuals fighting against corruption and declared that his party would stand by those struggling for justice. He also questioned the BRS leadership, particularly KCR, about their involvement in political killings and corruption.

## Former MLA Gandra Venkata Ramana Reddy Condemns Rajalinga Murthy's Murder in Bhupalpally



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Former MLA Gandra Venkata Ramana Reddy held a press conference at the Telangana Bhavan, strongly condemning the murder of Rajalinga Murthy in Bhupalpally. Reddy stated that the incident should not be associated with the BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samithi) party or its leadership, including Chief Minister KCR and Minister Harish Rao, as the Congress party had been wrongly linking them to the crime without understanding the facts. He emphasized that

the murder had occurred due to a local land dispute, and an FIR had been filed to that effect. Responding to accusations from Rajalinga Murthy's wife, Reddy claimed that the allegations against him were influenced by pressure from certain individuals. He also pointed out that Congress leaders were demanding a CB-CID inquiry into the case, while he clarified that they would have no objections if the investigation was handed over to the CBI. Reddy further mentioned that Rajalinga Murthy had filed a

case against Mategadd, and the BRS was currently handling the legal proceedings. He noted that the deceased had been involved in land disputes and had a rowdy sheet against him. Accusing Congress leaders of trying to influence the investigation by making baseless allegations against the BRS, Reddy claimed that the Congress was known for playing political games over murders. He also criticized Minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy for making baseless remarks about other political leaders, citing an instance where Komatireddy accused Nalgonda Municipal Chairman of murder. Reddy pointed out that Vemula Veeresh, the MLA from Nakirekal, who was now in the Congress party, had been falsely accused by Komatireddy. Reddy concluded by urging the police to conduct an impartial investigation and ensure strict punishment for the guilty, and advised Congress leaders to refrain from engaging in malicious political tactics.

## Minister Sithaakka Slams BJP for Spreading Lies and Hindering Development



**TPN , Correspondent**  
**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Minister Sithaakka launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led central government during her campaign for Congress MLC candidate Narendra Reddy in the joint Adilabad district. Speaking to the media, she accused the BJP of focusing only on spreading lies and sowing discord among communities rather than contributing to real development.

Sithaakka criticized the BJP for its failure to keep promises, especially the commitment to provide 2 crore private-sector jobs annually, which she said had been forgotten. She also pointed out the steep rise in gas cylinder prices from ₹400 to ₹1200 under the BJP, contrasting it with the Congress government's effort in the state, where gas is provided to people at ₹500. Furthermore, she emphasized Congress's achieve-

ment of filling 55,000 government jobs in the first year of its rule. Highlighting the BJP's negligence towards the development of Adilabad, Sithaakka expressed her concern over the central government's interference with forest laws, which she claimed would harm the local tribals. She expressed anger over attempts to send tribal people out of the forests under the guise of 'sanctuary' regula-

tions and criticized the BJP for valuing forest animals more than human lives. Sithaakka concluded her speech by urging the people of the state to support Congress's welfare schemes and elect Narendra Reddy to ensure progress in the region. She appealed to voters to bless the Congress government, which has prioritized development and welfare.



## Former Minister Vemula Criticizes Revanth Reddy's Government Over LRS Scheme

TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Former Minister and MLA Vemula has strongly criticized the Congress government led by Revanth Reddy for its handling of the Land Regularization Scheme (LRS), accusing it of betraying the public's trust. Vemula claimed that Revanth Reddy's government had developed a habit of going back on promises made to the people, especially in governance. He accused the Congress of exploiting the public under the pretext of LRS. Vemula reminded that when the BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samithi) party introduced LRS, Congress leaders had promised the public that the scheme would be implemented free of cost. However, he stated that now the Congress government was planning to impose a financial burden of approximately 20,000 crores through LRS by charging up to one lakh rupees per plot. Vemula pointed out that 25 lakh applications had been received for regularization, meaning LRS would affect 25 lakh citizens. He demanded that the



Congress government honor its earlier election promises by implementing LRS without charging any fees, as they had committed during their election campaign. Vemula further criticized the Congress for changing its stance once in power, accusing them of using the scheme as a means to exploit the public financially. He also called for the resignation of key leaders, including CM Revanth Reddy, Uttam Kumar Reddy, Sitaakka, Komatireddy, and Deputy CM Batti Vikramarka if they fail to implement LRS for free as promised. Vemula warned that failure to do so would result in public repercussions.

## TPCC President MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud Holds Emotional Reunion with Teachers from Nirmala Hridaya High School

TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** TPCC (Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee) President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud recently had an emotional and nostalgic reunion with the teachers who taught him from LKG to 5th grade at Nirmala Hridaya High School. The meeting, held with great warmth, provided an opportunity for Mahesh Kumar Goud to reconnect with his childhood mentors and share fond memories from his school days. During the heartfelt gathering, Mahesh Kumar Goud spent time reminiscing with his former teachers, recalling moments from his early years of education. The event served as an emotional trip down memory lane for the TPCC President, as he expressed his gratitude to the teachers who played a significant role in shaping his formative years. The interaction was not just a chance for personal connection but also a celebration of the impactful work



educators do in the lives of their students. Mahesh Kumar Goud thanked the teachers for their dedication and contribution to his personal and academic growth, highlighting the importance of education in nurtur-

ing future leaders. The meeting was a beautiful reminder of the lasting bond between teachers and students, fostering a sense of community and shared history.

## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Invited to Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Kumbhabhisheka Ceremony



TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a significant gesture, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

was personally invited to the grand Kumbhabhisheka Mahotsav of Sri Sri Sudarshan Lakshmi Narasimha Divya

Swarna Vimana Gopuram. The invitation was extended by a delegation comprising Government Whip Beeral Iyallayya, Shailaja Ramayyar (Principal Secretary, Department of Endowments), the Executive Officer of Yadagirigutta Temple, and the temple priests. The event, which holds great religious and cultural significance, is set to be a monumental occasion for devotees. Konda Surekha, the Minister for Endowments, Forest, and Environment, was also

part of the delegation that made the invitation. The Kumbhabhisheka Mahotsav is expected to attract a large number of devotees and dignitaries, celebrating the divine significance of the temple's spiritual and architectural transformation. The temple's upcoming event will showcase its rich heritage, and the invitation to CM Revanth Reddy underscores the importance of the occasion and the temple's status as a key religious and cultural landmark in Telangana.

## Government Plans to Increase Liquor Prices by 20%, Shocking Consumers



TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** In a move that is likely to hit alcohol consumers hard, the state government is reportedly planning to raise the prices of various types of liquor, including brandy, whiskey, rum, wine, and foreign scotch. The government's Price Fixation Committee has reportedly recommended an increase of 15% to 20% on liquor prices, and a formal announcement is expected soon. This decision comes after the state government had already imposed a burden on liquor lovers by raising beer prices. The price of cheap liquor in the state has skyrocketed, with a 180 ml quarter of cheap liquor now costing ₹110. Consumers are anticipating an additional ₹20 hike on this price. Meanwhile, neighboring states have managed to control the prices of cheap liquor by reducing excise duties and VAT taxes, making alcohol cheaper. In

Karnataka, for example, a 90 ml tetra pack of cheap liquor is sold for ₹45, while in Maharashtra, a quarter bottle of desi liquor is available for ₹35. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh, fulfilling an election promise, is selling a quarter of cheap liquor for ₹99. As a result, liquor enthusiasts in Telangana are demanding that the state government reduce excise duties on cheap liquor to match the lower prices in neighboring states. They argue that this would also help curb the production and sale of illicit liquor (Gudumba) and reduce the number of NDPL (Non-Duty Paid Liquor) cases. The government is reportedly preparing to increase prices across all types of alcohol, from cheap to medium and premium brands, including imported foreign liquor. The Price Fixation Committee's report suggests an increase of 15% to 20%, and an official decision may be announced soon.

## BRS Corporators Withdrawing from Standing Committee Elections

TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** BRS corporators are stepping back from the upcoming Standing Committee elections. Two BRS corporators had filed their nominations last week to contest the elections, but with insufficient support to win, they are now looking at withdrawing from the race. Today, BRS corporator from Addagutta, Prasanna Lakshmi, withdrew her nomination. With her withdrawal, the number of nominations for the Standing Committee elections has been reduced to 16. If another corporator withdraws, the

Standing Committee elections will be uncontested. Tomorrow is the last day for nomination withdrawals. By noon tomorrow, Kookatpally BRS corporator, Jupalli Sathyanarayana, is expected to withdraw his nomination, which will lead to a unanimous election for the committee. After the elections, for the first time, Congress corporators will be a part of the Standing Committee. Following the unanimous election, seven Congress corporators and eight MIM corporators will be part of the GHMC Standing Committee.



## Telangana Women's Congress Celebrates Victory with Grand Festivities

TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Telangana State Women's Congress achieved a significant milestone, clinching the first position in the country with over 100,150 memberships. To mark this achievement, the celebration at Gandhi Bhavan was nothing short of grand, with fireworks, band music, and women singing and dancing in joy. Under the dynamic leadership of Sunitha Rao, who has always championed women's empowerment, the Women's Congress has grown stronger and more united. She has been instrumental in rallying women from all walks of life, bringing them together to make Telangana's Women's Congress the top-ranking party in terms of membership across India. Sunitha Rao, in her address, humbly stated that this vic-



tory was not hers alone but a collective achievement. Every woman who contributed to this success, through their memberships, was a part of this triumph. She emphasized that these memberships were not merely numbers but a result of hard work, determination, and unity. She also acknowledged the support and encouragement from fellow leaders and mem-

bers. Sunitha consistently motivated district leaders to give women a place in every membership drive, and this collective effort has led to the victory. The event saw enthusiastic participation from women across districts, with several district presidents, committee members, and block chairpersons in attendance. Certificates were distributed

to top performers, and the atmosphere was filled with joy as the Women's Congress celebrated its success with band music, fireworks, and traditional dances. This event highlighted the growing strength and unity of Telangana's Women's Congress, which is now working tirelessly to ensure the empowerment of women in the state.

## MLA Vakiti Srihari Accused of Corruption: Letter to CM Revanth from Maktal Congress Workers



TPN , Correspondent

**Hyderabad , Feb 21 :** Maktal Congress workers have reportedly written a letter to CM Revanth Reddy, accusing the ruling Congress MLA Vakiti Srihari of corruption. The letter raises questions about how Srihari, who had claimed to be financially struggling and had taken loans before the elections, is now able to purchase another house near his own for Rs. 1.5 crore. The letter further mentions

that Srihari owns 100 square yards of land near Lahari Convention, five plots in Hyderabad, and ten acres near Bhutpur. It also asks how his family members now have five cars. The workers allege that a person named Nagaraju, who worked in a wine shop, has mysteriously become wealthy after Srihari's victory. The letter also raises concerns about Srihari's associates, who reportedly belong to the Gowda community and are allegedly extorting money from local liquor traders. The workers warn that if Srihari is appointed as a minister, it would lead to the destruction of Maktal. Further details regarding these allegations are yet to be fully revealed.

## Nalgonda Police Arrest Most Wanted Criminal, Mohammad Asraf Khan, of Dhar Gang

TPN, Correspondent

**Nalgonda, Feb 21** : In a major breakthrough, Nalgonda district police arrested Mohammad Asraf Khan, the gang leader of the notorious interstate criminal group, Dhar Gang, and recovered ₹25 lakhs in cash along with a vehicle. Asraf Khan, the prime suspect in numerous theft cases across the country, was captured under the supervision of Nalgonda SP Sharath Chandra Pawar IPS, with special teams formed to track him down. The case dates back to February 9, 2025, when a private travel bus, traveling from Chennai to Hyderabad, was targeted by the Dhar Gang. The bus had stopped for breakfast at Poojitha Hotel in Narkatpally, where the criminals stole ₹25 lakhs in cash from a passenger's bag. The victim, Boyina Venkateshwarlu from Nellore, had the money in the bag after selling agricultur-



al land in Hyderabad. The theft was reported to the Narkatpally police, leading to an investigation. Through CCTV footage and coordination with police teams in Madhya Pradesh, it was found that the criminals were part of the Dhar Gang, known for targeting travelers on highways. With the help of Madhya Pradesh police, special teams arrested Asraf Khan in the Manwar Police Station area of Dhar district and

recovered the stolen money and a vehicle. Asraf Khan has been involved in several criminal activities, including thefts in Pune (Maharashtra), Indore, and Sulurupeta in Andhra Pradesh. Three accomplices remain at large, and police are making efforts to apprehend them. Nalgonda SP praised the efforts of the officers involved in cracking the case and announced rewards for the team.

## Minister Konda Surekha Unveils 'Man Manyankonda' Video on Temple's Significance

TPN, Correspondent

**Hyderabad, Feb 21** : Telangana's Minister for Endowments and Religious Affairs, Konda Surekha, unveiled the video 'Man Manyankonda' highlighting the unique significance and grandeur of the Manmyankonda Sri Lakshmi Venkateshwara Swamy temple, located in Mahabubnagar district, on Thursday. The video, conceptualized and directed by renowned filmmaker Allani Sridhar, showcases the temple's rich heritage and the annual Brahmotsavams. The video, produced under the banner of Film Media Productions and presented by Sai Teja, was launched by Minister Konda Surekha at the State Secretariat in a grand ceremony. The video captures the divine and cultural essence of Manyankonda, and reflects the strong belief among the Telugu people that visiting



this temple is a blessing. Minister Surekha emphasized the importance of promoting the state's rich temple culture and history. She said that the government is committed to spreading awareness about the various temples in Telangana, as part of its efforts to preserve and celebrate their cultural and spiritual heritage. She also expressed her desire for more films and documentaries that inspire religious and ethical values in society.

She praised the efforts of Allani Sridhar for his dedication in producing the video and personally honored him with a shawl as a gesture of appreciation. Minister Surekha highlighted the growing number of devotees visiting Telangana's temples as a clear indication of the increasing popularity and recognition of the state's religious heritage, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

## Sangareddy Police Bust Inter-State Gang Involved in Palladium Carbon Theft



TPN, Correspondent

**Sangareddy, Feb 21** : Sangareddy district police have successfully apprehended a gang responsible for stealing Palladium Carbon from pharmaceutical companies, with the total value of stolen goods amounting to approximately ₹4.5 crore. The police operation, conducted by the Sadasivpet and CISCO police teams, led to the arrest of six criminals on February 19th. The team recovered 96 kilograms of Palladium Carbon, which was stolen from Arihant Life Sciences, Yavapur village.

The arrested individuals include Allam Sambasiva (43), a private employee, and Prasad Saheb Shitole (24), a JCB driver, among others. Sambasiva, who had extensive knowledge of Palladium Carbon's value, orchestrated the thefts with his gang. The group had carried out multiple thefts in the past, including stealing Palladium Carbon from companies in Gummadidala, Bollaram, Bidar, and other locations.

The police investigation revealed that Sambasiva had previously worked in pharmaceutical companies and used his connections to gather inside information on valuable materials. The gang would then steal and sell the Palladium Carbon.

The SP emphasized the importance of tightening security measures in industrial sectors, particularly pharmaceutical companies. He advised installing CCTV cameras, conducting regular audits, and hiring only verified employees. The police team was commended for their efforts in solving the case, with rewards being announced for the officers involved in the operation.

## Government Should Acknowledge Siripuram Yadaya's Sacrifice: Speakers Demand

TPN, Correspondent

**Hyderabad, Feb 21** : A meeting was organized by the Telangana State Padmashali Sangham Siripuram Yadaya Memorial Committee at Gun Park, near the Telangana Martyrs' Memorial, under the leadership of Ganji Srinivas, Sangishetty Jagadeesh, and others. The event was presided over by CH Bhadravaharu, the president of the World Environmental Organization and Telangana movement activist.

During the event, TPCC General Secretary Addanki Dayakar stated that Siripuram Yadaya, on February 20, 2010, sacrificed his life by setting himself on fire for the cause of Telangana, just like the martyr Bhagat Singh in In-

dia's freedom struggle. He is remembered as the true hero and the real Bhagat Singh of Telangana. BC Welfare Association National President Jadula Srinivas Goud emphasized that the sacrifices made by BCs for Telangana statehood are not properly recognized. He expressed disappointment over the absence of senior government officials at the event and announced plans for grand celebrations of Siripuram Yadaya's birth and death anniversaries in the coming year across all districts and constituencies. Senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao also expressed regret over the lack of a statue for Siripuram Yadaya and pledged to take responsibility for installing his statue at



Osmania University. Former Rajya Sabha member Rapolu Anand Bhaskar lauded Yadaya's efforts and sacrifices, calling him the true hero who awakened the Telangana society.

The event saw participation from various leaders, including Raj Kumar, Addanki Dayakar, Jagadeesh, Vikram Goud, and others. All speakers stressed the need to honor Siripuram Yadaya's legacy.

## 64 Kilos of Ganja Seized, One Arrested



TPN, Correspondent

**Hyderabad, Feb 21** : Excise police have seized 64 kilograms of ganja being illegally transported in a Tata Safari vehicle near the Andhra-Odisha border forest area. Based on prior information, the Kothagudem Excise Task Force and the Manuguru Excise Station teams conducted checks near the Rathangutta Urban Park in Manuguru.

During the inspection, they found the ganja hidden inside the Tata Safari vehicle. The total weight of the seized ganja was confirmed to be 64 kilograms. Excise officials also seized the vehicle, a mobile phone, and arrested one individual. The seized ganja is valued at Rs. 19.10 lakh, according to Assistant Excise Superintendent Karam Chand. The arrested individual has been identified as Mohammad Sameer, a resident of Kerala.

## Farmers in Mahabubabad Wait in Long Queues for Urea

TPN, Correspondent

**Mahabubabad, Feb 21** : Farmers across the state are facing severe hardships due to the unavailability of urea. With the ongoing paddy sowing season, many farmers are desperately searching for urea to ensure proper crop growth. Due to insufficient stock, they have to stand in long queues, sometimes stretching for kilometers, to get the essential fertilizer, leading to much frustration and anxiety among them.

Recently, in the Narsimhulapet mandal of Mahabubabad district, farmers were seen waiting in long lines at urea distribution centers. They expressed their dissatisfaction over the inadequate supply of urea at PACS (Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies). Farmers voiced concerns, stating that they were being given urea in limited quantities, which was insufficient for their needs. They questioned how they could expect a good harvest under such conditions, urging



for a more reliable and sufficient supply to ensure their crops can thrive.

## Anger of Dairy Farmers Against Sirisilla Collector

TPN, Correspondent

**Sirisilla, Feb 21** : Dairy farmers in Sirisilla have expressed strong anger against Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha. They accuse the Collector of taking unjust actions by seizing the milk chilling center, which they claim directly affects their livelihood. For the past 22 years, the farmers have been running a dairy cooperative in the Karimnagar district, but the Collector's unplanned actions have sparked outrage. The incident took place in the Vemula-



wada Rural mandal of Rajanna Sirisilla district, where the Collector ordered the seizure of the milk chilling center owned by the Karimnagar farmers. The farmers, who have been running the facility

for years, claim that they were not given any prior notice before the authorities seized 20,000 liters of milk stored in the tanks. This has led to immense frustration among the dairy farmers, as they rely on the dairy business to support their families. They argue that such an action, without warning or proper communication, has severely impacted their livelihoods. Farmers are now demanding a review of the Collector's actions and calling for support from the government.

## CM Revanth Kanter's Strict Action Against Illegal Sand Transportation in Jagityala

TPN, Correspondent

**Jagityala, Feb 21** : Chief Minister Revanth Kanter has taken strict action against the illegal transportation of sand in the state. He issued a directive that anyone involved in the unauthorized transportation of sand from riverbeds should face severe consequences. Following these orders, the Jagityala district collector seized four sand tractors.

The district collector, along with the district SP Ashok Kumar, inspected sand mining activities along the Godavari riverbanks in the villages of Dammannapet and Arrepli in Dharmapuri mandal. They found illegal sand excavation in the area. The collector emphasized that strict actions would be taken against the sand mafia and anyone involved in illegal sand transportation would not be spared. He stated that the government would ensure that sand is available to the poor and urged officials to conduct thorough inspections in the local streams. District Collector B. Satya Prasad reiterated that no one would be allowed to exploit the sand resources illegally.



# 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.



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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.



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**5. IGL (Indraprastha Gas Ltd.)**  
IGL is a leading city gas distribution company in the National Capital Re-



gion, 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.

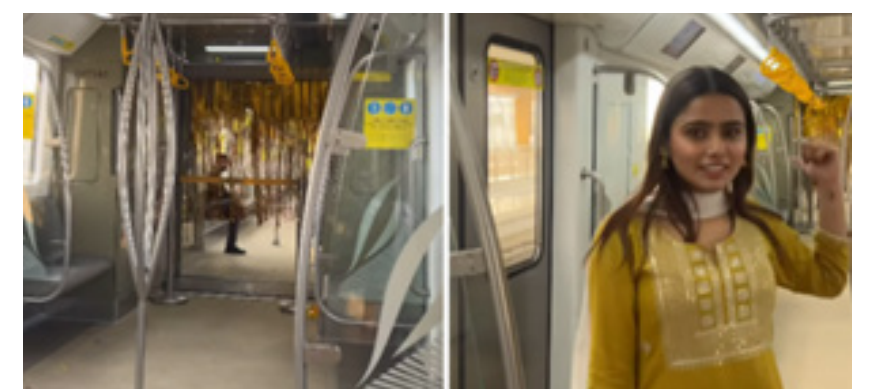
The "Search Screen with Google Lens" feature operates similarly to the Android version, where a user can circle, highlight, or tap text, images, or any other on-screen content. Once the action is performed, Google Lens will instantly analyze the selected content and display rel-

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.

