



**Weather Forecast**

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

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



\$21 million for voter turnout in India.

Why are we caring about India turnout? Trump questioned.

DOGE confirmed the cancellation of the USAID fund.

"I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected," Trump hinted at election interference.

BJP and Congress Clash Over Trump's Allegations

**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, US-AID'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.



**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
Former US President Donald Trump slammed the now-cancelled \$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 cancel-

lation 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. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera questioned the Modi government's role, asking, "If this money entered India, why did the BJP allow it?"



Revanth Reddy slams KCR for aiding Jagan

Is BJP ready for a debate on Modi's 12-year rule?

Criticizes BRS for blocking industries in Palamuru

**No Panchayat with Chandrababu if Palamuru projects were completed by KCR**

**TPN Correspondent | Telangana**  
Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy launched a scathing attack on former CM KCR, stating that if the Palamuru projects had been completed during KCR's tenure, there would have been no disputes with Chandrababu Naidu over water sharing. He alleged that KCR had invited Jagan to Pragathi Bhavan with official honors and served him a lavish feast, ultimately paving the way for Telangana's water exploitation through Rayalaseema lift irrigation. "Isn't this sin yours, KCR?" Revanth questioned, adding that it was YS Rajasekhara Reddy who made KCR carry slippers and do the dirty work. Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for Indiramma houses in Narayanpet, Revanth accused KCR of corruption in the ₹1 lakh crore Kaleshwaram project, which he claimed has already collapsed. He also alleged that KCR attempted to incite violence in Lagacharla and even plotted to kill the district collector. He demanded to know why

industries were being blocked in Palamuru, questioning BRS's motives.

**"BRS committed extortion in the name of project redesigning"**

The Chief Minister accused BRS leaders of looting funds under the guise of redesigning projects. He stated that BRS leaders are asking for votes only where Indiramma houses were given, and Congress is ready for that challenge. "Congress will ask for votes where Indiramma houses exist,

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# Are there Covert BRS Officials in Government Departments?

- Madhu Yashki's hot comments!

Are there covert officials in government departments?

Are they still working in favor of BRS?

Are they leaking government information to the Gulabi Party?

What is the reason behind Madhu Yashki's comments?

Who is the official who worked in favor of Kavitha?

Has the CMO focused on covert officials?



**TPN , kishore katta**  
Are there covert officials in Telangana's government departments? Are they still working in favor of BRS? Are they secretly providing government information to the Gulabi Party? These questions have become a hot topic in the state's political discussions, gaining momentum after TPCC campaign committee chairman Madhu Yashki Goud made sensational allegations. Speaking to media representatives at Gandhi Bhavan, he claimed that officers who held dominance in the previous government are now in key positions and are

leaking government information in collusion with the opposition. He suggested that officials who played a key role in BRS's ten-year rule should be sidelined. He also stated that a list of corrupt officers has reached CM Revanth Reddy and urged immediate action against them. Madhu Yashki further blamed the police for the murder of Rajalingamurthy in Bhupalpally, stating that despite knowing the life threat, they failed to provide security.

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# PIL Filed in HC Against KCR's Absence from Assembly

**TPN Correspondent | Telangana**  
A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Telangana High Court challenging the continued absence of former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) from the Assembly. The petition, filed by D Vijaypal Reddy, president of the Telangana Federation of Farmers' Associations, urged the court to direct the Speaker and his office to ensure KCR's participation in Assembly sessions. He pointed out that KCR has not attended the Assembly since assuming the role of

Leader of the Opposition on December 16, 2023. Reddy also criticized the Speaker's office for not taking any action on KCR's absence, stating that elected representatives must be present to voice public concerns. He emphasized that MLA salaries were increased to facilitate active participation in legislative proceedings. Additionally, Reddy urged that if KCR is unable to fulfill his duties, he should be relieved of the position and a new Leader of the Opposition should be appointed by BRS working president KT Rama Rao (KTR).



# GHMC official caught by wife with another woman



**TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad**  
GHMC Joint Commissioner Janakiram was allegedly caught by his wife while spending time privately with another

woman in an apartment in Warasiguda. The incident led to a heated altercation, with Janakiram and the woman reportedly being beaten

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# TGSRTC Expands Digital Payment System for Bus Tickets



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## TGSRTC Expands Digital Payment System for Bus Tickets

- Digital payments to be implemented across all TGSRTC buses.
- QR-based transactions introduced, with a focus on reducing processing time.
- 6,000 i-TIMS machines procured for phase-wise implementation.

TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) is set to expand digital payment options across its entire fleet, making it more convenient for passengers to pay bus fares without the need for exact change.



After successful trials on select routes, TGSRTC is rolling out digital payment facilities statewide. Currently, many air-conditioned long-distance buses are already equipped with this system, receiving positive feedback from passengers while also easing fare collection for staff. A pilot project in Hyderabad, covering bus depots such as Bandlaguda and Dilsukhnagar, proved

effective in reducing the time spent on fare collection and ticket issuance. Encouraged by these results, TGSRTC is moving ahead with a broader implementation plan. Passengers can make payments via QR codes, with transactions currently taking around 30 seconds. Officials are working to further streamline the process and resolve technical issues. To support this transition, TGSRTC has procured 6,000 Intelligent Ticket Management System (i-TIMS) machines in the first phase, out of the 10,000 required across the state. City buses will be equipped first before the system expands to other regions.

As i-TIMS machines are touch-based, bus conductors have undergone three months of training to ensure smooth operation. Challenges identified during the trial phase are being addressed based on staff feedback. "We have tested these automatic ticketing machines for software updates, cash transfers, and accurate tracking of bus stops. A dedicated team is working to fix any technical glitches," a TGSRTC official stated.

## Will Shutdown HYDRAA if it acts against GO 99

- Telangana HC warns HYDRAA of shutdown if it violates GO 99.
- Court questions demolitions based on personal complaints rather than legal grounds.
- HYDRAA ordered to maintain status quo and submit a response by March 5.



TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

The Telangana High Court strongly criticized the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) on Thursday, cautioning that it may shut down the agency if it continues to act against Government Order 99 (GO 99).

Justice K Lakshman expressed dissatisfaction over HYDRAA's approach, noting that despite issuing over 20 orders in similar cases, the agency had failed to adhere to proper legal procedures before carrying out demolitions. The court was hearing a petition filed by A Praveen, who alleged that HYDRAA demolished his shed in Muttangi village, Sangareddy district, without proper notice or consideration of documents proving his land ownership.

HYDRAA officials, including Inspector Rajasekhara, appeared in court, defending their actions by claiming that the demolitions were conducted only after verifying documents. They argued that the permissions granted by the panchayat in November 2023 were obtained under pressure.

However, Justice Lakshman questioned how permissions granted in 2023 could be revoked in 2025 without due legal process. He also criticized HYDRAA for taking action based on complaints from private groups like the Gayatri Members Association, rather than legal mandates.

Stating that determining land rights falls under civil courts and not HYDRAA, the judge directed the agency to maintain the status quo on the petitioner's property and submit a counter by March 5, deferring further proceedings until then.

## Maoist Leader Accused of Killing Two Police Officers Surrenders

TPN Correspondent | Warangal

A female Maoist leader accused of killing two police officers has surrendered in Telangana's Warangal district. Vanjem Kesha, a member of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), turned herself in on Friday, February 21.

Warangal Police Commissioner Amber Kishore Jha revealed that Kesha had been associated with the Maoist group since childhood, having been a member of Chaitanya Natya Mandali. Her father, Hidma, also a Maoist worker, is currently in jail.

"In 2017, Kesha joined CPI (Maoist) through Pamed local squad commander Gotte Kamala and worked in the Chaitanya Natya Mandali under Punnem Joga for two years. Later, she was transferred to the Abujmarh hill forest area and became a member of the Protection Group for the Central Committee led by Kadari Satyanarayana Reddy," said Commissioner Jha.

Kesha remained in the Maoist area committee until December 2022 before moving to Chhattisgarh's North Bastar division, where she met her husband, Ramesh, also a Maoist leader, who is now imprisoned in Maharashtra.

Involvement in Police Killings

In April 2024, Kesha became the female commander of the Kosa Protection Group. During a gunfire exchange in Koyalibeda village, she killed a police officer and seriously injured another. She was also responsible for another officer's death in the Abujmarh hill forest area. Both attacks occurred in Maoist-affected regions of Chhattisgarh, following which the Telangana government announced a ₹4 lakh bounty on her.

Reasons for Surrender

Kesha surrendered after the Telangana government introduced rehabilitation schemes for former Maoists. Commissioner Jha assured her full assistance and safety, citing health concerns as another reason behind her decision to lay down arms.

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## No Panchayat with Chandrababu if Palamuru projects were completed by KCR

but is BRS ready to ask where their double-bedroom houses are?" he questioned. He also accused KCR of marketing Palamuru's poverty for political gains. Revanth criticized KCR for remaining silent while Andhra Pradesh was diverting Krishna water. He reminded that BRS lost the 2023 Assembly elections, failed to win a single MP seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and is now struggling to find candidates for the MLC elections. "Is this even a party?" he mocked.

**"Don't obstruct land acquisition, fair compensation will be given"**

The Chief Minister urged Palamuru residents not to oppose land acquisition, assuring them that fair compensation would be provided. "Your son and brother are here, so compensation will definitely be

given," he promised, vowing to complete the Uddanpur project. "If we don't address Palamuru's struggles now, what is the use of having one of our own in power?" he asked.

**"Is BJP ready for a debate on Modi's 12-year rule?"**

Revanth Reddy threw an open challenge to Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay for a debate on Prime Minister Modi's 12-year rule versus Congress's 12-month rule in Telangana. "We are ready to come to any center, anytime," he declared, along with Deputy CM Damodar Rajanarasimha.

He reminded that Modi, before coming to power, had promised to bring back black money and deposit it in every Indian's account. "Has even one person received it?" he questioned, alleging that instead, black money holders have fled the country.

## GHMC official caught by wife with another woman

by his wife and relatives.

Upon receiving information, Warasiguda police intervened, rescuing the duo and shifting them to the police station. Janakiram, who serves in the administration department of GHMC, had reportedly been staying away from home for some time, citing work commitments. His wife's suspicions grew after noticing his frequent phone conversations and un-

usual behavior.

Acting on her doubts, she and her relatives tracked him down on Friday morning and confronted him at the apartment. She also accused Janakiram of engaging in multiple extramarital affairs, including with women from his workplace. She further claimed that she had caught him in such situations several times before.

## Are there Covert BRS Officials in Government Departments?

He demanded strict action against the culprits. He also alleged that officials who gained power under the previous government are still influential and misleading the administration. According to him, these officials, who assisted in financial irregularities under BRS, continue to hold key positions. He pointed out former Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar as an example, alleging his involvement in a ₹11 billion GST scam. He claimed that the investigation is being delayed because many officials under scrutiny are themselves involved in corruption. He also demanded action against Amoy Kumar.

Madhu Yashki further accused certain officials of working closely with BRS leaders and leaking crucial government

information. He stated that an officer who helped Kavitha in Singareni is still in a key position, proving how BRS loyalists continue to hold power. He also criticized intelligence failures in multiple instances and accused the NDA of misusing agencies like CBI and ED for political gains, just as BRS is using government officials.

He alleged that BRS leaders bribed police officials, particularly in LB Nagar, to influence votes. With reports suggesting that a list of such officials has reached CM Revanth Reddy, speculations are rife that these officials might soon be transferred. Now, the big question remains—who are these covert officials, and when will the government act against them?

## Telangana to Boost Agriculture with Israeli Technology: Tummala

TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has announced plans to modernize the state's agricultural sector using advanced Israeli technology. The initiative aims to enhance farming efficiency and sustainability through innovative techniques.

During a meeting with representatives from Israeli firms MDHAI and Windponics at the Secretariat, the minister emphasized the government's commitment to integrating modern agricultural methods. He noted that Telangana is looking to leverage technologies such as precision farming, artificial intelligence, sensor-based automation, and groundwater treatment to improve farm productivity.

Nageswara Rao stressed the importance of making Israeli exper-



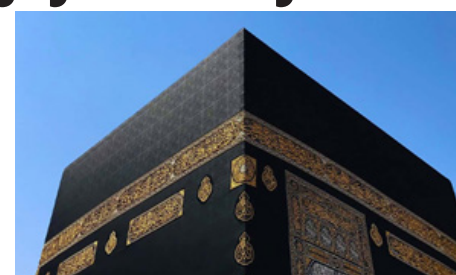
tise accessible to local farmers and suggested preparing a detailed project report to facilitate the collaboration. The government plans to work closely with universities to implement pilot projects, ensuring proper training and support for farmers adopting these advanced techniques.

## Telangana to Send 46 Khadim-ul-Hujjaj for Haj 2025

TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

The Telangana Haj Committee has begun the selection process for Khadim-ul-Hujjaj volunteers for Haj 2025, with 46 candidates set to be chosen from the state. A total of 172 applications were received, and the selection process was overseen by Telangana Haj Committee Chairman Maulana Syed Ghulam Afzal Biyabani Khusro Pasha.

Following a new rule by the Central Government that reduced the pilgrim-to-volunteer ratio from 200 to 150, the number of Khadim-ul-Hujjaj selected from Telangana was adjusted accordingly. Unlike previous years, where selection was done through a lottery, this year's



process includes interviews and a computerized test to assess candidates' knowledge of Haj procedures, experience, and fitness.

Maulana Khusro Pasha emphasized that the Telangana government is committed to ensuring smooth arrangements for Haj pilgrims, with enhanced facilities at the Haj camp and airport.

## Uttam Kumar Reddy blames BRS for Krishna water issue

TPN Correspondent | Telangana

Minister of Water Resources and Civil Supplies Uttam Kumar Reddy criticized the previous BRS government, accusing it of negligence in the Krishna River water issue and failing to complete irrigation projects in South Telangana. He claimed that due to BRS's inefficiency, Telangana was unfairly treated in water allocation.

"The BRS leaders who served as ministers in the previous government have no moral right to talk about the projects in the Krishna Basin. Isn't it true that they neglected the projects sanctioned during our Congress government's tenure for the last ten years?" he questioned.

He alleged that despite taking loans amounting to ₹1.81 lakh crore, the BRS government failed to ensure justice for Telangana in Krishna water allocation.

"During their tenure, not only were no projects in the Krishna Basin completed, but they were also completely negligent in allocating

funds. As a result, South Telangana lost the capacity to store 100 TMC of water annually," he stated.

He pointed out that the reservoirs through the SLBC tunnel in Nalgonda district have a capacity of 10 TMC, Dindi Lift Irrigation Scheme reservoirs have 25 TMC, and Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme reservoirs have 65 TMC. "Despite these projects, the BRS government failed to allocate funds, worsening drought conditions in South Telangana," he alleged.

Uttam Kumar Reddy also accused BRS of failing to acquire land for irrigation projects and leaving canal and distributor construction incomplete. He held former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and ex-irrigation Minister Harish Rao responsible for the stalled projects in the Krishna Basin. Announcing the Congress government's commitment, he assured, "Under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, we will complete all Krishna Basin projects in the next three years."







## BJP MP Warns 'Corrupt' IAS, IPS Officers of 'Saffron Book'

Eatala Rajender warns corrupt IAS, IPS officers of consequences. Criticizes Congress' caste census as a "drama" and questions its effectiveness. Urges voters to back BJP candidate Puli Sarottam Reddy in MLC elections.



TPN Correspondent | Warangal

Malkajgiri BJP MP Eatala Rajender has warned IAS and IPS officers engaging in corruption under political influence, stating that they will be named in a "saffron book" and face consequences from higher authorities. Speaking at a press conference in Warangal on Wednesday, February 19, during the campaign for the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda constituency teacher MLC elections, Rajender accused senior officials of misusing their power and assured that they would be held accountable.

He also criticized the Congress-led government's caste census initiative, calling it a mere political stunt. Rajender argued that after one survey was completed, another was ordered, exposing the inefficiency of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's administration. Mocking the Congress' claim of offering 42% seats to BCs in local body elections, he pointed out that the party failed to provide official reservations, making their promise meaningless.

He also raised concerns about the practicality of conducting a nationwide caste census, citing variations in caste classifications across states. "For instance, Lambadas are considered SCs in Telangana but OBCs in Karnataka," he said.

Rajender urged voters to support BJP candidate Puli Sarottam Reddy with their first preference vote. The press conference saw participation from key BJP leaders, including Warangal district president Ganta Ravi Kumar and former MP Dr. Sitaram Naik, who reiterated the party's stance on corruption and governance issues.

## Public Inquiry into Kaleshwaram Project to Begin on Feb 24



TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

The commission led by Justice PC Ghosh, which is investigating irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, is set to begin a multi-phase public inquiry from February 24. The project includes the construction of the Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla barrages.

Justice Ghosh is scheduled to arrive in Hyderabad on February 23 after a visit to Kolkata. The commission, which has already recorded testimonies and examined several individuals, is now expected to summon key figures from the previous BRS government, including senior bureaucrats and engineers involved in the project.

To allow for a detailed investigation, the government has extended the commission's deadline until the end of April, as it was initially set to conclude this month. The National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) is also expected to present its final report on construction deficiencies in the barrages during this phase of the inquiry. The commission had earlier urged the NDSA to expedite its findings, and a preliminary report has already been submitted to the Ministry of Jal Shakti. The inquiry comes amid growing concerns over the structural integrity and safety of the Kaleshwaram project, one of the largest multi-stage lift irrigation projects in the world.

# Telangana MLC elections

CEO reviews preparations with collectors

24-hour security, CCTV surveillance arranged at polling stations

TPN Correspondent | Telangana  
Telangana Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) C. Sudharshan Reddy on Friday held a video conference with district collectors to review the poll preparations for the upcoming MLC elections scheduled for February 27. During the meeting, the collectors briefed the CEO on election readiness, including polling station arrangements, webcasting facilities, deployment of micro-observers, and training for polling personnel. They also discussed the overhauling of ballot boxes and security measures for polling stations and strong

rooms where polled ballot boxes will be stored. Officials assured the CEO that 24-hour security and CCTV surveillance have been arranged at polling stations and strong rooms. The CEO emphasized the need for smooth coordination among polling officials, proper distribution of voter slips, and the deployment of trained micro-observers.

The biennial MLC elections will be held in the following constituencies:

- Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Graduates' Constituency



- Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar & Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Teachers' Constituencies
- Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Teachers' Constituencies
- Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Teac hers' Constituency

Election authorities are ensuring all necessary measures for the smooth conduct of the polls.

## RS Praveen Kumar slams Congress for targeting Harish Rao

Alleges political vendetta, misuse of police to silence opposition

TPN Correspondent | Telangana

BRS leader RS Praveen Kumar has accused the Congress government of targeting former minister T Harish Rao with fabricated cases, alleging that the ruling party is using police and legal mechanisms to suppress opposition voices.

Speaking at Telangana Bhavan on Friday, Praveen Kumar claimed that Harish Rao was being framed in corruption and phone tapping cases solely because he was effectively cornering the government on public issues. He alleged that a criminal named Chakradhar, reportedly close to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, had filed a false complaint at Panjagutta police station, leading to the FIR against Harish Rao.

"Harish Rao, a seven-time MLA from Siddipet, served Telangana with dedication, particularly during the Covid-19 crisis as the health minister. Unlike Revanth Reddy, who was involved in the Cash-for-Vote scam, Harish Rao has never been linked to corruption. Yet, he is being implicated through multiple cases, showing the Congress government's intent to silence him," Praveen Kumar stated. He further accused police officials of acting under political pressure, specifically naming DCP SM Vijay Kumar for allegedly coercing individuals to falsely implicate Harish Rao. He cited the



alleged torture of Vamsi Krishna, a former associate of Harish Rao, in the phone-tapping case as an example of such pressure tactics. Highlighting Chakradhar's criminal background, Praveen Kumar pointed out multiple cases against him, including charges of sexual assault, fraud involving job aspirants, and kidnapping. He questioned how an FIR was swiftly registered against Harish Rao based on Chakradhar's complaint despite a previous High Court writ being withdrawn.

He also criticized the selective approach of law enforcement, alleging that complaints against Congress leaders were ignored while BRS leaders like Kaushik Reddy and Erolla Srinivas were being falsely implicated. Praveen Kumar urged the DGP to ensure additional security for Harish Rao, citing threats from Congress leaders, and warned that BRS was ready to counter any politically motivated cases.

## Revanth Reddy pledging Telangana to Rahul Gandhi

Congress collecting 'Rahul and Revanth tax' from builders, industrialists

TPN Correspondent | Medak

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, accusing him of pledging Telangana to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Speaking at a graduate and teacher MLC election campaign meeting in Medak on Friday, he alleged that the Congress was imposing a "Rahul and Revanth tax" on builders and industrialists in the state.

Kishan Reddy claimed that Revanth Reddy had failed to deliver on his promises and had disappointed the people of Telangana. "Congress came to power promising change, but the only change we see is their leaders grabbing power and opportunities while neglecting the welfare of the people," he remarked.

He further stated that voters in the Adilabad-Nizamabad-Karimnagar and Medak graduate and teachers' constituencies would teach Congress a lesson for its false promises. Confident of BJP's future prospects, he asserted that the party would emerge victorious in all upcoming elections in Telangana, paving the way for a double-engine government.

Reddy criticized the Congress government for failing to implement key promises, including the loan waiver, Rythu Bharosa, job calendar, and unemployment pensions.

Medak MP M Raghunandan Rao, BJP graduate constituency candidate Chinnamal Anji Reddy, and teachers' constituency candidate Malka Komuriah were also present at the event.



## Former Congress MLA campaigns for independent candidate in Asifabad

TPN Correspondent | Kumram Bheem Asifabad

In a setback to the Congress ahead of the MLC polls, former Sirpur (T) MLA Koneru Konappa has distanced himself from the party's official candidate and begun campaigning for Independent candidate Prasanna HariKrishna. Sources indicate that Konappa is considering quitting Congress, though he has not made an official announcement yet.

Addressing voters in Penchikalpet mandal on Friday, Konappa urged support for HariKrishna, stating that he would be a strong voice for graduates in the Legislative Council. He praised HariKrishna's contributions to education, emphasizing that thousands of students had benefited from his efforts. His decision to back an Independent candidate has surprised many within political circles.

Konappa's move has not only exposed internal rifts within the Congress but has also dealt a blow to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's leadership. The development highlights the party's struggles in managing dissent and preventing defections. On February 15, Konappa hinted at contesting as an Independent in future elections, stating that he would consult with the people before making a decision. However, he denied rumors of joining the BRS.

Konappa, who previously contested on a BRS ticket in the 2023 Assembly elections, was defeated by BJP's Dr. Harish Babu. He later joined Congress in March. He had earlier won from the Sirpur (T) segment in 2004, 2014, and 2018.

## BRS blames Congress for irrigation project delays, water crisis in Telangana

TPN Correspondent | Wanaparthy

Former Minister and senior BRS leader S Niranjan Reddy accused the Congress government of neglecting Telangana's irrigation projects and misleading the public on water issues. He questioned the government's failure to complete the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project, which is crucial for the State's water needs.

"We built the Palamuru-Rangareddy project at a cost of ₹34,000 crore and finished around 90 percent of the work. Instead of completing the pending works and providing irrigation water, the Congress has sidelined it," he said, criticizing the ruling party for not allocating funds for its completion.

Addressing mediapersons in Wanaparthy on Friday, Niranjan Reddy alleged that leaders from Congress, BJP, and TDP had remained silent on Telangana's irrigation projects for political reasons. He slammed the Revanth Reddy-led government for spreading falsehoods about water supply while deliberately stalling project completion.

"They claim Telangana is not receiving adequate water, yet they refuse to clear pending contractor bills. Without funds, how will the project be completed?" he questioned.

The former Agriculture Minister also dismissed the Congress government's corruption allegations as false propaganda,



pointing out that Hyderabad is now benefiting from Kaleshwaram project water. He accused the Congress of failing to address Andhra Pradesh's alleged illegal usage of Krishna river water, stating that AP had diverted 660 TMC this monsoon while Revanth Reddy remained silent. Niranjan Reddy further charged the Congress with failing on every major election promise—from pension hikes to Rythu Bharosa—leading to farmer suicides, auto driver deaths, and student distress.

Challenging Congress Ministers for a public debate on unfulfilled promises, he asserted that the BRS had elevated Telangana's per capita income to ₹3.26 lakh and transformed rural livelihoods.

"No matter the misinformation against former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao and the previous BRS government, people know the truth," he declared, reiterating that BRS would continue fighting for Telangana's rights.









## Jadcherla Farmers Protest Over Udandapur Reservoir Compensation Delay

TPN Correspondent | Mahabubnagar

Farmers and residents in Jadcherla mandal are protesting against the Congress government over delays in compensation payments for land acquired for the Udandapur reservoir. They are demanding compensation at market value, citing the financial strain caused by parting with their lands.

With the delay in payments, farmers have been obstructing reservoir works and recently staged protests at the site. The project, with a 15.91 TMC capacity, has affected around 4,900 acres and over 2,850 structures in Vallur, Udandapur, and five surrounding hamlets.

"Even after elections, there is no word from Congress leaders



on the promised compensation hike," farmers alleged. "The government must increase compensation to ₹16.5-25 lakh, considering market value," landowners demanded. Of the 1,950 identified structures, only 510 have received ₹45 crore in compensation so far. Families affected by the project also cited safety risks, pointing to the tragic death of two children on February 2.

Before the elections, Congress leaders assured affected families that their compensation would be raised, similar to the Polepally oostees. However, even after a year, there has been no progress. Farmers submitted a representation to the District Collector, warning that they would continue to obstruct the project until fair compensation is granted.

## KRMB Emergency Meeting Postponed to February 24

TPN Correspondent | Hyderabad

The Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) has postponed its emergency meeting to February 24, following a request from Andhra Pradesh officials. The meeting was originally scheduled for February 21.

In a special communication, KRMB urged both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to ensure their participation in the rescheduled meeting. While Telangana officials were ready to attend the meeting as planned, AP's request led to its deferment.

"The meeting was postponed at the request of Andhra Pradesh officials," KRMB stated. Telan-



gana officials were prepared to attend and present their arguments despite AP's absence. The meeting aims to resolve disputes over the utilization of less than 100 TMC water in joint reservoirs, with Srisailem and Nagarjuna Sagar projects being key points of contention

between both states. The meeting is expected to focus on the ongoing water-sharing dispute between the two states, particularly regarding the summer utilization of the remaining water in Srisailem and Nagarjuna Sagar reservoirs.

## Villagers Catch Trespassers Digging for Suspected Treasure in Medak

TPN Correspondent | Medak

Three men were caught red-handed by villagers in Lingareddypally, Manoharabad mandal, while digging on private land, allegedly in search of hidden treasure. The incident took place late at night when locals noticed unusual activity and confronted the suspects.

According to sources, the trio attempted to intimidate the villagers but were overpowered as more people gathered. They had already dug a trench using a JCB before being stopped. The villagers also discovered a woman's photograph and puja materials at the site, raising suspicions about occult practices.

The suspects, who claimed to be from Chandrayangutta and Bowenpally, told the villagers that they were hired by the landowners to carry out the excavation. However, they could not provide any credible proof for their claims.

The police were informed and took the three men into custody. Officials have launched an investigation to verify their claims and determine if there was any illegal activity involved.



## Eight-Year-Old Girl Raped by Two Youths in Sangareddy

TPN Correspondent | Sangareddy

A horrific incident has shaken Pasalwadi village near Sangareddy town, where an eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two youths on Thursday evening. The assault has sparked outrage among locals and prompted a swift police response.

According to authorities, the young girl was playing near a cluster of 2BHK houses when the two perpetrators lured her with an offer, enticing her into a secluded area of bushes. There, the assailants carried out the brutal attack. The girl's cries for help alerted residents after she began bleeding from her injuries.

Local residents rushed to the scene, managing to apprehend one of the accused. Enraged by the crime, they beat the suspect before turning him over to the police. The second accused fled and remains at large, with law enforcement launching a manhunt to capture him.

The victim was immediately taken to the government hospital in Sangareddy, where she is undergoing medical examination and treatment. Police have initiated a thorough investigation to uncover further details of the incident and ensure justice is served.

The assault has left the community in shock, with authorities urging anyone with information to come forward as the search for the second suspect intensifies.

## Chemical Spill at Pharma Unit in Sangareddy Injures Three Workers; Probe Underway

Injures Three Workers; Probe Underway

TPN Correspondent | Sangareddy

A chemical spill at a pharma company's Khajipally unit in Sangareddy district left three workers injured late Thursday night. The incident occurred while employees were filling a reactor with chemicals.

Despite the seriousness of the accident, the management of Hetero reportedly kept the matter under wraps. The news came to light only when night shift workers disclosed the incident after leaving the facility on Friday morning. The injured workers were immediately rushed to a corporate hospital in Hyderabad for treatment. Among them, two were casual laborers, while one was a permanent employee of the company. Following the revelation, Jinnaram police registered a case and launched an investigation into the matter. Authorities are probing the circumstances leading to the spill and whether safety protocols were followed at the facility.



## Several NMIMS Students in Jadcherla Suffer Food Poisoning; MLA Slams Administration



TPN Correspondent | Mahabubnagar

Several students of Shri Vile Parle Kelavani Mandal (SVKM) Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) in Jadcherla suffered food poisoning on February 20 after consuming a meal on campus. Instead of promptly shifting them to hospitals, the university administration allegedly attempted to suppress the incident by engaging private doctors to treat students on the floor of the library and common rooms.

According to student statements, this is not an isolated incident. They have repeatedly raised concerns about the poor quality of food and drinking water, but the administration has remained negligent. On Thursday, the sick bay quickly filled with students experiencing nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, and fever. Despite the severity of the situation, no ambulances were arranged until after persistent pressure from authorities.

Jadcherla MLA J Anirudh Reddy visited the campus upon learning of the incident and reprimanded the administration. Expressing shock at students being treated on the floor without proper medical care, he demanded immediate hospitalization for the affected students. In a video, he was seen ques-

tioning the university's attempt to suppress the incident, stating, "You are only trying to protect the university. Protect the children. If anything happens, who will take responsibility? Shift them to hospitals, idiot fellows."

Following his intervention, around 15-20 students, out of more than 50 affected, were shifted to hospitals in Mahabubnagar and Hyderabad for better treatment. Meanwhile, the university administration reportedly tried to block media access to the campus but was forced to allow them in after protests.

Students have long complained about the substandard quality of groceries, vegetables, and cooking oils used in the mess, but their concerns have been repeatedly dismissed. They also alleged that the administration refuses to publish reports on the quality of food and water, despite multiple requests.

Emphasizing the need for accountability, NMIMS students are now demanding immediate publication of food and water quality reports, improved medical infrastructure, and a complete review of administrative policies affecting student health and safety.

## Inter Student Dies by Suicide in Khammam Hostel

TPN Correspondent | Khammam

A 16-year-old intermediate first-year student of Sri Chaitanya Junior College at Yellandu Cross Roads, Khammam, was found dead in her hostel room on Friday.

According to police, the student, identified as D Yoga Nandini, attended morning study hours before being discovered hanging from the ceiling fan in her room. The cause behind her extreme step remains unknown. Nandini hailed from Chintalagudem in Yetapaka mandal, ASR district of Andhra Pradesh. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident.

## Principal Secretary Inspects Sand Mining in Jayashankar Bhupalpally

TPN Correspondent | Jayashankar Bhupalpally

To curb illegal sand extraction and transportation, Principal Secretary (Mines and Geology) inspected desiltation areas in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, interacting with sand contractors and local villagers to understand their concerns. He directed the district administration to ensure an adequate supply of sand at affordable prices.

During his visit to Bommapur, El-keshwaram, Annaram, Puskapalli, and Maddulapalli, the senior official assessed the challenges faced by contractors and emphasized the need to increase sand excavation and supply. He instructed the district collector to conduct regular inspections, deploy personnel to prevent illegal sand mining, and explore new areas with high sand deposits to boost availability.

Jayashankar Bhupalpally is among Telangana's most resource-rich districts for sand, and officials were directed to identify sites with over one crore tonnes of deposits. The principal secretary also stressed maintaining strict vigilance against illegal transportation and ensuring fair distribution of sand to the public.







## 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,

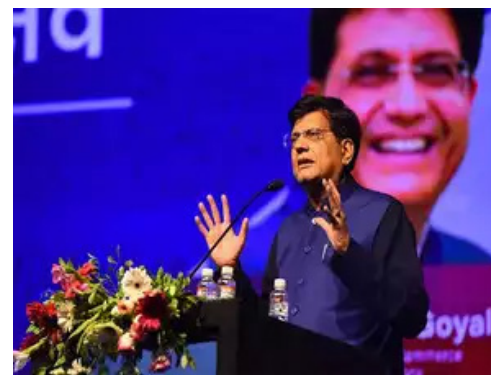
and Vedanta recorded weekly gains of 7-10%.

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



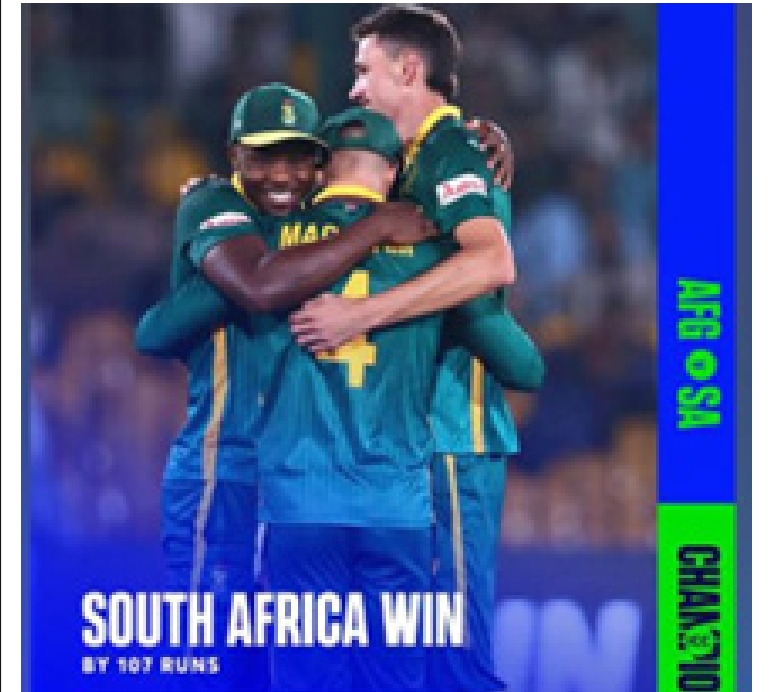


## PCB Seeks Explanation from ICC Over Omission of Pakistan's Name in Champions Trophy Branding



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



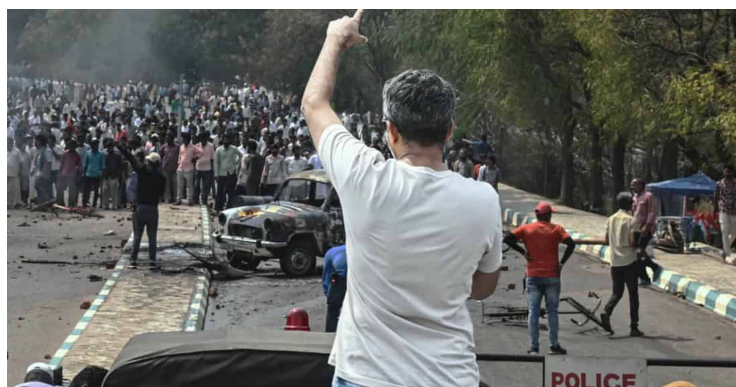
Bobby Deol opened up about his role as the anti-hero Baba Nirala in the web series Aashram, revealing that he took up the role at a time when he believed he would no longer be offered hero-like roles. The actor, who was keen on exploring different types of characters, embraced the opportunity to play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



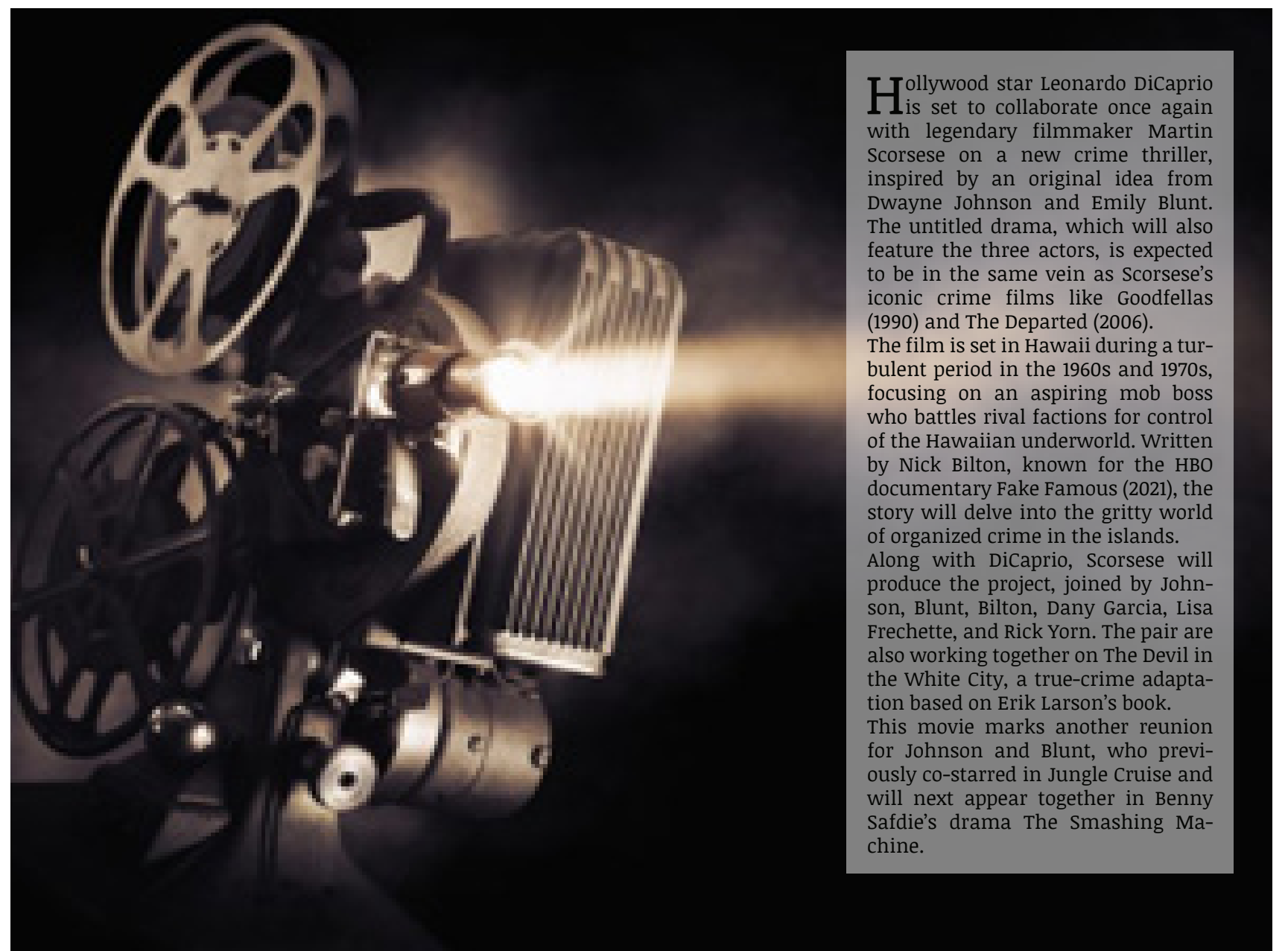
## Kangana Ranaut's 'Emergency' to Stream on Netflix from March 17



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.

