



**Weather Forecast**

HYDERABAD	VIJAYAWADA	TIRUPATHI
H 27° C L 14° C	H 30° C L 19° C	H 26° C L 21° C



# NO FEE... NO EXAM, WE DON'T CARE FEE REIMBURSEMENT

- Govt has to pay Rs.4800 Cr of Fee Reimbursement Dues
- Big Colleges are pressurizing students to clear fee dues
- They have stopped students from writing exams
- This is against Supreme Court guidelines
- Students and Parents are worrying on this aspect
- Colleges like Vignan are doing like this
- Parents seeking Govt intervention in this regard

TPN Correspondent  
Guntur, Feb 22

Fee reimbursement has become bane for the students now. Yes, it's true. The scheme which should be a boon, has become bane to them now. As the payments from the Government is not releasing in a proper manner and moreover major top college managements are behaving very rude with the students in this regard. These managements are asking the students to pay the fee first and then come to exams and they are not bothering about the reimbursement supposed to be come from the Government. "If the Government pays it, we will reimburse you, but you have to pay first" this is what the managements are throwing out at the face of the poor students in a very commercial manner.

Vignan Institutions, we know very famous for decades. It's head is now MP and in key position in the ruling party TDP. Despite influencing the Govern-

ment to release the pending payment, the management under his regime is pressurizing the students to pay the fee and restricting them to not to write exams without fee clearance allegedly. Not only Vignan, many other institutions which are having demand and having full occupancy are showing such attitude towards the students. The students and their parents are worrying at this juncture. Allegedly, the managements who are having clarity on the payment delay from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, have taken decision to stop the students who cannot pay the pending fee. The colleges which are struggling to have occupancy are pressurizing the students to clear pending fee, but are not daring to stop them from writing exams. The big college managements are showing such attitude, where students are facing mental torture.

A parent of a student of Vignan college at Duvvada said that "The Government is not releasing them pend-

ing fee reimbursement. We came to know that at around Rs.4800 crores were pending for the colleges under this account from the Government of Andhra Pradesh. My kid is studying engineering in Vignan. They have clearly stated that without clearing pending fee, he cannot write the exam. This was made my kid demoralize and feeling shameful among other classmates. We are unable to pay it, as our family is suffering from financial troubles. Even, I am trying to get a loan on interest, but I am unable to get it. He is a merit student. If the management do not allow him to write exam, definitely it will ruin his track."

As far as the Government is concerned, they are going to clear the fee reimbursement pending dues in an installment mode. As per the rules and as per the guidelines given by Supreme Court also, No College cannot stop any student in writing exam in the name of pending fee, who are under fee reimbursement scheme.



## Central Govt Extends Full Support for AP Development - Hardeep Singh Puri

- CM Chandrababu and Dy CM Pawan Kalyan met Union Ministers in Delhi.
- Key investments in industrial corridors, highways, and smart cities.
- Petroleum traders urge legal metrology compliance and dealer margin revision.

TPN Correspondent  
Andhra Pradesh, Feb 22

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri reaffirmed the central government's commitment to Andhra Pradesh's development, emphasizing that CM N. Chandrababu Naidu is leading the state with strategic foresight. Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Friday, he said India's global influence has increased under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Andhra Pradesh is receiving strong support for various infrastructure and welfare projects.

Puri revealed that he met CM Chandrababu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan in Delhi, where they discussed ongoing and upcoming projects. The Centre is backing AP's development, particularly in irrigation, capital infrastructure, ports, and industrial expansion. The central government is actively supporting Andhra Pradesh's development through key infrastructure and industrial initiatives. Under the Industrial Corridor Development Program, three industrial corridors are being developed, while Amaravati, Kakinada, Tirupati, and Visakhapatnam have been selected under the Smart Cities Mission. To boost irrigation, funds have been al-

located to accelerate the completion of the Polavaram project. Additionally, five greenfield corridors have been completed under the Bharatmala Project, with 2,525 km of national highways under development in Phase-1. In the aviation sector, Tirupati and Vijayawada airports are being upgraded to international status, and AIIMS Mangalagiri has been dedicated to the nation. The state has also achieved 100% electrification, and a 57 km railway line from Errupalem to Nambur is set for completion in the next five years.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri highlighted that fuel prices have been stabilized, gas cylinders are being distributed free under the Ujjwala scheme, and gas pipeline networks are being expanded. Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Federation of Petroleum Traders (APFPT) submitted a memorandum requesting certification of dispensing units under the names of Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), standardized fuel management, and transparency in pricing. They also urged the implementation of a 'One Nation, One Price' policy for fuel and a revision of dealer margins based on operational costs. In response, Minister Puri assured that these concerns would be reviewed for appropriate action.

## Union Minister Rammohan Naidu met Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Chilli Farmer's Issue

### Central Govt Steps In to Address AP Chilli Farmers' Issues Following CM Naidu's Request

TPN Correspondent  
New Delhi, Feb 22

Union Minister Rammohan Naidu announced that the Central Government is taking steps to address the concerns of Andhra Pradesh's chilli farmers following CM Chandrababu Naidu's request. Speaking after a meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in New Delhi on Friday, he said that the government is examining ways to boost chilli exports and provide financial support to farmers. The meeting, attended by Minister Atchannaidu and state officials, focused on increasing farmers' income through the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS). The state government estimates the production cost of chilli at ₹11,600 per quintal, and efforts are underway to ensure farmers receive a higher price.



A series of crucial decisions have been made to address the challenges faced by chilli farmers in Andhra Pradesh. A state-level conference will be organized to gather inputs from farmers and exporters on strategies to boost chilli exports. The Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) will be expanded by 75%, ensuring procurement at fair prices. The Centre is also considering setting a minimum price above ₹11,600 per quintal, with proposals to increase

it to ₹12,000 under MIS. With chilli exports declining in recent years, discussions focused on stabilizing and expanding international markets, while central government funds will be utilized to bridge the gap between market prices and farmers' investment costs.

Union Minister Rammohan Naidu emphasized that Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan understands the hardships of farmers and has assured immediate procurement of the chilli crop. He highlighted that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directly discussed the issue with the Centre, stressing its urgency. The Union Minister assured that the Centre will soon take a final decision on these measures, aiming to protect the interests of chilli farmers and enhance their economic stability.



## Veena Reddy: Ex-USAID India Chief in "\$21M Fund" Controversy

The controversy has brought former USAID India chief Veena Reddy under focus. Born in Andhra Pradesh, Reddy held key USAID roles before leading operations in India. During her tenure, USAID's funding surged from \$94.3 million in 2021 to \$228 million in 2022, before falling to \$151.8 million in 2024. She returned to the US in July 2024, just after the Lok Sabha elections. Trump's claims have intensified debates over foreign funding, with both BJP and Congress using the controversy to attack each other.

## Trump calls \$21 million USAID fund to India a 'kickback scheme'

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Former US President Donald Trump slammed the now-canceled \$21 million USAID fund for "voter turnout" in India, calling it a "kickback scheme." Speaking at the Republican Governors Association meeting in Washington DC, he questioned why US taxpayers should fund elections in another country.

"\$21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we caring about India turnout? We got enough problems. We want our own turnout," Trump said, as reported by NBC News. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, confirmed the cancellation of the USAID fund, listing it among taxpayer-funded programs that were scrapped. Trump also hinted at election interference, stating, "I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected."

### BJP and Congress clash over allegations

Trump's remarks triggered a political battle between the BJP and Congress. BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya accused "deep-state assets" of using such funds to manipulate Indian elections.



# Minister Nadendla Meets Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Vijayawada

- AP government expressed gratitude for his support in the petroleum sector.
- 93 lakh LPG cylinders delivered under Deepam 2.0 scheme.

TPN Correspondent  
Vijayawada, Feb 22

In Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh Minister Nadendla Manohar, along with Member of Parliament V. Balashowry and Civil Supplies Department officials, met Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Vijayawada on Friday. The state delegation extended their gratitude to the Union Minister for his continued guidance and support in strengthening the petroleum and energy sector in Andhra Pradesh. During the meeting, Minister Manohar highlighted the success of the Deepam 2.0 scheme,



under which 93 lakh eligible beneficiaries across the state have received LPG cylinders. The initiative, launched under the leadership of Chief Minister N.

Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, aims to ensure clean cooking fuel accessibility for low-income households.

The state government reiterated its commitment to expanding welfare initiatives and improving essential services for the people of Andhra Pradesh.



## 55 Govt Doctors Dismissed in AP Following Lokayukta Orders

TPN Correspondent  
Andhra Pradesh, Feb 22

In a decisive move against negligence in public healthcare, the Andhra Pradesh government has dismissed 55 doctors from the Medical and Health Department. The terminated employees, including associate and assistant professors, were found absent from duty for over a year without prior permission or leave.

The action was taken following a complaint by former Uyyur Sarpanch Srinivas Goud to the Lokayukta, highlighting the prolonged absenteeism and its impact on patient care. Taking serious note of the issue, the Lokayukta directed the state government to conduct an inquiry and identify doctors who had been absent without authorization. Based on the findings, the government proceeded with their dismissal.

The decision, executed as per the Lokayukta's orders, has sparked concern among the affected doctors. However, the government maintains that strict measures are essential to ensure discipline and accountability in the public healthcare system.

## Co-Optex: A Symbol of Traditional Textiles

- Co-Optex showroom modernized and inaugurated in Vijayawada.
- APCO-Co-Optex partnership to sell each state's handloom fabrics.
- Handloom sector's significance in employment and Indian traditions.



TPN Correspondent  
Vijayawada, Feb 22

Tamil Nadu Handlooms and Textiles Minister R. Gandhi emphasized that Co-Optex handlooms symbolize Indian culture and traditions. He announced that handloom fabrics from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu will now be available in both APCO

and Co-Optex showrooms as part of an inter-state handloom promotion agreement. On Friday, Minister R. Gandhi inaugurated the modernized Co-Optex showroom on Vijayawada's Eluru Road. Speaking at the event, he highlighted the significance of handlooms in India's heritage and stressed that handloom artisans continue to create machine-free, handcrafted fabrics to im-

press modern consumers.

### APCO-Co-Optex Partnership

A key highlight of the event was the official agreement between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu's handloom agencies. This agreement ensures:

- **APCO handloom products will be available in Co-Optex showrooms in Tamil Nadu.**
- **Co-Optex handloom products will be sold in APCO showrooms across Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Increased accessibility of handloom clothing to consumers.**

Minister Gandhi emphasized that Tamil Nadu's handloom sector provides employment to thousands of workers, and efforts like this collaboration will help sustain and expand the industry.

The event was attended by Andhra Pradesh Handloom and Textiles Commissioner Rekha Rani, Tamil Nadu Co-Optex Managing Director Deepak Jacob, Chief General Manager A.P. Ravi, General Manager Shankar, Regional Manager C. Nagarajan, Showroom Manager P. Venu, and handloom enthusiasts.

This collaboration is expected to boost handloom sales, promote traditional weaving techniques, and enhance the livelihoods of weavers in both states.



## Revenue Issues Should Be Resolved in a Timely Manner - RP Sisodia

TPN Correspondent  
Nellore, Feb 22

Revenue Department Special Chief Secretary Ram Prasad Sisodia directed revenue officials to ensure timely and effective resolution of revenue-related issues. On Friday, he conducted a review meeting with RDOs and Tahsildars at Thikkana Premises, Collectorate, Nellore, discussing PGRS petitions, revenue conferences, re-surveys, land encroachments, court cases, and other key matters.

Sisodia emphasized that petitions received under PGRS should be resolved efficiently, avoiding unnecessary reopenings. He instructed officials to conduct thorough investigations before disposing of cases instead of making the public wait at revenue offices. He stressed the need for swift action on petitions from the Chief Minister's Office and urged officials to treat grievances with priority, ensuring no petitioner is left waiting.

He directed revenue authorities to address minor discrepancies in land surveys by engaging with farmers and resolving disputes amicably. Regarding land encroachments, he ordered strict measures to remove encroachments and prevent recurrence. Additionally, he called for a special drive to address issues related to dotted lands and insisted that Pattadar passbooks be issued to farmers on time to avoid inconvenience.

Sisodia stressed the importance of digitizing all revenue records and warned that court cases should not be taken lightly. He instructed officials to prioritize legal matters, file counter-affidavits without delay, and set up a legal cell to handle cases efficiently.

Given Nellore's coastal location, he emphasized the need for disaster preparedness, urging officials to develop a communication plan to handle emergencies effectively. Joint Collector K. Karthik assured that the instructions of the Special Chief Secretary would be implemented without delay, ensuring quality grievance redressal. He stated that a legal cell would be established to expedite case resolutions.

The meeting was attended by Municipal Commissioner Suryateja, Sub-Collector Sri Pooja, DRO J. Udaya Bhaskara Rao, Kavali and Atmakur RDOs, District Survey Officer, and Tahsildars.

## AP Revenue Services Association Submits Key Demands to Govt

- Revenue Academy Proposal for training all revenue employees.
- Restructuring of Revenue Staff from Tahsildar to CCLA level.
- Immediate Possession of Completed Revenue Offices to ensure better governance.

TPN Correspondent  
Amaravati, Feb 22

On Friday, the Andhra Pradesh Revenue Services Association (APRSA), led by State President Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, met Revenue Minister Angani Satya Prasad at the State Secretariat. The association submitted a written request outlining critical issues in staffing, infrastructure, and training gaps in the Revenue Department, seeking urgent government action to improve governance.

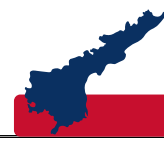
The APRSA emphasized that the Revenue Department plays a vital role in land administration and public welfare but lacks adequate training for its employees. They proposed a 42-day induction training for new junior assistants and a 15-day refresher course every six months for all employees from Village Revenue Officers (VROs) to Deputy Collectors on revenue laws and IT-based services. To address this, they urged the establishment of a 'Revenue Academy' in the capital region. The association pointed out that since the introduction of the Mandal system in 1985, the staffing structure has remained unchanged, despite workloads increasing significantly, particularly after the 2022 district reorganiza-



tion. They called for an immediate restructuring of staff at all levels, from Tahsildars to the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA). Concerns were also raised regarding dilapidated revenue office buildings, many of which were constructed during British rule and have suffered damage from cyclones and floods. While the government approved the construction of 132 Tahsildar offices and 8 Revenue Divisional Offices (RDOs) in 2017-18, several remain unfinished or unoccupied due to pending payments. The APRSA urged the immediate takeover of completed buildings

and expedited construction for the rest. With the formation of 24 new revenue divisions and 7 new mandals, they stressed the need for new Tahsildar and RDO offices in these areas and urged District Collectors to assess and reconstruct damaged offices.

A key demand was the reallocation of DDO (Drawing and Disbursing Officer) powers for Grade-2 VROs and Village Surveyors, currently under Panchayat Secretaries and Municipal Commissioners. The APRSA suggested assigning these responsibilities to Tahsildars, ensuring faster, more transparent services.



## NDA Govt Cleared Over ₹1,000 Crore Dues in AP, Says Minister Satyakumar



Minister Satyakumar slams Jagan, compares him to a cat seeking atonement after wrongdoing YSRCP government accused of neglecting healthcare by withholding payments to drug suppliers Coalition government ensured regular medicine supply by clearing pending dues TPN Correspondent Andhra Pradesh, Feb

22 Medical and Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav criticized former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on social media, likening his behavior to “a cat that ate a hundred mice and then went on a Kashi pilgrimage for atonement.” He questioned whether Jagan was unaware that the coalition government had cleared over ₹1,000 crore in dues owed to drug suppliers, debts inherited from the previous YSRCP administration.

He accused the YSRCP government of jeopardizing public health by failing to pay suppliers, leading to a halt in medicine distribution to hospitals. “Wasn’t it your government that played with the health of the poor by accumulating unpaid bills

and stopping drug supplies? While you were focused on commissions, we prioritized clearing debts and improving the healthcare system,” he stated. Minister Satyakumar emphasized that the coalition government is committed to supporting the underprivileged by ensuring a steady supply of essential medicines. He criticized the YSRCP for refusing to acknowledge its failures even after being rejected by the people in the elections. “The people gave their verdict because of your insincerity towards public health. Instead of spreading false propaganda, YSRCP should engage in self-reflection and understand why the public turned against them,” he advised.

## People Don’t Believe Jagan’s ‘I-PAC’ Dramas, Says Minister Kollu Ravindra



TPN Correspondent Gudivada, Feb 22

Minister Kollu Ravindra strongly criticized YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing him of running away from the Assembly out of fear of being questioned about his past mistakes. Addressing a press conference at the TDP office in Gudivada, alongside APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao and MLA Venigandla Ramu, Ravindra alleged that Jagan had resorted to vile politics, including threatening the police. He questioned, “Shouldn’t cases be filed if a Dalit youth is kid-

napped? People have made him stand on the road in rags, yet his behavior has not changed. No one even understands what he is talking about anymore.” Ravindra highlighted Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu’s efforts in addressing the concerns of chilli farmers by discussing the issue with the Union Minister. He accused Jagan of disregarding the election code and visiting the Guntur chilli yard purely for political gain. “Officials stated that the election code is in force, yet Jagan still went there. People are criticizing his staged dramas,

where paid artists were made to pose as farmers,” he remarked. Responding to former minister Kodali Nani’s comments, Ravindra retorted, “Do you need a job to serve the people? We have worked responsibly for the public, both in the opposition and in power.” He asserted that the TDP-led alliance is striving to restore Krishna district’s lost reputation, which he claimed had been damaged by corruption, anarchy, and destruction under the YSRCP regime. Several alliance leaders participated in the media conference, including AP Granthala Chairman Gonuguntla Koteswara Rao, State Warehousing Corporation Chairman Ravi Venkateswara Rao, Jana Sena Party District Convener Bandi Ramakrishna, Gudivada Jana Sena Party In-charge Booragadda Srikanth, senior TDP leaders Pinnamaneni Babji and Lingam Prasad, Gudivada BJP In-charge Davuluru Surendrababu, Gudivada TDP President Dintyala Rambabu, Rural Mandal Presidents Vase Murali and Daneti Sanyasirao, and Jana Sena Town President Majji Srinivasa Rao.

## Chandrababu Conspiring to Restrict Jagan’s Movements: Anantha Venkataram Reddy



TPN Correspondent Anantapur, Feb 22

Former YSRCP MLA and Anantapur district pres-

ident Anantha Venkataram Reddy accused Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of deliberately conspiring to restrict YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s movements among the people. He expressed outrage over the alleged reduction of security for Jagan when he visited the Guntur chilli yard.

Reddy criticized Chandrababu for justifying the security lapse by claiming that protection could not be provided for illegal activities. He strongly questioned how meeting chilli farmers—who are struggling due to low prices—could be considered illegal.

He further alleged that the coalition government has failed in its responsibility to ensure Jagan’s security. Reddy pointed out that during the YSRCP regime, the government had provided support prices for 24 crops, whereas the current government has failed to offer fair prices to farmers. He demanded that the ruling coalition take immediate steps to support distressed farmers and ensure proper security for opposition leaders.

## Jagan Neglecting Pulivendula Development, But CM Ready to Help - B.Tech Ravi



TPN Correspondent Pulivendula, Feb 22

TDP Pulivendula in-charge B.Tech Ravi criticized YSRCP chief and Pulivendula MLA Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, al-

leging that he has no genuine concern for the people of his own constituency. He pointed out that the residents of Pulivendula have consistently supported the YS family for

years but continue to face numerous problems. Speaking to the media, Ravi stated that as the elected representative, Jagan is responsible for resolving the constituency’s issues. He remarked that if Jagan truly wishes to address Pulivendula’s problems, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu would be willing to give him an appointment to discuss and find solutions.

Ravi further commented on the possibility of a by-election in Pulivendula, citing Jagan’s absence from the Assembly sessions. He questioned whether Jagan would contest and win if a by-election were to take place.

## Jagan’s Guntur Mirchi Yard Visit Exposed Govt’s Neglect of Farmers - Botsa Satyanarayana



Botsa Satyanarayana questions if farmers are a priority for the coalition government

Claims the government only acknowledged chilli farmers’ issues after Jagan’s visit Demands release of reports on land scams and criticizes Super Six promises’ implementation

TPN Correspondent Visakhapatnam, Feb 22

Former minister and YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana has alleged that factional politics are being played out in Andhra Pradesh and accused the coalition government of insincerity towards farmers and agriculture. He stated that YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy visited

the Guntur chilli yard to directly understand the problems faced by farmers, but the government only took notice of their issues after his visit.

Botsa questioned how Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu could claim to be addressing chilli farmers’ concerns when no minister was even present in Delhi for discussions. “Does the government only recognize farmers’ problems when Jagan visits them?” he asked, criticizing the government’s response.

Referring to allegations of illegal activity, Botsa countered, “How can meeting struggling chilli farmers be considered illegal? And what kind of activity is attending a

musical night?” He demanded that the city report on land scams, including the one prepared during the Adi A government, be made public. Botsa also criticized AP Congress President Y.S. Sharmila, alleging that she was speaking with a personal agenda, which he claimed has no place in politics. He further stated that the Election Commission had not prohibited Jagan from visiting the Mirchi Yard.

Commenting on legal matters, Botsa remarked that the court would decide if Jagan failed to appear in the Kodi Kathi case. He also urged the government to focus on resolving issues in the roster system related to Group-2 examinations, ensuring that candidates do not face undue hardships. Additionally, he demanded that the coalition government fulfill the promises made during the elections, expressing frustration over the incomplete implementation of the Super Six guarantees. Botsa Satyanarayana also confirmed that the YSRCP would stay away from the upcoming MLC elections.

## YS Sharmila Demands the Govt Discuss Group-2 Mains Candidates’ Concerns

TPN Correspondent Andhra Pradesh

AP Congress President Y.S. Sharmila has raised concerns over the grievances of Group-2 Mains candidates and demanded that the Chandrababu Naidu-led government engage in discussions with them. She pointed out that candidates are worried about alleged mistakes in the roster system mentioned in the notification issued on December 11, 2023. They fear that if these errors are not corrected, it could lead to significant setbacks for them.

Sharmila highlighted that candidates are apprehensive about a potential legal crisis, citing the example of Jharkhand, where a notification was canceled due to similar roster system errors, resulting in job losses. She stressed that the mistakes must be rectified to avoid such consequences in Andhra Pradesh.



Furthermore, Sharmila questioned the urgency behind conducting the exam on February 23, despite the Advocate General reportedly admitting in court that errors exist. She criticized APPSC for being adamant on proceeding without addressing the concerns of the protesting candidates. “If Group-2 Mains candidates are taking to the streets across the state, will their voices simply be ignored?” she asked.

Demanding immediate action, Sharmila urged Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to intervene, hold discussions with the agitating candidates, and clarify the government’s stance on correcting the roster system errors before conducting the exam. She shared a video of the candidates’ protests on social media to highlight their plight.

## MP Kesineni Shivanath Meets Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

TPN Correspondent  
New Delhi, Feb 22

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Shivanath (Chinni) paid a courtesy visit to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at his residence in Delhi on Friday.

During the meeting, Kesineni Shivanath presented a bouquet of flowers and a Sri Venkateswara Swamy idol to the Speaker as a gesture of respect. The interaction was held in a cordial atmosphere, with discussions on key issues concerning Parliamentary proceedings and development initiatives.

MP Kesineni's visit holds significance as he continues to strengthen relations at the national level while focusing on Vijayawada's growth and progress.



## Minister Nimmala Rama Naidu Challenges Jagan Over Velugonda Project



TPN Correspondent  
Palakollu, Feb 22

Irrigation Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu has openly challenged former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to visit the Velugonda project and prove who is misleading the public. Speaking to the media in Jinnuru village of Podur mandal, Minister Nimmala slammed the one of the newspaper publishing false claims regarding the project.

The Minister questioned how Jagan declared the project completed during his tenure when even newspaper itself reported otherwise. He pointed out that compensation for displaced people was still pending and channel work remained unfinished. Mocking the contradictions in own media reports, he remarked that a liar needs a good memory, or else their own words will expose them.

Nimmala Ramanaidu also took a jibe at Jagan, claiming that even his own family does not trust him. He invited Jagan to personally inspect the Velugonda project and debate the facts in front of the public.

Earlier, the Minister inspected the construction of a major bridge on the Nidadavolu-Narasapuram main canal and a pipeline connecting the main canal to a freshwater tank in Jinnuru. He announced that ₹2.8 crore was allocated for these works.

## Daylight Robbery in Two Houses at Nehru Nagar



TPN Correspondent  
Nandigama, Feb 22

A shocking incident of daylight robbery took place in Nehru Nagar, Nandigama, where unidentified thieves targeted two locked houses and looted valuables.

The thieves reportedly broke the doors using iron rods and stole 50 grams of gold and ₹30,000 in cash. The house owners, who were away at the time, discovered the theft upon returning and immediately alerted the police.

Upon receiving information, the police reached the spot and began an investigation. A clues team is analyzing CCTV footage from the area to identify the culprits.

Local residents and victims have expressed concerns over rising thefts, demanding that CCTV cameras be installed across the city and special surveillance teams be deployed to prevent such crimes.

# German Delegation Praises APCNF's Natural Farming Initiatives

Germany's Perspective on Global Farming Challenges

German delegation commends Andhra Pradesh's natural farming model.

Farmers Empowerment Organization to collaborate with APCNF.

Global agricultural concerns and sustainable solutions discussed.

TPN Correspondent  
Vijayawada, Feb 22

A German delegation acknowledged the significant role of small and marginal farmers in combating climate change and praised the active participation of women in natural farming practices.

Over the past three days, the delegation inspected APCNF-supported natural farming fields across Guntur, Krishna, Eluru, and East Godavari districts. On Friday, the 21st, they met with mentors and farmer scientists at a private hotel in Vijayawada, discussing their learning experiences and insights from the field visits.

Training Farmers in Sustainable Agriculture

Sudhakar and Zakir Hussain, Senior Thematic Leads of the Farmers Empowerment Organization, briefed the delegation on how mentors train Farmer Scientists in adopting natural farming techniques. These scientists study natural farming for four years, incorporating models like ATM (Any Time Money) and "A" grade farming techniques in their fields.



The German team, comprising Benedict Herlin, Jasper Jordan, Diogo Coutinho, and Lucas Kehle, delivered a PowerPoint presentation emphasizing:

- If global land is divided per capita, each person would have just half an acre, making monocropping unsustainable.
- The "2000 Square Meter Model", promoted by the Foundation on Future Farming, encourages diverse cropping to ensure food security.
- Despite high yields in chemical-based farming, hunger deaths persist, with 800 million people lacking proper nutrition

and 3 billion people suffering from obesity due to unhealthy food consumption.

• Soil health directly affects human health, as chemical farming disrupts soil microorganisms, leading to air and water pollution in countries like Germany.

The German delegation commended APCNF's efforts over the past five years, stating that policy changes in Andhra Pradesh have positively impacted sustainable farming. They expressed a strong interest in collaborating with APCNF, recognizing similarities between APCNF's policies and Germany's "2000 square meters model project".

Senior officials of the Farmers Empowerment Organization, including Prakash Rao, Srinivasulu, G. Srinivas Rao, and APCNF District Project Manager Smt. Vijaya Kumari, attended the event.

The joint efforts of APCNF and global sustainability organizations are expected to enhance natural farming practices and contribute to a more environmentally friendly agricultural future.

## International Mother Language Day Celebrated at Sri Lalitha School in Tadepalligudem



TPN Correspondent  
Tadepalligudem, Feb 22

International Mother Language Day was celebrated at Sri Lalitha School, Rama Rao Peta, Tadepalligudem, under the auspices of the Tadepalligudem Telugu Sahiti Samakhyia on Friday evening.

The event was presided over by the association's president, Manda Brahmaji. Chief guest Kotte Kota Rao emphasized the im-

portance of preserving and promoting the Matru Bhasha, urging everyone to work for its upliftment.

Sahitya Samakhyia General Secretary Pylu Srinivasa Rao, Dr. Madabhushi Jyothi Kumari, PT Venkanna, Yaddanapudi Subbarao, Mandavalli Nagendra, Sri Lalitha School Principal Sunkara Srinivas, Mahasivabattu Lakshmana Raju, Godavarthi Prabhakar Sastry, Blossoms School

Principal Yarragogula Durga Prasad, Kuchi Anil Kumar, and Chinuku Janardhan Rao were among those who participated in the event.

The program commenced with PT Venkanna lighting the ceremonial lamp. Chief guest Kota Rao was honored on this occasion. Prizes were also distributed to the winners of the essay writing competition held in honor of the Matru Bhasha.

## Green Leaf Rating Introduced for Hotels and Lodges

TPN Correspondent  
Vijayawada, Feb 22

In a bid to promote cleanliness and environmental sustainability in the hospitality sector, the government has introduced the Green Leaf Rating System (SGLRS) to assess and recognize hotels, lodges, and other hospitality facilities based on their sanitation and waste management practices.

District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmi Sha, addressing a coordination meeting at the Collectorate Sri Pingali Venkaiah Samavesh Mandir, emphasized that maintaining high standards of cleanliness is crucial for responsible tourism. She stated that Green Leaf ratings will be awarded based on the following criteria:

- One Leaf: Score of 100-130 marks
- Three Leaf: Score of 130-180 marks
- Five Leaf: Score of 180-200 marks

A District-Level Committee, led by the Collector, with the Superintending Engineer of Rural Water Supply Department as the convener and the District Tourism Officer as the member secretary, will oversee the rating process. At the division level, a verification sub-committee headed by the RDO will evaluate the facilities. Hotels and lodges will be mapped through the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Gramin) website.



Awareness programs will be conducted for hospitality owners. Workshops and training sessions will be held at the district level. The goal is to rate at least 1,000 hospitality locations across the state by October 2, 2025.

Dr. Lakshmi Sha highlighted that Vijayawada, known as the Gateway to Amaravati, should lead in securing top ratings, enhancing the district's tourism and hospitality sector. The meeting was attended by Rural Water Supply SE S. Vidyasagar, ZP CEO K. Kannam Naidu, AP Hotels Association President RV Swamy, AP TDC Divisional Manager Chaitanya, District Tourism Officer A. Shilpa, Special Officer of Village Ward Secretariats G. Jyothi, DPO P. Lavanya Kumari, District Tours and Travels Association representative T. Ravikumar, DLDs, and others. RDOs from Vijayawada, Thiruvur, and Nandigama joined virtually.

## SCR Operates 115 Special Trains for Kumbh Mela

TPN Correspondent  
Vijayawada, Feb 22

As part of the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, the Indian Railways has deployed over 13,000 special trains to Prayagraj from across the country, facilitating the travel of 3.09 crore pilgrims since January 13, 2025. These arrangements include color-coded tickets and additional shelter areas for smooth passenger movement.

The South Central Railway (SCR) has played a vital role by operating 115 special and regular trains from the Vijayawada region during January and February. As of February 21, 2025, nearly 60,000 passengers have availed themselves of these services.

The trains operated via Prayagraj Cheeki to major destinations like Gaya, Azamgarh, Banaras, and Danapur. Key originating stations within the Vijayawada region include Vijayawada, Guntur, Machilipatnam, Kakinada, and Narsapur.

The Indian Railways' extensive planning and advance reservation system ensured that special trains were fully booked, meeting the travel demand of devotees heading to the sacred Kumbh Mela.

According to Ms. Nusrat M. Mandrupkar, Public Relations Officer, Vijayawada Division, South Central Railway, the initiative aimed to provide seamless travel for pilgrims, ensuring a comfortable and hassle-free experience during the grand religious event.



## SRI SATYA SAI DRINKING WATER SCHEME UNDER CRISIS



- Pending bills of ₹3 crore leave workers unpaid for months
- Leakages in the pipeline disrupt water supply to 140 villages
- Scheme at risk of collapse due to lack of government support
- Funds Dry Up, Workers Protest, Infrastructure Collapse
- Corporate Exit & Growing Debt, Future at Risk

TPN | KISHORE B.K  
Jangareddy Gudem, Feb 22

The Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Scheme, once a lifeline for Agency Metta residents, is now on the brink of failure due to financial neglect and infrastructure breakdowns. The scheme, aimed at delivering Godavari river water to remote villages, has been severely impacted by pending dues and maintenance issues, leaving thousands without drinking water. Despite its vital role, the scheme has suffered from non-payment of ₹3 crore in dues, forcing maintenance workers into financial distress. Many have not been paid for seven to eight months, leading to protests and sit-ins. The scheme, which initially served 240 villages in 11 mandals, has now shrunk to just 140 villages due to lack of funds and maintenance. Adding to the crisis, severe pipeline cracks—from Lakshimpuram Bridge in Buttaygudem to Kovvada—have resulted in large-scale water

leakage for months. The government's failure to release funds has left even officials helpless, reducing them to mere spectators. The project was originally maintained by L&T, a corporate giant, ensuring smooth operations. However, due to mounting dues, including ₹18 crore pending from the previous government, L&T withdrew, leaving the scheme in disarray. The contractor company even approached the court for payments, escalating the crisis. Currently, 150 workers are struggling to maintain the crumbling infrastructure. The massive wastage of drinking water threatens the entire scheme, raising fears that it may collapse entirely in the coming days. If the government does not step in with immediate financial and infrastructure support, the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Scheme may disappear altogether, leaving thousands in dire need of clean drinking water.

## Historic Palli Kondeswara Swamy Temple in Satyavedu Gears Up for Maha Shivaratri



TPN | C. Sekhar  
Satyavedu, Feb 22

The Sarva Mangala Sametha Palli Kondeswara Swamy Temple, located in Surutupalle, Satyavedu constituency, is a unique and ancient Shiva temple where Lord Shiva is worshipped in a reclining posture, resembling Maha Vishnu. Built by Hari Hara Bukka Raya between 1344-47 AD, the temple has a rich history and continues to attract devotees from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Situated just 73 km from Tirupati and 68 km from Chennai, this temple is a key religious site for devotees traveling between the two states. The State Institute of Temple Administration of Andhra Pradesh currently oversees its management. Local MLA Koneti Adimulam has been actively working to develop the temple, bringing its significance to the government's attention multiple

times. In preparation for the three-day Maha Shivaratri celebrations, review meetings have been conducted with district officials to ensure smooth arrangements for devotees. Annadanam (free food distribution) is being conducted daily with donor support. The government will offer silk clothes to the deity as part of the Maha Shivaratri rituals. The 10-day Brahmotsavam festival will also be organized. The Lord's celestial wedding (Kalyanotsavam) is scheduled for February 27. MLA Koneti Adimulam has assured that, with the support of CM Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh, the temple will receive further development in the coming days. Thousands of devotees are expected to visit the temple during the Maha Shivaratri celebrations. Officials have been instructed to ensure smooth arrangements for the pilgrims.

## Alumni of Tadepalligudem ZP High School Unite to Revamp School Ground



- Alumni from three to four decades come together for school ground development
- ₹60,000 donation made by the 1990-1991 10th class batch
- Ground to benefit students and the local community

TPN Correspondent  
Tadepalligudem, Feb 22

In a heartwarming initiative, alumni of Tadepalligudem Zilla Parishad High School, spanning over three to four decades, have come together to enhance the school ground for the benefit of students and the local community. The initiative aims to promote sports, fitness, and recreational activities, benefiting not just the students but also the residents of Tadepalligudem and nearby villages. As part of this effort, NVV Satyanarayana, an advocate, took the lead in mobilizing funds to revamp the school ground, coordinating with 30 years of school alumni. Within this, the 1990-1991 10th class batch contributed ₹60,000 towards the project, which was handed over to NVV Satyanarayana in the presence of School

Principal Ganapathi Garu, marking a significant step towards improving the school's infrastructure and enhancing sports and fitness facilities. The upgraded school ground will now be accessible not only to students but also to the residents of Tadepalligudem and surrounding villages. The ground will be equipped with solar power, and additional features such as a walking track and



various sports facilities have been introduced to encourage a healthier lifestyle among locals. The initiative saw enthusiastic participation from the 1990-1991 batch, including Sekhar, Tammisetty Srinu, Subadra, Sarada, Bayya Lakshmi Narayana, Shaik Baji, Seshidar Reddy, Nagabhushanam, Krishnam Raju, Sriram Kumar, Uppuluri Srinivas, and Venkat Ramana. Their collective efforts reflect a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility towards their alma mater, fostering a strong sense of community involvement. Speaking at the event, alumni members expressed their happiness in contributing to the school's development and encouraged fellow former students to join hands in similar initiatives. They emphasized that such efforts not only improve infrastructure but also inspire younger generations to take pride in their school and strive for excellence. This initiative stands as a shining example of alumni giving back to their educational institutions, ensuring that future students have access to better facilities and opportunities. The dedication of the Tadepalligudem ZP High School alumni highlights the power of collective goodwill and its lasting impact on the school's development for future generations.



## Konidela Anjanadevi: The Guiding Force Behind the Mega Legacy

Mrs. Konidela Anjanadevi, a towering figure of strength and grace, stands as the cornerstone of the illustrious Konidela family, revered by millions across the Telugu states. She is not just a mother but a symbol of unwavering resilience, nurturing a legacy that has transformed the landscape of Telugu cinema and politics.

As Bammara Pothana beautifully described in his verse, "Ammala Gannayamma Murgammala Moolaputamma," Durga Devi is the supreme mother who nurtures all. In on Friday's world, such a divine embodiment of power and compassion is found in every mother, and among them, Mrs. Konidela Anjanadevi shines as an epitome of maternal strength. She is the revered mother of three remarkable sons—Megastar Chiranjeevi, producer and actor Nagababu, and Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and Jana Sena Party leader Pawan Kalyan. Her unwavering guidance and sacrifices have been instrumental in shaping their extraordinary journeys, cementing the Konidela name across generations. It was under her protective embrace that Sri Chiranjeevi emerged as an indelible force in Telugu cinema, setting a benchmark that continues



to inspire generations. Her nurturing spirit extended beyond the silver screen, fostering a family that has given Telugu audiences some of its brightest stars. Through her strength, she not only raised a film icon but also nurtured a leader—Sri Pawan Kalyan—who now holds a pivotal role in the state's governance. Her legacy continues to flourish through her grandson, global star Ram Charan, ensuring that the Mega family's impact transcends generations. As a gentle guide, a strong protector, and a visionary mother, Mrs. Anjanadevi's role in shaping the Mega legacy is unparalleled. On behalf of all Mega fans, we extend our heartfelt prayers for her good health and long life. May she continue to bless the Konidela family for many more years to come. — Ravanam Swaminaidu, All India Chiranjeevi Youth

## District Collector Reviews Maha Shivaratri Arrangements



TPN Correspondent  
East Godavari, Feb 22

District Collector P. Prashanthi has directed officials to ensure seamless coordination and strong arrangements for the upcoming Maha Shivaratri celebrations on February 26 across all major Shaiva Kshetras in the district. At a review meeting held at the Collectorate Camp Office, officials from Revenue, Endowments, Police, Municipal, and Fisheries departments discussed arrangements. The District SP D. Narasimha Kishore also participated. Thousands of devotees are expected to visit sacred sites like Pattiseema Veerabhadra Swamy Temple, Kovvur Goshpada Ghat, Pushkara Ghat, Markandeya Swamy Temple Ghat, and Kotilingala Ghat in Rajamahendravaram. To facilitate them, control rooms

will be set up, and police personnel, boats, and security guards will be stationed at all ghats. The municipalities and panchayats have been instructed to ensure sanitation, drinking water, and medical camps at temple sites. The RTC will operate special buses, while the Excise Department will enforce a liquor ban near festival sites. The police force, SDRF, rescue teams, and fire engines will be on standby. The SP assured additional security at all Shaiva Kshetras. Barricades, CCTV cameras, mics, dressing rooms, and temporary toilets will also be arranged for devotees. Officials, including DRO T. Seetharama Murthy, Additional SP L. Arjun, RDOs, and district department heads, participated in the meeting.

## SBI Employees Stage Dharna in Eluru

TPN Correspondent  
Eluru, Feb 22

SBI employees staged a dharna at the Eluru SBI Main Branch on Friday evening, demanding the resolution of key issues faced by bank staff. The protest was held in response to the nationwide strike call on February 24-25. UFBU District Convener Kale Srinivasa

Rao led the protest and expressed concerns over the increasing workload due to staff shortages. He urged the authorities to appoint sufficient employees and implement a five-day workweek. He also demanded an end to the recruitment of outsourcing employees. Leaders from various bank unions, including AIBEA's Srinivas Mohan and N.

Lakshman Rao, AIBOC's Srinivas, NCBE's Ratna Vimal, and Retired Union leader Narayana Rao, participated in the demonstration. The employees emphasized that their demands are crucial for maintaining efficient banking services and ensuring better working conditions.

## Qatar Emir's Visit Marks Renewed Strategic Partnership with India



The recent visit of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, to India has reignited a strong and strategic partnership between the two nations. The Emir's visit comes a decade after his last trip, and it marks a significant reboot in bilateral relations. This gesture underscores the growing importance of India to Qatar and reflects the strong ties between the two countries, which have been mutually beneficial in various sectors.

India, as the world's fifth-largest economy, is set to become the third-largest by 2027, and Qatar, one of the wealthiest nations globally, has long played a pivotal role in energy exports. Qatar fulfills a significant portion of India's liquefied natural gas (LNG) needs, with Indian labor also forming the backbone

of Qatar's workforce. Bilateral trade stands at \$15 billion, and both sides have committed to further investment, with Qatar planning to inject \$10 billion into India.

The two countries also aim to double their trade to \$28 billion in the next five years and are considering a free trade agreement. This collaboration is expected to strengthen their strategic ties, especially in energy, trade, and infrastructure development.

Qatar's importance extends beyond economics. It has been a key diplomatic player in the Middle East, mediating peace talks, including the Hamas-Israel ceasefire. Its strategic positioning, with military bases hosting the US and Turkey, places it at the center of regional political shifts. As the Middle East undergoes

changes, Qatar continues to assert its influence, including maintaining close ties with Islamist groups, which have been controversial among its Arab neighbors.

Despite recent tensions, including the arrest of Indian naval officers in Qatar, which strained relations, the Emir's visit has set the stage for a closer relationship. Diplomatic efforts led by Indian leaders helped resolve such issues, ensuring stability in the bilateral relationship. With energy demand expected to grow in India, Qatar's role as a key energy supplier remains crucial. This renewed partnership highlights the strategic importance of the relationship between India and Qatar, signaling a bright future for both nations amidst a rapidly changing global landscape.

## Whose Interests Was USAID Really Serving in India?

Recent revelations about the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its funding in India raise important questions regarding the influence of foreign interests in India's electoral process. Reports uncovered by the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, have shed light on large sums of American taxpayer dollars being directed towards initiatives aimed at boosting voter turnout among marginalized communities in India, particularly ahead of the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections.

USAID has been involved in India for decades, initially focusing on food security and governance reforms. Since 2011, its Democratic Elections and Political Processes (DEPP) program has allocated substantial amounts of funding, with over \$318,000 annually given to the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) for India-focused projects. In election years, funding spikes significantly, such as in FY2014, when \$21 million—about ₹182 crore—was spent on voter awareness campaigns during the national elections. However, funding dropped drastically after May 2014, suggesting an electoral rather than institutional focus. A similar funding pattern occurred in 2019, with \$486 million allocated regionally.

Despite claims by USAID of promoting democracy, US President Donald Trump raised concerns that these efforts were more about restricting democracy, questioning the need for such large sums in India's elections. In fact, USAID's expenditures in India have often drawn comparisons to those in other countries, such as Bangladesh, where funding from the US for "strengthening the political landscape" was linked to

political unrest. Additionally, the Election Commission of India (ECI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the US-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in 2012, which reportedly facilitated training programs at the ECI's India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM). While former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi denied any direct USAID funding to the ECI, audits revealed that funds were channeled to NGOs for initiatives aimed at mobilizing marginalized voters—often along caste lines. These initiatives, includ-



ing a focus on Dalit voter participation, have sparked controversy, especially as similar rhetoric later surfaced in political debates, such as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's call for caste-based rights allocation.

The dual funding from USAID and tech giants like Google, Meta, and Microsoft to IFES has also raised concerns about conflicting interests, particularly as IFES's policy papers have promoted caste-based voter categorization. These funding patterns and political alignments prompt questions about foreign influence in shaping India's political landscape, especially when such efforts coincide with election cycles.

## 'Hindu-Buddhist Bhai Bhai'? The Politics Behind the RSS-Buddhist Alliance at the Kumbh Mela



The grand spectacle of Hindu-Buddhist unity at the 2025 Kumbh Mela, featuring Buddhist monks alongside RSS leaders like Bhaiyyaji Joshi and Indresh Kumar, is less an eternal truth and more a political performance with deep historical precedents. This grand display of solidarity between Hinduism and Buddhism is not without its contradictions, as it reflects both the shared heritage of these traditions and the historical schisms between them. The roots of this alliance can be traced back to the early 20th century. In 1923, Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sinhalese Buddhist leader, proclaimed at the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha that "Buddhists are also Hindus." This was a crucial moment in the histor-

ical construction of Hindu nationalism, as leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya echoed the sentiment, positioning Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism as sects within the broader Hindu fold. Such attempts to incorporate Buddhism into the Hindu identity were motivated by political pragmatism rather than deep spiritual kinship, as the emerging Hindu nationalist movement sought to consolidate power and create a unified Hindu identity.

However, this narrative of harmonious unity overlooks the historical hostility between Brahmanism and Buddhism. Ancient Buddhist texts such as the Tevijja Sutta and Ambaṭṭha Sutta criticize the Brahmanical caste sys-

tem, and brahminical texts often portrayed the Buddha as a heretic or disruptive force. Even during the colonial era, figures like Swami Vivekananda presented Buddhism as a misguided offshoot of Hinduism, reinforcing the idea of an antagonistic relationship between the two traditions.

In the early 20th century, Hindu nationalist leaders, facing colonial rule and internal divisions, sought to include Buddhists within the "Hindu Nation." This was a strategic move, aimed at uniting marginalized groups while excluding Muslims and Christians, viewed as external threats. Anagarika Dharmapala's involvement in these debates was driven by his desire to gain control over the Maha

Bodhi Temple in Bodhi Gaya, a symbol of Buddhist heritage. The most striking example of this alliance was in 1935, when the Hindu Mahasabha invited U Ottama, a Buddhist monk from Burma, to preside over the organization, an alliance forged more out of shared anti-colonial politics than religious unity.

In the present day, the Kumbh Mela's display of Hindu-Buddhist unity is underpinned by similar political calculations. While the resolutions passed at the event condemn the persecution of minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan, the lack of any similar critique of India's marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, is notable. This selective advocacy underscores the po-

litical nature of this alliance, which often sidelines internal dissent.

The participation of Tibetan exiles at the Kumbh Mela also signals a shift from colonial-era alliances. With Tibetans reliant on Indian support, many are forced to align with the RSS and BJP to secure their place in India, even as they remain cautious of these political forces. Thus, the "Hindu-Buddhist bhai bhai" narrative at the Kumbh Mela is a performance grounded in political pragmatism, shaped by the shifting dynamics of power, history, and survival. The deep-rooted contradictions in this alliance raise questions about its durability, suggesting that alliances of convenience may not endure without tension.

# India needs leaders to find solutions to global complexities: PM Modi

- India flags US funding cut as foreign interference
- MEA calls \$21M USAID halt "deeply troubling"
- Tensions rise over electoral sovereignty concerns



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday expressed concerns over the recent cancellation of a \$21 million USAID funding by the Donald Trump administration, intended for voter turnout programs in India. The MEA described the decision as "deeply troubling" and raised alarms about potential foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.

The funding was part of USAID's broader efforts to strengthen democratic processes globally, including in India, but the recent developments have sparked tensions between the two countries. The Indian government's response highlights its growing sensitivity to perceived foreign involvement in its domestic matters, particularly when it comes to elections and political processes.

The USAID initiative had been designed to support voter education and ensure fair electoral participation in the world's largest democracy. However, critics argue that the cancellation of the funds could undermine efforts to increase political engagement among Indian citizens, especially in remote areas.

The US move comes amid a broader conversation about foreign influence on global democracies and the need for nations to safeguard their sovereignty and electoral processes from external interference. While the Indian government has expressed its displeasure over the funding cut, it remains to be seen how this issue will impact the relationship between the US and India moving forward.

As the situation unfolds, the MEA's comments underscore India's commitment to maintaining the integrity of its democratic processes without external influence.

Spokesperson for the MEA, Randhir Jaiswal, stated, "We have seen information that has been put out by the US administration regarding certain USA activities and funding. These are obviously very deeply troubling. This has led to concerns about foreign interference in India's internal affairs." His comments came after the US government halted the funding, which was aimed at supporting voter engagement and turnout initiatives during elections in India.

## My father is 100% fit, vote for him: Nitish's son urges Bihar people



TPN Correspondent | Patna

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's son, Nishant Kumar, on Friday urged the people of Bihar to vote for his father in the upcoming assembly elections, asserting that the 72-year-old leader is "100 per cent fit" to continue serving the state. Speaking briefly with journalists at Patna airport upon returning from a wedding in Delhi, Nishant appealed to voters to back his father's leadership, emphasizing the progress Bihar has seen under Nitish Kumar's tenure.

"This is an election year. I have urged the people to vote for my father before, and I do so again. He has done so much for Bihar, and his return to power will ensure that development continues without interruption," Nishant stated. His comments came amidst growing political speculation, with the state gearing up for assembly elections later this year.

Nishant was also questioned about rival RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav's recent remarks casting doubt on the health of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who is set to seek a fifth consecutive term. In response, Nishant firmly stated, "My father is 100 per cent fit," dismissing any concerns regarding his father's health.

While speculation surrounding Nishant's potential political career continues, with rumors suggesting he could join the JD(U) or even contest the assembly elections from Harnaut—his father's former constituency—he refrained from commenting on these matters. Nishant quickly moved past the group of journalists and entered his car, not addressing any further questions about his own political ambitions or the future of the party leadership.



## India Rejects Turkish President Erdogan's Remarks on Kashmir, Lodges Protest

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India on Friday strongly rejected Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's comments on the Kashmir issue, stating that it is an internal matter of India and does not warrant external interference. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs lodged a formal protest with the Turkish ambassador in New Delhi over Erdogan's remarks, which were deemed both "unwarranted" and "unacceptable."

Erdogan's comments were made during his visit to Islamabad on February 13, following talks with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In his statements, Erdogan called for the Kashmir issue to be addressed according to a United Nations resolution, suggesting that the matter should be resolved through dialogue between India and Pakistan, while considering the aspirations of the people of Kashmir.

The remarks, which diverged from Erdogan's usual stance on Kashmir, were viewed by India as a departure from his prior silence on the issue. For nearly two years, Erdogan had refrained from publicly commenting on Kashmir, even at international fo-

rumors like the UN General Assembly and the D8 bloc. His sudden remarks sparked strong reactions from New Delhi, prompting a swift diplomatic response.

Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal rejected the Turkish president's comments, asserting that "Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India" and that no other country has the right to comment on it. He further stressed that such statements undermined India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

In response to Erdogan's remarks, the Indian government reiterated that matters related to Kashmir are purely domestic and are not subject to international mediation. India continues to maintain that it is committed to resolving any issues through dialogue, but only within the framework of its territorial sovereignty.

As the Kashmir issue remains a sensitive topic in India-Pakistan relations, India's firm stance against Erdogan's comments reinforces its position on the matter, further asserting that external interference is neither necessary nor acceptable.



## Qatar's Growing Influence in Middle-East Politics and Its Ties with India

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

In the complex and often volatile landscape of Middle-East politics, Qatar has carved out a significant role, earning a reputation as both the arsonist and firefighter of the region. In a place where radical Islam and Shia-Sunni tensions often dominate, Qatar uses its vast natural gas reserves—third largest in the world after Russia and Iran—to wield considerable political leverage, often at the expense of more traditional regional powers.

The small Gulf nation has earned international recognition for its ability to play a central role in diplomatic negotiations. Qatar hosts the largest US airbase in the Middle East at Al Udeid and has brokered significant deals, such as the US-Iran prisoner swap in 2023. It was instrumental in facilitating the US-led coalition's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 by offering refuge to Taliban leadership. Furthermore, Qatar has been actively involved in peace efforts in Gaza, facilitating ceasefires and hostage releases, and has had a hand in the civil wars in Yemen, Syria, and Libya. Notably, it maintains strong ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, further amplifying its political influence.

Under the leadership of Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar has become an influential power in West Asia, adept at contributing to regional problem-solving. The Emir's diplomatic acumen has led Qatar to be recognized as a key player in shaping the future of the Middle East.

Acknowledging Qatar's growing stature in the region and the country's positive relationship with India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, made a notable gesture of respect during the visit of Sheikh Tamim to India in February 2025. Breaking diplomatic protocol, both leaders personally greeted the Emir and his delegation at Delhi's IGI Airport, underscoring the importance of Qatar's role in the Middle East and its cordial ties with the large Indian diaspora living in the Gulf nation.

## "India Needs To Cut Tariffs For Its Own Good": NITI Aayog CEO

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam asserted that tariffs do not protect countries, and India needs to reduce them for its own benefit, regardless of external pressures. Speaking at the 69th Foundation Day of the All India Management Association (AIMA), Subrahmanyam emphasized that being open to global markets should be one of India's top priorities if it aims to become a developed nation.

He highlighted the need for India to finalize trade agreements with key economies such as the European Union and the United Kingdom to facilitate tariff reductions. Subrahmanyam further stressed the importance of deregulation at both the central and state levels to integrate India into global supply chains.

Subrahmanyam also observed that while there is global interest in India, many investors are choosing to explore other countries instead. He pointed to nations like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Turkey, which have benefitted from the "China plus one" strategy adopted by global companies seeking alternatives to China.

The NITI Aayog CEO argued that India's entry into global value chains requires more than just initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI); it also demands deregulation and a focus on skill development. He expressed concern about the bureaucratic red tape involved in business operations, which he claimed is stifling growth, particularly for MSMEs.

Subrahmanyam shared that NITI Aayog is working on integrating India into global supply chains across various sectors, including electronics, auto components, chemicals, textiles, and footwear. He also mentioned that the Aayog is awaiting Cabinet clearance for its recommendations on the electronics component supply chain and is preparing to launch a national manufacturing mission within three months.

In addition to manufacturing, Subrahmanyam identified education and agriculture as critical areas for India's development. He stressed the need to transform agriculture by shifting focus away from traditional crops like rice and wheat toward horticulture, floriculture, and dairy production. He also emphasized that states must be open to enterprises from other regions to stimulate growth, with a free-flowing enterprise environment being key to progress.



# Saudi Arabia Invests in Dark Skies to Boost Astrotourism

- Red Sea Destination to become the region's largest Dark Sky Reserve
- Blends Islamic astronomy with tourism while preserving natural darkness



TPN Correspondent | Saudi

Saudi Arabia is making significant investments in dark sky conservation and sustainable tourism to promote astrotourism. With its vast desert landscapes and minimal light pollution, the Kingdom is capitalizing on the global trend of stargazing, which has become a key driver of tourism worldwide. Astrotourism has seen an uptick in popularity, with destinations like the United States generating billions in revenue from stargazing tourism. Saudi Arabia is now positioning itself as a prime destination for those seeking to experience the wonders of the night sky.

The Kingdom's clear desert skies make it an ideal place for astrotourism, and projects like the AlUla Manara and Al-Harameel Nature Reserves are already

receiving recognition for their pristine nightscapes. Even more ambitious plans are in the works, including the development of the Red Sea Destination, which is set to become the largest Dark Sky Reserve in the Middle East. The reserve will span an area the size of Belgium, and its development will focus on preserving natural darkness by minimizing light pollution. Red Sea Global, the developers behind the project, are working with lighting experts to ensure compliance with stringent light pollution guidelines.

In addition to its natural landscapes, Saudi Arabia is tapping into its rich Islamic astronomical heritage, offering unique experiences that bridge science and culture. One such initiative focuses on celestial objects used for navigation during the Hajj pilgrimage, as well as integrating the moon's phases and the Hijri

calendar into the visitor experience. This fusion of astronomy and cultural traditions offers a distinctive dimension to the astrotourism experience.

However, as with any booming tourism sector, astrotourism also presents challenges. Increased visitation could lead to light pollution, but Saudi Arabia's low population density provides an advantage in keeping light pollution minimal. The Red Sea Global project plans to limit annual visitor numbers to one million while ensuring environmental protection initiatives are in place to safeguard local wildlife and ecosystems. Saudi Arabia is set to become a leading hub for astrotourism, offering travelers an unparalleled opportunity to experience the beauty of the night sky in one of the world's most awe-inspiring desert landscapes.



## Raises Worries Of Interference In Internal Matters: India On USAID

TPN Correspondent | Washington

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) recently raised concerns over the US Agency for International Development (USAID) \$21 million funding aimed at voter turnout in India in 2012, saying it "raises worries of interference in India's internal matters." The response came amid a heated political clash between Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), both of which have criticized the funding as "external interference" in India's electoral process.

The controversy intensified after the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, identified the \$21 million allocation to India as part of a broader \$486 million audit of government expenditures in the US. DOGE's audit also included grants to Moldova for political process strengthening and other countries. The revelation spurred further political discourse, with BJP leaders accusing the Congress party of allowing external forces to influence India's elections.

Congress's Pawan Khera strongly criticized BJP leader Amit Malviya's claims, pointing out that the funding was approved in 2012, when the Congress-led UPA was in power, not the BJP. Khera sarcastically asked why the Congress would invite "external interference" if it was meant to sabotage its own electoral prospects. BJP leaders Nalin Kohli and Amit Malviya, however, questioned the rationale behind such a significant financial investment by a foreign entity into India's elections.

Former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi refuted BJP claims, explaining that the funding was part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), intended for election training and preparation. Quraishi denied any malicious intent behind the funding, which he described as a routine partnership with international organizations.

## Post-Ramzan Protests Loom as Imran Khan's Party Targets Shehbaz Sharif Government

TPN Correspondent | Islamabad

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (February 21) – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Junaid Akbar Khan, announced plans to launch a protest movement after Ramadan and reaffirmed the party's commitment to forming a grand opposition alliance. Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail, Khan expressed his frustration after being denied a scheduled meeting with PTI's founding chairman, Imran Khan, by authorities.

Despite government restrictions, Junaid Akbar Khan emphasized that PTI leaders would continue to stand by their chairman's call. He dismissed claims that party leaders were avoiding jail visits, affirming that they remained fully committed to supporting Khan. Khan also confirmed the party's intention to rally opposition forces and organize large-scale protests after Eid, in what is expected to be a high-profile political initiative.

While speaking to reporters, PTI leaders suggested that the possibility of a sit-in outside Adiala Jail could be considered, should the situation demand it. They strongly criticized the government for restricting their efforts to meet with Imran Khan, describing these actions as a violation of constitutional rights.

In a related statement, PML-N President Nawaz Sharif reiterated his position that the people of Pakistan would no longer tolerate disruptions to national progress. He firmly stated that the country's development would not be held back by groups lacking political and democratic understanding, a reference aimed at the opposition parties.

PTI leaders, including Khan, have repeatedly accused the government of intentionally misrepresenting their party's actions and misguiding the public about the intentions of opposition leaders. Khan further criticized the government's tactics, calling them part of a broader strategy to undermine PTI and its leaders. He rejected accusations that PTI was responsible for any uncivilized political behavior, insisting that it was the ruling party's leaders who had first engaged in unethical political attacks. As the political situation continues to evolve in Pakistan, PTI's planned protests and opposition alliance efforts signal growing tensions within the country's political landscape.



## Kash Patel Confirmed as FBI Director, Vows to Restore Trust in the Agency

TPN Correspondent | Washington

Indian-origin Kash Patel was confirmed by the Senate on Thursday as the new director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Patel, who is a close ally of former President Donald Trump, expressed his gratitude and commitment to rebuilding the FBI into an organization that is "transparent, accountable, and committed to justice."

In his first statement following the confirmation, Patel thanked President Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi for their unwavering support. "I am honored to be confirmed as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Thank you to President Trump and Attorney General Bondi for your unwavering confidence and support," Patel said in a post on X.

Patel emphasized the need to restore public trust in the FBI, acknowledging the agency's significant role in protecting the nation, from the era of the "G-Men" to its post-9/11 mission of safeguarding Americans. However, he also acknowledged that the politicalization of the justice system had eroded public confidence in the Bureau, vowing to put an end to that. "The politicalization of our justice system has eroded public trust—but that ends today," he stated.

Patel promised to rebuild the FBI into an agency that the American people can be proud of. "Working alongside the dedicated men and women of the Bureau and our partners, we will rebuild an FBI the American people can be proud of," Patel said. He also issued a stern warning to those who pose threats to Americans: "To those who seek to harm Americans—consider this your warning. We will hunt you down in every corner of this planet."

The Senate confirmation vote for Patel passed narrowly, with a 51-49 result. While Senators Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine opposed his nomination, the majority of Republican Senators, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, supported Patel. All Senate Democrats voted against his confirmation.



## Kickback Scheme, What Do I Care? Trump On USAID As BJP Slams Congress

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Former US President Donald Trump has once again voiced his criticism regarding the \$21 million allocated by the US government through USAID in 2012 for voter turnout programs in India. Calling the funding a "kickback scheme," Trump expressed indifference, stating, "What the hell do I care about it? We got enough problems." He did not provide further details or evidence to back his allegations.

Speaking to a gathering of Republican Party state Governors, Trump questioned the purpose of the funds, stating, "Can you imagine all that money going to India? I wonder what they think when they get it. Now, it is a kickback scheme... they kick it back to the people that send it." He further rambled on, suggesting that whenever there is a lack of understanding about certain matters, it could indicate a "kickback" situation. He also questioned the allocation of \$29 million to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh.

Trump's comments were part of his broader criticism of foreign aid, and he emphasized that his administration had terminated many such projects. "We got a lot. We got enough problems," he remarked, reiterating that the US needed to prioritize domestic issues.

The remarks sparked a political firestorm, especially in India, where Trump's comments were quickly picked up by opposition parties. The BJP, in particular, linked Trump's "kickback" comment to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's earlier remarks in the UK, suggesting that he had insulted India abroad. In May 2023, Gandhi had stated that global democracies were in decline, urging US and European nations to recognize the threats to democracy. The BJP seized upon his comments, accusing him of undermining India's image on the international stage. Meanwhile, BJP leaders like Amit Malviya and Pradeep Bhandari claimed that the \$21 million was used to sustain "deep state assets" in India, accusing Gandhi and the Congress party of benefiting from the foreign aid.



## Sebi Proposes Fast-Track Framework for REITs and InvITs Fundraising



The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has unveiled a new proposal aimed at streamlining fundraising for real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs). On Thursday, the regulator introduced a framework for conducting fast-track follow-on offers, a move designed to make capital raising more efficient and accessible for these investment vehicles.

The proposed framework is expected to enhance the fundraising process by offering quicker and more flexible methods for REITs and InvITs to issue additional units. This initiative aims to reduce the time required for follow-on offers, thereby benefiting both the sponsors and investors.

As part of the proposal, Sebi has recommended a lock-in period of three years for units issued to sponsors through a preferential issue. This lock-in requirement is intended to align the interests of sponsors with those of other investors, ensuring that sponsors remain committed to the long-term growth and stability of the trust.

Sebi's move comes as part of its ongoing efforts to make the Indian capital market more dynamic and supportive of various investment vehicles. With real estate and infrastructure being key sectors in the country's growth, the framework for fast-track follow-on offers is expected to facilitate smoother and faster fundraising, attracting more capital into these sectors.

This proposal is set to significantly impact how REITs and InvITs raise funds in the future, making it easier for them to tap into the market and continue their expansion efforts. The regulator's push to improve fundraising efficiency is seen as a positive development for both investors and sponsors, offering more opportunities for growth in these investment channels.

## Maruti Suzuki Aims for 50% Market Share and EV Dominance by FY30



India's largest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, has set an ambitious target to reclaim a 50% market share in the country, with a bold vision laid out in its mid-term management plan for FY25-FY30. The company, which once held a dominant share of the Indian automotive market in FY19, is keen to retake that position by securing one out of every two cars sold in the country.

Currently, Maruti Suzuki holds a market share of 41.6% as of FY23, having lost some ground to competitors like Tata Motors, Hyundai, and Kia. The company is now focusing on strategic moves to enhance its position, with plans to introduce new models, enhance its production capacity, and expand its reach across various segments, including electric vehicles (EVs).

Despite entering the EV market later than its competitors, Maruti Suzuki has big plans for electric vehicles and aims to be the country's largest producer, exporter, and seller of EVs. The company has yet to start sales of its electric vehicles but is positioning itself to make a significant impact in the segment. Maruti Suzuki's delayed entry into the EV space is expected to be addressed with the launch of new electric models in the coming years as part of its broader strategy.

The company's renewed focus on regaining its market dominance and its plans to lead the EV market reflect the broader trends in the Indian automotive industry, where electric mobility is increasingly gaining traction. With a strong brand presence and extensive distribution network, Maruti Suzuki is well-positioned to meet its ambitious goals, provided it executes its strategy effectively in the years leading up to FY30.

## Market falls as auto stocks tumble; Sensex down 429 points

Domestic stock markets fell sharply on Friday, weighed down by auto stocks and weak global cues. Investors remained cautious due to the absence of positive triggers and continued selling by foreign institutional investors (FIIs). The decline in auto stocks, particularly after reports of Tesla's potential entry into India, added to the downward pressure. Analysts suggest that unless the markets stabilize and consolidate over the next few days, a trend reversal is unlikely.

The BSE Sensex, which had closed at 75,735 in the previous session, opened at 75,612 and fluctuated between an intraday high of 75,612 and a low of 75,112. It eventually settled at 75,311, down 429 points. The NSE Nifty opened at 22,857, touched a high of 22,921 and a low of 22,720, before closing at 22,795, a loss of 117 points. The Nifty Bank also dropped 353 points to settle at 48,981.

Market breadth on the NSE favored sellers, with 1,744 stocks declining against 1,100 gainers out of the 2,916 traded. While 23 stocks hit 52-week highs, 91 reached new lows. Among the Nifty50 stocks, 13 advanced while 37 declined. Hindalco, Tata Steel, Eicher Motors, Larsen & Toubro, and SBI Life were the top gainers, while M&M, Adani Ports, BPCL, Tata Motors, and Adani Enterprises were among the



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biggest losers. The rupee weakened slightly against the US dollar, closing at 86.71. Meanwhile, Mahindra & Mahindra shares took a hit following reports of Tesla's potential India entry. Tata Steel CEO TV Narendran noted that US tariffs could impact Indian exports. Varun Beverages shares saw an uptick on high trading volume,

while Adani Ports announced an additional Rs 20,000 crore investment in VILINJAM port. NHPC shares have gained 10% over the past three sessions, and metal stocks such as Hindalco, Nalco,

and Vedanta recorded weekly gains of 7-10%. Analysts are anticipating a 25-basis point rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India in April. Additionally, SEBI and AMFI have introduced a monthly SIP scheme starting at Rs 250, while CDSL shares rose amid reports of NSDL's upcoming IPO. The share of foreign portfolio investors in mutual fund ownership of NSE-listed companies has reached a 13-year low.

Despite the market decline, investor sentiment remains focused on improving economic and corporate developments that could influence future trends.

## India on track for \$35 trillion economy, States & Centre in sync: Piyush Goyal

India is setting its sights on an ambitious economic transformation, with Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announcing plans to expand the country's economy from USD 4 trillion to USD 30-35 trillion by 2047. Speaking at the Invest Kerala Global Summit, Goyal highlighted the government's efforts to lay the foundation for this massive leap, emphasizing the central role of investment and growth in achieving this target.



During his address at the summit, attended by business leaders and policymakers, Goyal spoke of the enormous potential within India's market, urging global investors to take advantage of the country's growth trajectory. "There are unmatched opportunities for growth, development, and economic opportunities," he stated, underscoring India's attractive investment landscape.

The Indian government is working in tandem with state governments to create a conducive environment for business and economic expansion, Goyal assured the audience. His remarks were aimed at bolstering investor confidence and encouraging strategic investments across sectors. India's potential, he emphasized, lies not only in its growing domestic market but also in its increas-

ing role as a global economic player.

The event, held in Kerala, also marked a significant moment as the state is facing political differences at the local level. However, despite these challenges, Kerala continues to be an important part of India's overall growth story. The Minister's focus on the state's contribution to the national economy and its opportunities for foreign investments was clear.

India's goal to reach a \$30-35 trillion economy by 2047 is part of a broader vision that seeks to drive growth, create job opportunities, and elevate the country's global economic standing. As India moves toward this ambitious target, attracting both domestic and foreign investment will play a critical role in shaping its future.

### RBI MPC Minutes

## Interest Rate Cut and Focus on Economic Growth

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released the minutes from its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held on February 21, highlighting the rationale behind the recent 25 basis points (bps) repo rate reduction and discussing the outlook for inflation and economic growth. The decision marks the RBI's first rate cut in five years, signaling a shift in policy aimed at boosting India's economic momentum as inflation shows signs of aligning with the central bank's target.

In its first bi-monthly MPC meeting of 2025, the RBI lowered the benchmark repo rate from 6.50% to 6.25% and maintained a neutral stance. This move follows a prolonged period of restrictive monetary policy, with policymakers expressing concerns over its impact on economic growth. In his comments, RBI Governor Malhotra emphasized that the rate cut was necessary to support growth, noting that retail inflation was moving closer to the RBI's 4% target.

The MPC members were largely in agreement that India's inflation outlook was turning positive, particularly with food inflation easing. India's retail inflation fell to 4.31% in January, a five-month low. Governor Malhotra praised

the government's Union Budget proposals, particularly in agriculture and fiscal consolidation, which are seen as positive for price stability and inflation expectations. He suggested that the combination of monetary easing and growth-oriented measures from the Union Budget could lead to an uptick in household consumption and investments.

However, concerns over global uncertainties, such as trade policy and weather events, were also highlighted. External MPC member Saugata Bhattacharya noted that the policy repo rate might become excessively restrictive if inflation continues on its downward trajectory, potentially harming growth.

The meeting also stressed the need for continued support for economic growth. Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao suggested that with inflation aligning with the RBI's target, the central bank had more room to address growth concerns. MPC members pointed to subdued private consumption, particularly due to low real wage growth, and urged a more accommodative policy stance to



revive private capital expenditure. The committee also expressed concerns over the subdued Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into the country and noted that growth-supportive policies would remain a priority. External member Nagesh Kumar advocated for a more aggressive 50-basis-point rate cut to signal India's commitment to growth, although the committee opted for a more cautious 25 bps reduction due to global uncertainties.

Looking ahead, the RBI revised India's GDP growth forecast for FY2025-26 to 6.7%, while maintaining its inflation target for the fiscal year at 4.8%. The next MPC meeting is scheduled for April 2025.



## World's Most Expensive Teapot: "The Egoist" Worth \$3 Million



Tea lovers around the world are known for enjoying their favorite drink in beautifully crafted cups, saucers, and teapots. But some teapots go beyond just being functional and can be incredibly expensive. Take, for instance, a teapot that costs a jaw-dropping \$3,000,000 (approximately Rs 24 crore). This luxurious teapot, known as "The Egoist," set a world

record in 2016 for being the most valuable teapot ever created.

The Egoist, owned by the N Sethia Foundation in the UK, is a true masterpiece. It is crafted from 18-carat yellow gold, covered entirely with cut diamonds, and features a stunning 6.67-carat ruby at its center. The handle of the teapot is made from fossilized mammoth ivory, further

adding to its rarity and value. Italian jeweler Fulvio Scavia was the mastermind behind this extravagant creation, which is valued at an eye-watering Rs 24 crore. The Guinness World Records shared images of this incredible teapot on Twitter on August 9, and it quickly went viral, garnering over 80,000 views, 615 likes, and numerous comments from amused and curious users.

One Twitter user joked, "I wanted to purchase it but I can't use it to make tea, so I just dash it out," while another commented, "I'm stealing this, how can a teapot be richer and worth more than me, N Sethia Foundation needs to adopt me or else." A third user humorously questioned, "I'm curious, where did the foundation steal it from? I mean, seeing that most artifacts and antiques in the UK these days have been said to have been stolen from one colonized country or another."

Despite its hefty price tag, The Egoist teapot continues to be a fascinating symbol of luxury and fine craftsmanship, sparking both admiration and lighthearted humor online.

## UK Man Creates World Record By Getting Daughter's Name Tattooed 667 Times

Mark Owen Evans, a 49-year-old man from the UK, has reclaimed the Guinness World Record for the most tattoos of the same name on his body. Evans broke the previous record by inking his seven-year-old daughter's name, "Lucy," 400 more times, bringing the total number of tattoos to an impressive 667. Evans first set the record in 2017 when he had "Lucy" tattooed 267 times on his back. However, in 2020, the record was surpassed by Diedra Vigil from the United States, who had her name inked 300 times. Determined to regain his title, Evans embarked on a mission to beat the record and chose to have the additional tattoos done on his thighs, as there was no space left on his back. The 400 new tattoos were completed in five and a half hours, with 200 tattoos on each leg. "I couldn't wait to claim the record back and dedicate this to my daughter," Evans shared with Guinness World Records. His decision to attempt the record was not only to celebrate Lucy's birth but also to raise funds for the hospital that cared for her in the months following her arrival. Evans originally planned to have Lucy's name tattooed 100 times but was pleasantly surprised when tattoo artists helped him fit double that number on his back. He designed the tattoo himself, which featured an open book with



"Lucy" written on the pages, symbolizing his connection to the Guinness World Records book.

The tattoo process was a unique experience for Evans, as two tattoo artists worked simultaneously, which helped alleviate the pain. "It felt weird - because

there were two tattooists doing it at the same time, the pain was kind of cancelled out," he said.

Evans expressed his pride in his world record, saying, "I love that I'm literally wearing my record and it goes everywhere with me."

## BluSmart Launches Pet-Friendly Ride Service in Delhi and Gurugram

Electric ride-hailing service BluSmart has introduced a new service designed for customers traveling with their pets. The service, named 'Pet Rides,' aims to provide a reliable and comfortable transportation option for pet owners. This new feature is now available for riders in Delhi and Gurugram and can be used for both classic and rental trips.

Starting today, users can conveniently pre-book pet-friendly rides through the BluSmart app. When booking a ride, customers will find an option to travel with their pets at the bottom of the app interface. Additionally, users can easily access the Pet Rides service by clicking a dedicated banner within the app, where they can schedule their rides at their preferred time slots.

BluSmart's Pet Rides service offers a solution for those who have struggled to find transportation that accommodates pets. Whether heading to the vet, a park, or any other destination, pet owners can now enjoy a seamless and comfortable journey with their furry companions.

The service ensures that both pets and their owners can travel with peace of mind, knowing that their ride will be suitable for their needs. This initiative by BluSmart is part of the company's on-



going efforts to cater to a wider range of customer needs while maintaining its focus on sustainable and eco-friendly transport solutions.

BluSmart's electric vehicles, which are

designed to reduce carbon emissions, now offer even more convenience for pet owners, creating a unique offering in the rapidly growing market of ride-hailing services in India.

## Amazon to Shut Down Appstore for Android Devices, Discontinue Digital Program



Amazon has announced the discontinuation of its Amazon Appstore for Android devices, marking the end of a 14-year journey since its launch in 2011. The e-commerce giant revealed that the app store will be shut down for Android users on August 20, 2025. While it will no longer be available for download on Android smartphones and tablets, the Appstore will still function on Amazon's own devices, including Fire tablets, Fire TV streaming devices, and other devices running Fire OS. In addition to phasing out the Amazon Appstore for Android, Amazon will also be winding down its digital currency program, Amazon Coins. These virtual coins, which allowed users to make purchases or in-app transactions on the Appstore, will no longer be available for purchase. Existing users will need to use any remaining Coins by August 20, 2025, or they will be refunded after that date. A new FAQ page on Amazon's website clarifies that users will not be able to download the Appstore on Android devices af-

ter the shutdown. Additionally, Amazon warns that any apps already downloaded from the Appstore may cease functioning once the store is discontinued. For users with active subscriptions, the company advises disabling auto-renewals through the account settings on Amazon's website.

While the company has not provided an official reason for discontinuing the app store on Android devices, it is possible that the decision relates to increased restrictions on sideloaded apps and new APIs introduced by Google with Android 15. These changes have made it harder for alternative app stores to thrive on the Android ecosystem, potentially influencing Amazon's decision.

Although the closure marks the end of Amazon's Appstore for Android, users with Amazon's own devices will continue to have access to the store. The shutdown of Amazon Coins further signifies the company's shift away from the program, as it transitions to other business priorities.

## Rare "Doomsday Fish" Washes Ashore in Mexico, Sparks Alarm



A rare and elusive oarfish was spotted in the shallow waters of Baja California Sur, along Mexico's Pacific Coast, sparking alarm among locals and online communities alike. Known for its long, ribbon-like body and vibrant orange fins, the deep-sea fish is often referred to as the "doomsday fish" due to legends that associate its sightings with impending disasters.

The oarfish, a creature rarely seen by humans, has long been believed to be a harbinger of bad news, particularly disasters or destruction. In Japanese mythology, it is known as "Ryugu no tsukai," meaning "Messenger of the Sea God." This myth gained widespread attention when approximately 20 oarfish washed ashore ahead of Japan's catastrophic 2011 earthquake, leading many to draw connections between the fish's appearance and significant seismic events.

A video of the oarfish washing ashore in Mexico was shared by an X user named FearBuck, who wrote, "A deep-sea creature

rarely seen by humans called the oarfish has washed ashore in Mexico!" The video quickly garnered attention and sparked a flood of comments. Many users expressed their concern, with one writing, "There have actually been multiple oarfish that have been spotted on beaches recently. Does that mean doomsday is coming?"

Despite these concerns, experts disagree with the claim that oarfish sightings are always linked to impending disasters. While the fish's mysterious nature and dramatic appearance have fueled superstition, marine biologists emphasize that oarfish are naturally inclined to swim closer to shore when injured or dying, and their rare appearance doesn't necessarily predict a disaster.

While some continue to fear the arrival of a major event, others see the fish's appearance as a fascinating reminder of the mysterious creatures that inhabit our oceans. Regardless of the superstition, the sighting of the "doomsday fish" has once again captured the imagination

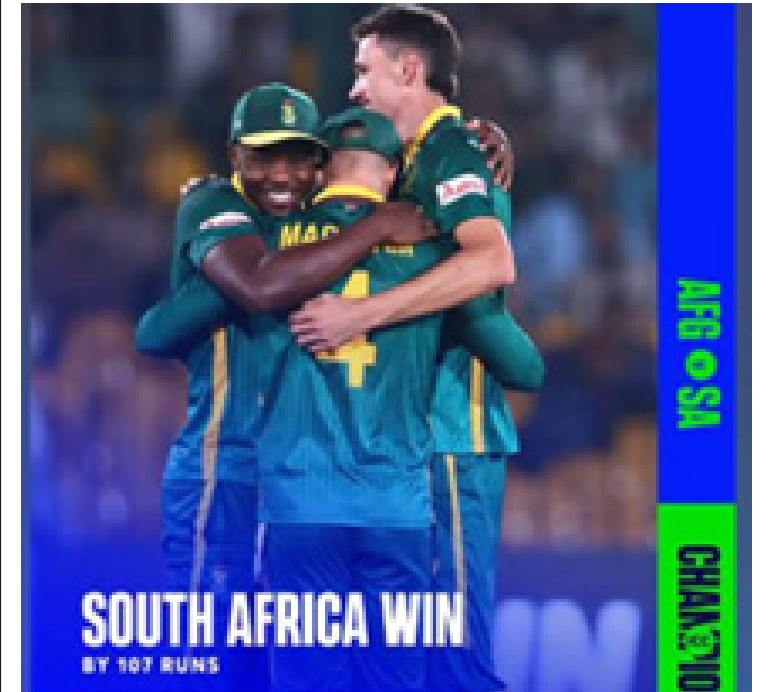


## PCB Seeks Explanation from ICC Over Omission of Pakistan's Name in Champions Trophy Branding



The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has formally requested an explanation from the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding the omission of Pakistan's name from the Champions Trophy 2025 branding. During the live broadcast of Thursday's match between India and Bangladesh in Dubai, the event logo displayed "Champions Trophy 2025" but did not include Pakistan as the host nation. This oversight has prompted the PCB to seek clarification from the ICC, raising concerns about the accurate representation of the host country for such a prestigious tournament. Sources within the ICC have informally attributed the omission to an early technical error, suggesting that the issue was not deliberate. The Champions Trophy 2025 is scheduled to be held in Pakistan, making the inclusion of the host nation's name a critical aspect of event branding. The ICC is expected to address the PCB's concerns in the near future.

## South Africa Beat Afghanistan by 107 Runs in ICC Champions Trophy Opener



South Africa dominated Afghanistan in their ICC Champions Trophy opener at Karachi, securing a comfortable 107-run victory. Chasing 316, Afghanistan's wickets fell at regular intervals despite a valiant knock of 90 from Rahmat Shah. South Africa, batting first, posted a formidable total of 315/6, thanks to a maiden ODI century from Ryan Rickleton (103). Temba Bavuma also contributed a solid 58, and Rassie van der Dussen scored a well-timed 50. Mohammad Nabi was the best bowler for Afghanistan, tak-

ing 2/51 in his 10 overs. Afghanistan's run-chase was derailed early with key dismissals, including openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (10) and Ibrahim Zadran (16). Rahmat Shah's resistance wasn't enough as Afghanistan was bowled out for 208 in 43.3 overs. Kagiso Rabada (3/36) and Marco Jansen (2/39) led the charge for South Africa with the ball. South Africa's all-round performance handed Afghanistan a crushing 107-run loss.

## India Expresses Interest in Hosting 2030 Commonwealth Games



India has shown its interest in bidding to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games, with the Sports Ministry considering the possibility of including sports disciplines that were excluded from the 2026 edition. The upcoming 2026 Commonwealth Games, scheduled in Glasgow, will feature a truncated sports programme, reducing the number of

events due to time constraints after Glasgow's late bid to host the Games. Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) President Chris Jenkins previously confirmed that the 2026 edition will feature fewer sports, likely around 10 disciplines. The exclusion of popular events like boxing, wrestling, hockey, cricket, badminton,

and shooting, in which India excels, has disappointed many athletes. The Sports Ministry is also contemplating the possibility of hosting the dropped sports in India next year, though discussions are still informal. The final decision will depend on discussions with the 2026 host and the readiness of the organisers.

## India Men's Hockey Team Secures 3-1 Comeback Win Over Ireland in FIH Hockey Pro League



India's men's hockey team overcame a 0-1 deficit to secure a 3-1 comeback victory against Ireland in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Friday. Ireland took the lead in the 8th minute through Jeremy Duncan's strike, following a swift attack from the right flank. Despite India's slow start, Mandeep Singh's equalizer in the 22nd minute set the tone for a strong comeback. The second half saw India take control, with Jarmanpreet Singh scoring in the 45th minute off a rebound from a penalty corner, giving India a 2-1 lead. As Ireland's defense struggled under pressure, Sukhjeet Singh sealed the win for India with a brilliant goal in the final minute, following a well-executed variation on a penalty corner. The victory marked India's third win in the league, bringing them to nine points from five matches.



Top seeds Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Vijay Sundar Prashanth kept the Indian flag flying high as they reached the men's doubles final at the Maha Open ATP Challenger 100 Tennis Championship on Friday. The duo triumphed over Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha and Courtney John Lock of Zimbabwe, securing a 7-6(5), 6-3 victory in the semifinals. They will now face second seeds Blake Bayldon and Matthew Christopher Romios of Australia, who edged out Jay Clarke and Jurij Rodionov

6-3, 3-6, 10-5 in a thrilling encounter. In singles, sixth-seeded Brandon Holt of the USA caused an upset by defeating top-seeded Billy Harris of Great Britain 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, to advance to the semifinals. Holt will meet eighth-seeded Alexis Galarneau of Canada, who triumphed over last year's winner Valentin Vacherot of Monaco. The competition is being held at the Mhalunge Balewadi Tennis Stadium in association with the Department of Sports and Youth Services of Maharashtra.

## FIH Hockey Pro League (Women): Germany Secure 4-0 Win Over India

Germany clinched their first win of the season with a dominant 4-0 victory over India in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024/25 (Women) clash at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, on Friday. Goals from Amelie Wortmann (3'), Sophia Schwabe (18', 46'), and Johanna Hachenberg (60') helped Germany rise to the seventh

spot in the standings. The Germans took an early lead in the third minute, with Wortmann slotting home a low cross from Aina Kresken. India's defense, led by goalkeeper Savita Punia, held strong despite continuous pressure from Germany, with the visitors winning several penalty corners.

Schwabe extended Germany's lead with a brilliant individual effort in the 18th minute and added another in the 46th minute. Despite a few chances for India, including a disallowed goal from Mumtaz Khan, Germany sealed the win when Hachenberg scored in the final minute to secure a 4-0 victory.





## Bobby Deol Talks About Career Turnaround with Aashram Role



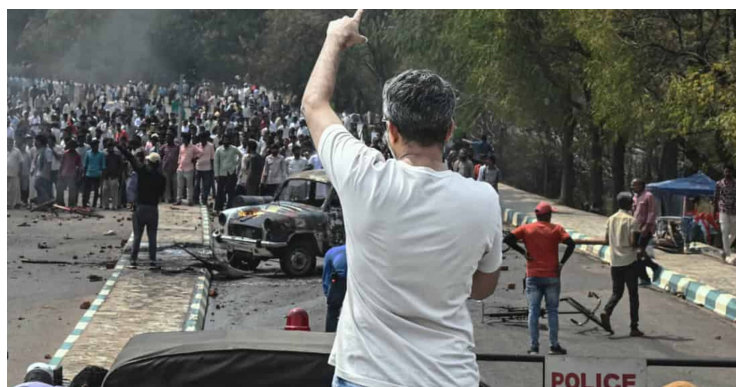
Bobby Deol opened up about his role as the anti-hero Baba Nirala in the web series Aashram, revealing that he took up the role at a time when he believed he would no longer be offered hero-like roles. The actor, who was keen on exploring different types of characters, embraced the opportunity to play a morally complex figure in Aashram, which marked a significant turning point in his career.

Directed by Prakash Jha, Aashram follows Baba Nirala, a self-proclaimed god-

man leading a fraudulent empire filled with drugs and exploitation. The first season of the series premiered in 2020, and Deol's performance was widely appreciated. Speaking at the trailer launch for Aashram season 3 part 2, titled Ek Badnaam Aashram, the actor shared that he had kept his participation in the series a secret from his family, eager to see their reaction after the show's release.

The new season is set to premiere on February 27 on MX Player.

## Prashanth Neel Launches 'NTRNeel' with NTR Jr. Into Production



Director Prashanth Neel, famed for his blockbuster hits K.G.F: Chapter 1, K.G.F: Chapter 2, and Salaar Part 1: Ceasefire, has officially launched the shoot for his highly anticipated film, tentatively titled NTRNeel. The film, which pairs Neel with NTR Jr. of RRR fame, began production on Thursday at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad, with over 2000 junior artists involved in the shoot. This film, which has been eagerly awaited by fans, marks a dynamic collaboration between two massive forces in Indian cinema. In this initial schedule, the team is working on a huge action episode set to leave a lasting impact. NTR Jr. is expected to join the shoot in the next schedule.

The official social media announcement shared a teaser image from the set, with the caption: "The SOIL finally welcomes its REIGN to leave a MARK in the HISTORY books of Indian Cinema! #NTRNeel shoot has officially begun."

The film promises a thrilling action experience and is expected to elevate NTR Jr.'s on-screen presence. Scheduled for release on January 9, 2026, NTRNeel will be available in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada, and Malayalam. The project is produced by Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts, under the leadership of Kalyan Ram Nandamuri, Naveen Yerneneni, Ravi Shankar Yalamanchili, and Hari Krishna Kosaraju.

## Samantha Ruth Prabhu Embraces Silence, Encourages Fans to Try It

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently shared her experience of spending three days in complete silence, urging her fans to try it as well. On Instagram, she posted a picture of a card that read "Silence" and revealed her "Silence sadhna" journey, where she disconnected from her phone and any form of communication. She reflected on how being alone with oneself can be one of the scariest experiences but also one of the most rewarding. Samantha encouraged her followers to embrace this

silence, saying, "Would I recommend you try it? A million times, yes." In addition to this, last month, Samantha spoke about the importance of meditation in her life. She described meditation as her "anchor," offering a way to return to a calm and peaceful state amid chaos. She encouraged her followers to meditate for 15 minutes daily, emphasizing its calming benefits. Fans overwhelmingly expressed interest in trying silence and meditation themselves.



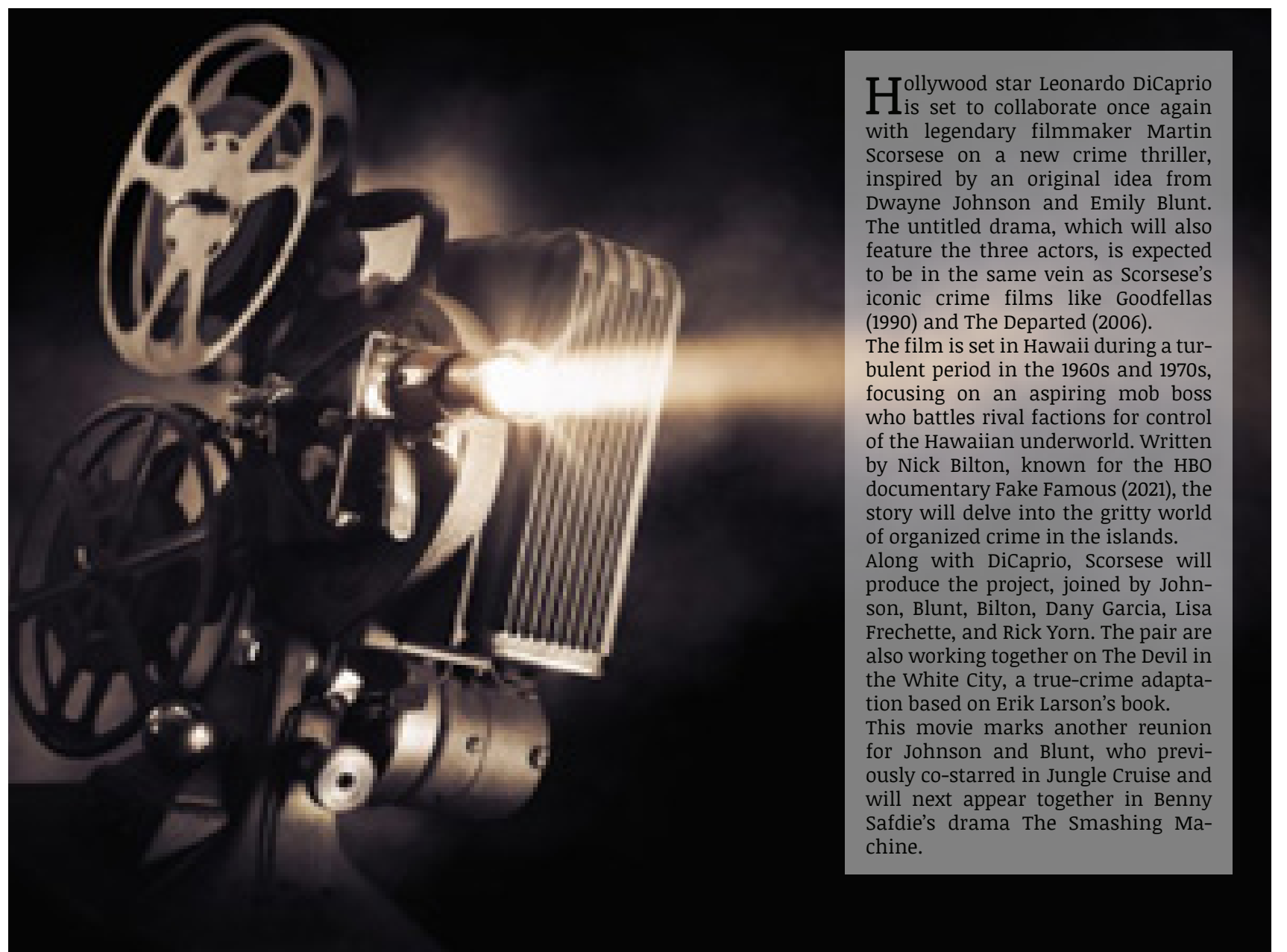
## Kangana Ranaut's 'Emergency' to Stream on Netflix from March 17



Kangana Ranaut's controversial film Emergency will be available for streaming on Netflix starting March 17. The film, which was released in theaters on January 17 after several delays, has sparked controversy, particularly regarding its censor certificate and allegations of misrepresentation of the Sikh community. Directed and produced by Ranaut, the movie portrays the period of the Emergency imposed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, with Ranaut playing the role of Gandhi herself. Ranaut shared an image from

the film on Instagram, announcing the streaming release date. Despite protests from Sikh organizations, including the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Emergency faced bans in Punjab cinemas. Ranaut responded to the protests, calling the situation a "complete harassment of art and the artist." The film also features Anupam Kher, Shreyas Talpade, Vishak Nair, Milind Soman, and the late actor Satish Kaushik. It was produced by Zee Studios and Manikarnika Films.

## Leonardo DiCaprio to Produce Martin Scorsese's Crime Movie Set in 1960s-1970s Hawaii



Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio is set to collaborate once again with legendary filmmaker Martin Scorsese on a new crime thriller, inspired by an original idea from Dwayne Johnson and Emily Blunt. The untitled drama, which will also feature the three actors, is expected to be in the same vein as Scorsese's iconic crime films like Goodfellas (1990) and The Departed (2006). The film is set in Hawaii during a turbulent period in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on an aspiring mob boss who battles rival factions for control of the Hawaiian underworld. Written by Nick Bilton, known for the HBO documentary Fake Famous (2021), the story will delve into the gritty world of organized crime in the islands. Along with DiCaprio, Scorsese will produce the project, joined by Johnson, Blunt, Bilton, Dany Garcia, Lisa Frechette, and Rick Yorn. The pair are also working together on The Devil in the White City, a true-crime adaptation based on Erik Larson's book. This movie marks another reunion for Johnson and Blunt, who previously co-starred in Jungle Cruise and will next appear together in Benny Safdie's drama The Smashing Machine.

## Eminem to Perform in India: What We Know So Far

India has become a hotspot for international music concerts, with recent performances by Ed Sheeran and Coldplay captivating fans. The latest buzz suggests that rap legend Eminem will be the next global artist to perform in India, with reports indicating a concert scheduled for June 3, 2025, in Mumbai. While no official confirmation has been made yet, the concert is expected to take place at one

of the city's prominent venues, either DY Patil Stadium or Jio World Garden, which have hosted previous international events. This performance is part of Eminem's world tour, covering major cities across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, with Mumbai being a key stop for his Indian fanbase. Fans are eagerly awaiting this debut performance in India, with the anticipation high

for an electrifying setlist featuring iconic tracks such as Lose Yourself, Stan, Without Me, and songs from his latest album Relapse Reloaded. Ticket sales, pricing, and other event details are yet to be released, but if the reports hold true, Eminem's concert will further solidify India's status as a top destination for international artists.

