



TMC's Kerala Gambit Shakes Up INDI Alliance

TMC targets Kerala to counter Congress's West Bengal padayatras.

Aims to weaken communists and Congress in one stroke.

Mahua Mitra, Derek O'Brien meet IUML leaders in Kerala.

P.V. Anwar, ex-Left MLA, bolsters TMC's state push.

Minority votes in focus as TMC eyes Malappuram.



mool Congress (TMC) and Congress locking horns. Rahul Gandhi's planned padayatras in West Bengal have rattled TMC chief Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek, who are determined to avoid a repeat of Congress's Delhi debacle in the 2026 West Bengal polls. In a cunning counterstrike, TMC has set its sights on Kerala, a move that could reshape regional power dynamics. TMC's incursion into Kerala is a calculated masterstroke. The coastal state, a fading stronghold of the communists—longtime foes of TMC in West Bengal—offers a chance to weaken a rival. More crucially, it's a direct jab at Congress, which retains influence in Kerala, home to

Priyanka Gandhi's Wayanad constituency. By planting roots here, TMC aims to stifle Congress's ambitions both locally and in Bengal, where any Congress resurgence threatens Mamata's dominance. Leading the charge are TMC MPs Mahua Mitra and Derek O'Brien, dispatched by Abhishek Banerjee to rally the party's base in Kerala. On Friday, they met Sadikali Shihab Thangal, state president of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a key Congress ally in the UDF coalition that secured Priyanka's recent Wayanad victory. Though IUML downplayed the meeting as non-political, its undertones are unmistakable. Mahua has been tasked with court-

ing Muslim and Christian groups, eyeing the minority vote bank that could tilt the scales. Joining them was P.V. Anwar, TMC's state coordinator and a former Left-backed MLA who defected after clashing with Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan over corruption claims. The duo's itinerary includes Malappuram, a Muslim-majority area, signaling TMC's intent to disrupt both Congress and the Left. This audacious strategy underscores the deepening rift within the INDI Alliance, as TMC flexes its muscle beyond Bengal. With tensions simmering, the Congress-TMC showdown promises to escalate, potentially fracturing the opposition's unity further as 2026 looms.

Karnataka's economy strong, BJP spreading lies: CM Siddaramaiah

- BJP left ₹2.7 lakh crore in unpaid bills, says CM.
- Karnataka's capital spend is 15.01%, highest among peers.
- State secured ₹10.27 lakh crore in new investments.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday asserted that Karnataka's economy remains strong and accused the BJP of misleading people with false claims. He urged the Opposition to cooperate with the government in furthering the welfare of the state. "Karnataka's economy is strong enough to withstand the BJP's betrayals. We will continue to fight for our rights against the injustices of the BJP-led Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We stand by our words and our people," Siddaramaiah stated, responding to criticism from BJP leaders BY Vijayendra and Basavaraj Bommai. He alleged that under the BJP's rule, Karnataka's economy was pushed to the brink of collapse. "Now, while sitting in the Opposition, they act as if they are expert economists. Our government is working to restore financial stability after the BJP's irresponsible policies caused mismanagement and chaos," he said. The CM further claimed that the BJP government undertook projects worth seven times the allocated budget, leaving behind unpaid bills amounting to ₹2,70,695 crore as of March 31, 2023. These pending dues affected crucial departments like Public Works, Minor Irrigation, Water Resources, Urban Development, Rural Development, and Housing. Accusing the Modi government of financial neglect, Siddaramaiah pointed out Karnataka's share in tax devolution has been unfairly reduced. "We are providing over ₹90,000 crore annually through DBT and subsidies, including ₹10,400 crore for senior citizens, disabled persons, and widows. The Centre contributes only ₹450 crore—the same amount as during PM Manmohan Singh's tenure. What has the BJP done for Karnataka?" he questioned. Highlighting the state's fiscal strength, Siddaramaiah claimed Karnataka's capital expenditure is higher than other progressive states—15.01% of the budget, compared to Maharashtra (12.74%), Tamil Nadu (10.58%), and Telangana (11.58%). He also noted that the state secured investment commitments worth ₹10.27 lakh crore during the recent Invest Karnataka summit.

KMF Elections

Will Siddaramaiah-Shivakumar Rivalry Resurface?

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The upcoming elections for Bengaluru (Bamul) and Kolar (Komul) milk unions, crucial in determining the next chairman of the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF), have become the latest stage for the ongoing political tug-of-war between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy, DK Shivakumar.

Despite the Congress high command urging both leaders to focus on governance, the power struggle between the two has subtly extended into the KMF elections. While the leadership is striving to downplay internal differences, the growing contest over the cooperative's top post has brought their rivalry back into the spotlight. Siddaramaiah is backing the current KMF chairman, Bheema Naik, for another term, while Shivakumar is pushing for his brother and former MP, DK Suresh, to take over. Traditionally, the ruling party aims for a consensus candidate to prevent factional infighting, but this time, both camps are engaged in an intense lobbying battle.

The power tussle between the two leaders has been ongoing since the Congress government was formed in May 2023. Speculation over a rotational chief ministership—where Siddaramaiah would pass the baton to Shivakumar midway through the term—has refused to die down, despite their efforts to project unity.

While both have softened their public stance on the issue, the contest over KMF leadership signals an underlying struggle for dominance within the party.

For Shivakumar, control over KMF is a strategic priority ahead of the upcoming Zilla and Taluk Panchayat elections. The JD(S), under former Prime Minister Deve Gowda's elder son HD Revanna, has long dominated the Hassan milk union (HAMUL), leveraging its influence to consolidate Vokkaliga support. Shivakumar, with his brother as KMF chairman, seeks to replicate that strategy to strengthen his hold over the politically significant community, which makes up 14% of Karnataka's electorate.

As the budget session of the state assembly approaches, both leaders have been making efforts to present a united front, attempting to deny the Opposition any chance to exploit their differences. Siddaramaiah, who once dismissed discussions about a leadership transition, has recently shifted his tone, repeatedly deferring the matter to the Congress high command. "The high command will decide. Whatever they decide will apply to all," he stated.

While he previously ruled out any possibility of stepping down before completing his full term, his recent statements have been more guarded, refraining from outright rejecting the speculation. Shivakumar, too, has adjusted his stance,

calling Siddaramaiah the "undisputed leader" of the government—a notable shift from his earlier remarks that hinted at his own chief ministerial ambitions.

The KMF elections come at a time when the cooperative has already witnessed significant turbulence. The abrupt transfer of Managing Director MK Jagadish, who was left without a new posting, raised eyebrows. Sources suggest that his removal was linked to key decisions he made without consulting KMF chairman Naik, a Siddaramaiah loyalist. His transfer also delayed the launch of Nandini's instant idli and dosa batter, which was later introduced 20 days after his exit.

Adding to the controversy, KMF's ongoing competition with Amul and its involvement in the Tirupati laddoo dispute reportedly did not sit well with certain senior officials, contributing to Jagadish's ouster.

With the KMF elections holding significant implications for rural voter consolidation, particularly among the Vokkaliga community, both factions are keen on securing control over the cooperative. Meanwhile, all eyes are on the state budget, set to be presented by Siddaramaiah on March 7, with speculation growing that the Congress high command may soon take a call on the much-discussed rotational chief minister formula.

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Govt Prepares Contingency Plan for Potential Dry Spell

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3. Karnataka accuses Centre of delaying JJM funds for 2024-25.
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Bengaluru was not built for its massive population, says Home Minister

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara acknowledged Bengaluru's severe infrastructure limitations, stating that the city's roads and transport systems were not designed to handle its current population and vehicle density. His remarks come amid growing concerns over Bengaluru's worsening traffic crisis.



Parameshwara's statement follows Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's recent remark that "even God can't fix Bengaluru's traffic issue." Addressing the matter, Parameshwara told PTI, "Everybody knows Bengaluru lacks infrastructure. The city was not built for this kind of population and the sheer number of vehicles. We have 1.4 crore people and an equal number of vehicles. Without new infrastructure, traffic congestion will continue to be a major challenge, as it always has been."

To tackle the crisis, the government is considering multiple solutions, including

underground road networks. "The minister in charge, DK Shivakumar, is exploring several options. One of them is constructing underground roads, and we have already started work on that. However, it will require time and significant investment. Fixing Bengaluru's traffic issues immediately is difficult, and major improvements will take time," he explained.

'Even God can't fix Bengaluru's traffic soon'

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had earlier stated that Bengaluru's traffic

woes are so severe that even divine intervention wouldn't offer an immediate solution. Speaking at the launch of Namma Raste, a guidebook on road design and maintenance, he estimated that resolving the congestion crisis would take at least three years.

Shivakumar assured that major projects like tunnel roads and elevated corridors would bring relief once completed. However, delays due to financial, technical, and land acquisition challenges have slowed progress. "The tunnel road work should have started already, but we are facing hurdles. The 40-km double-decker road project is ready, and several other initiatives will take shape in the coming years. Additionally, 1,700 km of roads are being white-topped," he stated.

With increasing concerns over Bengaluru's infrastructure, the government's plans aim to provide long-term solutions, but experts believe traffic relief will take time to materialize.

9 Injectable Drugs from other States Fail Sterility Tests

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has expressed serious concern over the presence of contaminated injectable drugs in the market, urging Union Health Minister JP Nadda to implement a nationwide alert system for drugs failing sterility tests.



In a letter dated February 20, Rao revealed that nine injectable drugs, manufactured in other states, failed sterility tests in Karnataka's government laboratories between January 1 and February 16. However, the list does not include injectables from Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals in West Bengal, whose contaminated products led to the deaths of five young mothers in Ballari district.

Rao emphasized that contaminated drugs from these manufacturers could be sold in other states as well, making it imperative to take swift action. "Injectables are used

in acute care, and given the 'life or death' consequences, all products from these companies should be withdrawn nationwide until they are inspected by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for Good Manufacturing Practices compliance," he said.

The minister also called for a legal requirement to share sales records from manufacturers to enable quick seizure of contaminated drugs before they reach patients. Additionally, he stressed the need for an alert system to notify doctors, pharmacists, and patients about unsafe medications.

We Will Hunt You Down

-Kash Patel's Bold Warning as New FBI Director

TPN Correspondent | Washington

Kash Patel, an Indian-origin attorney and loyal ally of President Donald Trump, was confirmed by the Senate on Thursday as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in a tight 51-49 vote. Patel, who took his oath on Friday administered by Attorney General Pam Bondi, won support from most Republicans.

Born in 1980 in New York to Gujarati Indian parents, Patel earned a BA from the University of Richmond and a JD from Pace University. He began as a public defender in Florida, later joining the Department of Justice in 2014, and rose in Trump's circle as a senior aide to Congressman Devin Nunes in 2017, countering Russia probes. Patel held key roles in the National Security Council and Pentagon during Trump's

first term, gaining notoriety for promoting "deep state" theories and authoring books like Government Gangsters.

On X, Patel thanked Trump and Bondi: "I am honoured to be confirmed as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Thank you to President Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi for your unwavering confidence and support." He pledged to restore trust, saying, "The FBI has a storied legacy—from the 'G-Men' to safeguarding our nation in the wake of 9/11. The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice. The politicalization of our justice system has eroded public trust—but that ends today."

Patel promised to rebuild the FBI's rep-

utation with its staff and partners. "We will rebuild an FBI the American people can be proud of," he said, warning threats: "And to those who seek to harm Americans—consider this your warning. We will hunt you down in every corner of this planet"

Patel's appointment holds significance for India, given his heritage and potential ties with the Indian government.

Alongside Tulsi Gabbard, another Indian-origin figure in Trump's administration, Patel's role could strengthen U.S.-India collaboration on security issues, including countering threats from Khalistani extremists targeting Indian interests in the U.S. His tough stance may resonate with New Delhi's concerns over transnational separatist activities.

Govt Prepares Contingency Plan for Potential Dry Spell



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government is gearing up to tackle a potential dry spell, with the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) working on a contingency plan to address water shortages and related issues. Minister Priyank Kharge announced on Friday that district collectors have been directed to submit reports on local challenges to facilitate emergency planning and swift implementation.

The move follows a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Disaster Management meeting held on February 20, where officials assessed the situation and drafted a preparedness blueprint for the upcoming summer. "The RDPR is actively formulating a contingency plan to address potential drought-like conditions. District CEOs have been instructed to provide detailed reports to ensure effective emergency response," Kharge stated on X. Meanwhile, the Karnataka gov-

ernment has strongly refuted allegations regarding misuse of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) funds, asserting that all central funds have been effectively utilized. The state also emphasized that it had allocated additional financial resources to ensure seamless execution of the mission. The government further criticized delays in the release of JJM funds from the central government for the financial year 2024-25.

Kharge, who also oversees the Electronics, IT, and Biotechnology departments, reiterated Karnataka's commitment to effective fund utilization and drought preparedness.

Additionally, on February 20, Kharge hailed Google's newly launched Bengaluru campus, 'Ananta', highlighting it as a major boost to the city's standing as India's premier tech hub. He noted that Bengaluru remains the top destination for global technology firms expanding in India.

Karnataka Police Academy, CIIL sign MoU for language training

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

The Karnataka Police Academy (KPA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) to provide specialized language training to police officials. This initiative aims to enhance communication skills and cultural understanding, enabling officers to interact effectively with diverse linguistic communities.

The agreement was formalized during the International Mother Tongue Day celebrations on Friday. Under the pact, CIIL will offer professional language training to Karnataka police personnel, while KPA will provide training in security, cyber security, and fire safety for CIIL.

KPA Director S.L. Channabasavanna highlighted the importance of linguistic diversity, emphasizing that police officials must be proficient in multiple languages to conduct investigations effectively across different states. "Understanding the local language is

crucial for effective communication. This agreement with CIIL will help officials gain language skills that enhance their professional efficiency," he stated.

Recalling his experiences, Channabasavanna cited an instance in Sudan where Indian peacekeeping officials felt immense joy when local police communicated in Indian languages. He encouraged officers to learn multiple languages, sharing his own experiences of picking up Tamil in Chamara-Janagar and Marathi and Telugu in Bidar. Renowned linguist and former JNU professor Kapil Kapoor, addressing the gathering virtually, stressed that all languages hold vast knowledge. He criticized the colonial mindset that prioritizes English in education and employment, advocating for primary education in regional languages. "It is a myth that scientific education cannot be imparted in regional languages. Indian languages have a rich vocabulary, and Sanskrit is a powerhouse of knowledge," Kapoor said.

Making Employees Work without Salary Amounts to Begar

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has strongly criticized the State Government for withholding salaries of teachers at Basaveshwar Engineering College in Bagalkot, stating that making someone work without pay amounts to "begar" (forced labor). The court directed the government to release the withheld salaries within seven days.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna, while delivering the verdict, noted that delaying salary payments was an "uncouth" act and warned that any delay beyond seven days would attract an interest of 6% per annum, from the date of withholding until payment. The ruling came in response to a petition by Basaveshwar Engineering College, an aided institution, challenging a June 29, 2024 order by the Department of Technical Educa-



tion. The order had unilaterally deployed excess teaching and non-teaching staff from BVB Engineering College in Hubballi to the petitioner's institution without consultation.

The college had expressed its inability to accommodate the six deployed staff members. In response, the government stopped releasing salaries to all employees of the petitioner's institution, citing non-compliance with its orders. The court condemned this move as an "arm-twisting tactic" and ruled that salary payments could not be used as leverage to force compliance.

BJP slams government's move to shut 9 universities

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The BJP has strongly opposed the Karnataka government's decision to close nine public universities, calling it irrational and politically motivated. Party leaders argued that the move would deprive students from poor and rural backgrounds of access to higher education. During a roundtable meeting organized by the ABVP at the FKCCI auditorium on Friday, BJP state president BY Vijayendra, former higher education minister Dr. CN Ashwath Narayan, MLC CT Ravi, former minister Arvind Limbavali, and education experts voiced their concerns over the decision. Limbavali criticized the government's sub-committee overseeing the closures, questioning the absence of educational experts in the panel. He pointed out that these universities were established based on recommendations of the



National Knowledge Commission and accused the government of unfairly targeting public institutions while ignoring sub-standard private universities. He also argued that the decentralization of universities had increased the gross enrolment ratio and that shutting them down would only benefit private players in the education sector. BJP leaders highlighted that the universities facing closure are in districts like Chamarajanagar, Haveri, and Koppal, where access to higher education is already limited. They demanded that instead of shutting them down, the government should focus on improving infrastructure and quality in these regions.

Couple arrested for defrauding 51 people with fake job promises abroad

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The South East CEN police have arrested a couple for duping 51 people by promising them jobs abroad and collecting ₹2.64 crore from them. The accused, Saqlain Sultan (34) and Nikath Sultan (28), charged victims between ₹2 lakh and ₹8 lakh each, providing fake visas for jobs related to horse racing. The racket operated between February 2023 and November 2024, targeting jockeys and horse racing professionals. The victims, realizing they had been cheated, lodged a complaint on January 24, leading to the couple's arrest in Tilak Nagar on January 28.

According to the police, Nikath got involved after meeting a foreign jockey at the Bengaluru Turf Club, who claimed he could arrange overseas jobs in exchange for a ₹50,000 commission per recruit. Tempted by the offer, the couple advertised on social media, luring job seekers with false promises of positions in Japan, New Zealand, Ireland, South Korea, England, Paris, and Gulf countries.

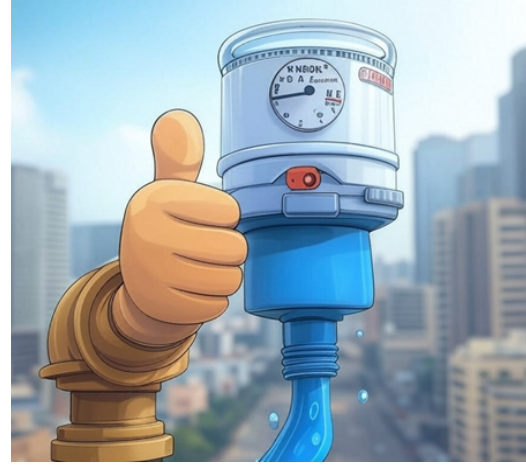
Police recovered ₹80 lakh worth of assets, including ₹66 lakh in cash, two cars, two-wheelers, and 24 grams of gold. Commissioner B Dayananda confirmed the details, stating investigations are ongoing.

BWSSB assures 200 liters of drinking water per house daily

Every household with a Cauvery connection to receive 200 liters of water daily.

BWSSB to launch a fee calculator for transparent water connection charges.

21,000 new connections provided through Cauvery Connection Campaigns.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has assured that every household with a Cauvery water connection will receive 200 liters of drinking water daily. Following the inauguration of the Cauvery Phase 5 project, the board now has sufficient resources and is dis-

tributing the supply across the city in phases.

To address concerns over apartment water connection charges, BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasat Manohar announced a mod-

el fee calculator will be launched on the board's website. This tool will help residents estimate connection costs for their homes, ensuring transparency.

At a meeting hosted by the Bangalore Apartment Federation, Manohar stated that a three-member committee, led by the Chief Engineer, will be set up to handle complaints related to water tariffs. This committee will review grievances and provide timely solutions.

BWSSB officials have already visited several apartments in Bengaluru East to resolve concerns. The board, in collaboration with the Bangalore Apartment Federation, is conducting meetings across zones to prevent water shortages. So far, through 258 Cauvery Connection Campaigns, over 21,000 connections have been provided.

Bikers perform dangerous stunts on Bengaluru roads, arrested after video surfaces

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bengaluru police have arrested a group of bikers who were caught performing dangerous stunts on city roads after a video of their reckless act surfaced on social media. Authorities swiftly identified and apprehended the individuals involved, sending a strong message against such behavior.

The Bengaluru City Police (BCP) shared the video on their official X handle, warning riders to refrain from stunts. "Beware, BCP is watching you," read the caption, emphasizing the consequences of such actions.

Social media users expressed their concerns, with one commenting, "Cancel their license and open a rowdy sheet," while another suggested, "Give them a very good & LONG treatment." Oth-



ers praised the police, with one user writing, "Happy to see the action from you, sir." This incident follows an earlier case where two men were caught attempting a wheelie on a scooter. The footage, shared by the Bengaluru Police on X, showed the rider lifting the front wheel while the pillion, appearing intoxicated, leaned backward. The police acted swiftly, identifying and arresting the suspects.

The Bengaluru Police have repeatedly warned against such stunts, stating that city roads are meant for safe rides, not dangerous displays.

BJP leader PC Mohan slams Art Park project in Cubbon Park

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP leader PC Mohan has strongly opposed the proposed Art Park in Cubbon Park, calling it a violation of environmental laws and a threat to Bengaluru's already shrinking green spaces. The Art Park, planned near Venkatappa Art Gallery, has triggered concerns over conservation, with Mohan arguing that it violates the Karnataka Government Parks (Preservation) Act, 1975, which prohibits construction in designated park areas.

"When Bengaluru is already grappling with shrinking green spaces, the proposed Art Park in Cubbon Park is a disaster. It violates the law and must be scrapped," Mohan posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Cubbon Park, a historic landmark and a vital lung space in the city, has been at the center of conservation debates, with citizens and activists voicing



concerns over its preservation.

Public backlash on social media The proposal has sparked strong reactions on social media, with many Bangaloreans demanding its cancellation.

One user wrote, "Scrap all new commercial development and infrastructure projects. Save Bengaluru."

Another warned, "If the destruction of green cover continues and the tunnel roads project moves forward, Namma Bengaluru will become unlivable in less than a decade."

Frustration over political inaction was evident, with a user questioning, "Why are all ministers crying on X? If you can't do anything, why become ministers in the first place?"

Some users highlighted the need for equitable development, suggesting that a park similar to Cubbon Park should be built in Mahadevapura instead of modifying existing green spaces. Allegations of corruption also surfaced, with one post stating, "They just need tenders for kickbacks. BJP and Congress are two sides of the same coin. You can't build a world-class city, but you sure can destroy the one handed down to you in the 1950s. Pathetic."

With growing public pressure, the fate of the Art Park project remains uncertain as conservationists and citizens demand urgent action from the government.

Four Arrested in Bengaluru Gang Rape Case



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The BJP has strongly opposed the Karnataka government's decision to close nine public universities, calling it irrational and politically motivated. Party leaders argued that the move would deprive students from poor and rural backgrounds of access to higher education. During a roundtable meeting organized by the ABVP at the FKCCI auditorium on Friday, BJP state president BY Vijayendra, former higher education minister Dr. CN Ashwath Narayan, MLC CT Ravi, former minister Arvind Limbavali, and education experts voiced their concerns over the decision. Limbavali criticized the government's sub-committee overseeing the closures, questioning the absence of educational experts in the panel. He point-

ed out that these universities were established based on recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission and accused the government of unfairly targeting public institutions while ignoring sub-standard private universities.

He also argued that the decentralization of universities had increased the gross enrollment ratio and that shutting them down would only benefit private players in the education sector. BJP leaders highlighted that the universities facing closure are in districts like Chamarajanagar, Haveri, and Koppal, where access to higher education is already limited. They demanded that instead of shutting them down, the government should focus on improving infrastructure and quality in these regions.

Safety inspection for Bengaluru Metro's first driverless train on Feb 24



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) will inspect Bengaluru Metro's first driverless train for the Yellow Line on February 24, Metro officials confirmed. The train, which arrived from China last year, is a key component of the long-awaited R V Road-Bommasandra corridor. Meanwhile, six domestically manufactured coaches that reached Hebbagodi depot two weeks ago have now been coupled to form the second train for the Yellow Line. A senior official stated, "We had submitted our application to CMRS for clearance from the Railway Board. The Commissioner has approved the documents, and the inspection will take place on February 24. However, the full Yellow Line inspection will happen by the end of March."

The first driverless train reached Hebbagodi depot on February 14, 2024, but delays in the supply of rolling stock stalled the line's launch. The 19.15-km corridor, running via Electronic City, has been ready for months but

awaits the required approvals before passenger services can begin.

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is set to receive an updated version of the Automatic Train Control Software on February 28, allowing tests to be conducted with or without a driver. The Railway Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) had cleared the train design on January 21, as the Communication-Based Train Control (CBTC) technology used is a first for Bengaluru Metro. Signaling static tests are currently underway, with dynamic tests set to begin after the software update. "Multiple train tests will be completed by mid-March, followed by third-party certification by an independent Safety Assessor for signaling by the last week of March," the official added. The line is expected to be ready for CMRS inspection by April.

Additionally, the third driverless train is expected to arrive in Bengaluru from Titagarh by the first week of April.

Bengaluru roads a shared responsibility, says Chief Secretary



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh emphasized that the development and upkeep of Bengaluru's roads require collective efforts from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), various government departments, and citizens. She called for greater public participation in ensuring better road maintenance.

Speaking at the 'Capacity Building of Corporation Engineers' workshop during the 'Namma Raste-2025' event, she stressed the need for collaboration. "While Bengaluru is praised for its weath-

er, its roads often draw criticism. A clear picture of the city's road conditions has been presented here, helping us identify solutions," she said.

Rajneesh stated that Bengaluru's roads are a shared responsibility, and lasting improvements can only be achieved through coordinated efforts. She urged for enhanced last-mile connectivity, suggesting the integration of electric vehicles, shared transport, and private organizations to boost public transport efficiency.

Meanwhile, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath instructed engineers to strictly follow road maintenance guidelines. "All works related to roads, including those by the water board, BESCOM, and telecom operators, must be executed properly to ensure durability," he said, stressing the need for long-lasting infrastructure solutions.

Lokayukta submits 8,000-page B Report in MUDA scam case

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Lokayukta submitted an interim 8,000-page B Report in the MUDA scam case on Thursday, stating that allegations against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi Siddaramaiah, and others could not be substantiated due to a lack of evidence.

Lokayukta SP Udesh, along with personnel, arrived at the People's Representative Court in Bengaluru carrying four bags containing 27 volumes of documents related to the enquiry. "The investigation is progressing as per procedure. The documents submitted form a crucial part of the enquiry," Udesh said. Earlier, the Lokayukta Police had issued a notice to complainant Snehamayi Krishna, stating that the allegations under the Indian Penal Code, the Prevention of Corruption Act, and the Karnataka Land Acquisition Act lacked sufficient evidence. According to the report, the accusations against Siddaramaiah and three others were either civil in nature or based on misinterpretations of legal provisions. Reacting sharply, Krishna accused the Lokayukta of shielding political leaders and vowed to challenge the report in



court. "It is proven what I doubted. Lokayukta officials behaved like they had sold their souls to political leaders. Though I submitted all required documents, they have given a notice stating that they will file a B Report saying there is no evidence against Siddaramaiah, Parvathi Siddaramaiah, Mallikarjun Swami, and Devaraj," Krishna alleged.

Karnataka Leader of Opposition R Asho-

ka also criticised the decision, calling it a "clean chit given by Congress to Congress." "The MUDA land scam investigation was conducted by Siddaramaiah, for Siddaramaiah. Congress Ministers and MLAs had already declared him innocent before the probe began. This outcome is no surprise. Justice may have been delayed, but it won't be denied. The truth will prevail," Ashoka stated.

Conduct BBMP polls, demands LoP Ashoka

Ashoka demands BBMP elections, calls Congress government inactive. Blames Congress for Bengaluru's poor infrastructure and civic issues. Claims Bengaluru is being neglected, says legal experts will push for polls.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka on Friday demanded that the Karnataka government conduct the long-pending Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) elections, alleging that the city has seen no development under the Congress government.

"The government lacks the willpower to conduct BBMP polls and is instead talking about Greater Bengaluru by expanding city limits, when it cannot even develop the existing areas. This is an insult to Bengaluru's founder, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda," Ashoka said.

Speaking after a BJP meeting on BBMP polls and Bengaluru's development,

Ashoka accused the Congress of failing to address basic civic issues. "Since Congress came to power, potholes remain unfixed, and garbage is piling up. Deputy CM DK Shivakumar talks about Brand Bengaluru, but he is helpless when it comes to actual development," he stated.

He also criticized the tunnel road projects, claiming people are already expressing their displeasure. "The Bengaluru minister is not from the city, and other district ministers have no interest in its welfare. Bengaluru has become an orphan," Ashoka remarked.

He further revealed that a team of legal experts is preparing to push for BBMP polls in court.

'Sidelined' Shashi Tharoor seeks clarity on role in Congress, Rahul Gandhi gives no clear answer

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor reportedly raised concerns over his sidelining within the party during a recent meeting with Rahul Gandhi. Tharoor, who has been excluded from major Parliamentary debates and key party roles, sought clarity on his future in the party but received no definitive response. According to reports, Tharoor expressed displeasure over his removal from the All India Professional Congress, an initiative he founded. He also questioned whether the party wanted him to focus on Kerala ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections and if he would be considered



the chief ministerial candidate. However, Rahul Gandhi maintained that the Congress does not announce CM candidates before election results. The meeting came amid tensions following Tharoor's recent remarks praising Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's US visit and lauding the LDF government's efforts in Kerala's industrial growth. These statements stirred unease within the Congress, as they appeared to diverge from the party's official stance. His article appreciating Kerala's entrepreneurship push was also met with backlash from state Congress leaders.

Tharoor, however, downplayed any rift, stating, "I have never made any complaint against anyone." He declined to share further details about the closed-door discussion but confirmed that election strategies or leadership roles in Kerala were not discussed.

Deve Gowda meets Jal Shakti Minister Seeks fair water allocation for Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Former Prime Minister and Rajya Sabha member HD Deve Gowda met Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil in New Delhi on Friday, raising concerns over Karnataka's share in river-linking projects and urging a fair allocation of water resources.

During the meeting, Gowda demanded that Karnataka be allocated 25 tmcft of water in the Godavari-Krishna-Cauvery river-linking project. Patil reportedly responded positively to the request. Gowda had earlier expressed dissatisfaction over

the current allocation, where Karnataka was granted only 15.891 tmcft out of the 147 tmcft available for diversion. He had also indicated plans to write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek a resolution. In comparison, Tamil Nadu received 40.93 tmcft, Telangana 45.061 tmcft, Andhra Pradesh 43.861 tmcft, and Puducherry 2.189 tmcft. Additionally, Gowda pressed for expedited approvals for Karnataka's irrigation projects and the provision of necessary grants to support the state's water infrastructure.



BJP, Congress Clash over Proposed Milk Price Hike

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A political face-off has erupted in Karnataka over the proposed hike in milk prices, with the BJP and the ruling Congress exchanging sharp remarks. The debate comes amid broader concerns over inflation and rising costs of essential commodities.

BJP leader Dr. C.N. Ashwath Narayan accused the Congress government of burdening people with relentless price hikes. "If they increase the price, milk will cost ₹47 per litre. The only guarantee of the Congress is 'Price Hike, Price Hike, and more Price Hike'," he said.

Responding to the BJP's criticism, Karnata

Chief Whip in the Legislative Council



Chief Whip in the Legislative Council and Congress MLC Saleem Ahmed defended the government, stating that no final decision had been taken. "The price has been increased from time to time, but this is just a proposal. When

the BJP was in power, prices of essential commodities also rose. They don't have the courage to ask the PM to reduce fuel prices," he said.

Ahmed further claimed that the Congress government has successfully implemented all five of its major electoral guarantees, contributing to its recent victories in three bypolls. "There will be some increase for development, and people will accept it," he added.

While the government insists that any revision will be in the public interest, the Opposition continues to attack the administration over its economic policies.

Govt committed to implementing Old Pension Scheme



- DyCM DK Shivakumar says OPS promise in the manifesto will be fulfilled.
- Emphasizes the role of govt employees and assures commitment to their welfare.
- OPS provides a monthly pension post-retirement, unlike NPS, which offers a lump sum.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday reaffirmed the state government's commitment to implementing the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), stating that necessary steps would be taken after reviewing the report of a committee examining the matter.

Speaking at a conference of office bearers of the State Government Employees Association, Shivakumar said that a committee, led by Anjum Parvez, has been formed to study the feasibility of OPS. "Our government will take necessary steps to implement it after studying the report. Our party had assured OPS implementation in our manifesto, and we are committed to it. However, it requires time and patience," he stated.

Shivakumar emphasized the crucial role of government employees in governance and lauded their

contributions. "Government employees are like priests in temples—people need them to interact with the system. I have also been working like a government employee for 38 years," he remarked.

He reiterated that the government is dedicated to addressing the concerns of all sections of society. "People's representatives and government employees are one. Our government has introduced guarantee schemes benefiting crores of people, and your demand for OPS is in our manifesto," he assured.

Under the Old Pension Scheme, government employees receive a monthly pension after retirement, typically half of their last drawn salary. In contrast, the New Pension Scheme (NPS) requires employees to contribute a portion of their salary to a pension fund, entitling them to a one-time lump sum on superannuation.

DK Shivakumar meets Sadhguru

Invited to Isha Yoga Center for Mahashivratri



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and his wife Usha Shivakumar hosted spiritual leader and Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev at their residence on Wednesday.

The Deputy CM's office confirmed the meeting. In a post on X, Shivakumar shared, "I had the pleasure of meeting Sadhguru JV today at my home office. He invited our family to attend a program at Isha Yoga Center on the 26th of this month

as part of Shivaratri. I am looking forward to participating in such a grand program filled with spiritual minds." The Isha Yoga Center in Coimbatore is set to celebrate Mahashivratri on February 26 with an all-night event featuring musical and dance performances by renowned artists, meditation sessions, and a discourse by Sadhguru. Meanwhile, Sadhguru recently appeared on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' on February 15, where he advised students to approach studies playfully rather than as a challenge. "Your textbook is not a challenge for

your intelligence. You are unnecessarily making it difficult for yourself by approaching it a certain way. Make your textbook into a play, and learning becomes effortless," he said. He emphasized that intelligence is not about comparison but about activating one's full potential. "Everybody can sparkle and do things beyond imagination. Intelligence creates a profound experience of life. The more you activate it, the more access you have to everything around you," he added, citing studies that show meditation practices like Shambhavi Mahamudra enhance brain activity.

4 Arrested For Assaulting Bus Conductor

For Not Speaking In Marathi In Belagavi

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

Four individuals have been arrested for allegedly assaulting a state-owned transport bus conductor in Belagavi after he failed to respond to a passenger in Marathi, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred on Friday on the outskirts of the district headquarters, which shares a border with Maharashtra.

The 51-year-old conductor, Mahadevappa Mallappa Hukkeri, recounted that a female passenger, who boarded the bus with a male companion at Sulebhavi village, spoke to him in Marathi. When he informed her that he did not know Marathi and requested her to speak in Kannada, she allegedly rebuked him, insisting that he must learn Marathi. Shortly after, a group of people gathered and assaulted him.

Hukkeri sustained minor injuries and was admitted to the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences. Police confirmed that he is out of danger.



A senior police official stated that a case had been registered against the assailants, leading to the arrest of four individuals. However, a counter-complaint was also filed by a 14-year-old girl, accusing the conductor of using derogatory remarks against her. Based on this complaint, a case was registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual

Offences (POCSO) Act, though no arrests have been made in this regard yet. Belagavi has long been a contentious region due to its significant Marathi-speaking population, with some groups advocating for its merger with Maharashtra, a demand strongly opposed by the state government and Kannada-speaking residents.

AAP minister led 'non-existent' department for 20 months

Netizens say 'elect a clown, expect a circus'

TPN Correspondent | Punjab

Punjab minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal has been removed from the 'non-existent' Department of Administrative Reforms after it was discovered that he had been heading the department for over 20 months without any staff or meetings. The revelation has sparked sharp criticism against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, with netizens mocking the oversight.

According to a Punjab government Gazette notification issued on February 21, 2025, Dhaliwal will now hold only the NRI Affairs portfolio.



The notification clarified that the Department of Administrative Reforms, which was previously assigned to him, does not exist. Reports suggest that for nearly two years, no staff was assigned to the department, nor were any official meetings held,

raising questions about the functioning of the state government under Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. The blunder has ignited a social media storm, with critics ridiculing the AAP leadership. One user on X remarked, "Elect a clown,

expect a circus. This is how Punjab is being run under Bhagwant Mann." Another user posted, "Such an oversight not only reflects poorly on the government's internal processes but also undermines public trust. This is embarrassing and unacceptable." Dhaliwal, one of the senior-most ministers in the Punjab Cabinet, previously held the Agriculture and Farmers Welfare portfolio before being relieved of it in May 2023. He was then assigned the NRI Affairs Ministry along with the now-exposed 'non-existent' department.

ISRO Unveils World's Largest 10-Tonne Vertical

Mixer for Solid Propellant Production

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has unveiled the world's largest 10-tonne vertical planetary mixer for solid propellant production, marking a major milestone in India's space technology advancements. Developed in collaboration with the Central Manufacturing Technology Institute (CMTI), the state-of-the-art equipment is set to enhance efficiency and safety in manufacturing solid rocket motors.

The handover ceremony took place on February 13 at CMTI, Bengaluru, where Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) Director A. Rajarajan received the mixer in the presence of ISRO Chairman S. Somanath and CMTI Director K. Prasad.

Weighing approximately 150 tonnes and measuring 5.4 metres in length, 3.3 metres in breadth, and 8.7 metres in height, the mixer is a crucial addition to India's space propulsion systems. Given the sensitivity of solid propellant materials, precise and controlled mixing is essential to ensuring



quality and scalability. The development aligns with India's push for self-reliance in critical aerospace technologies. The Department of Space has been driving indigenous manufacturing efforts, and the successful realisation of this mixer further strengthens India's capabilities in space engineering. Having undergone rigorous factory-level acceptance tests, the mixer will play a key role in ISRO's future launch vehicle programs. By improving safety and productivity, it is expected to streamline solid propellant preparation and reinforce India's position in the global space industry.

MK Stalin's 'beehive' warning to Centre

after Dharmendra Pradhan letter over NEP language row



TPN Correspondent | Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has issued a sharp warning to the central government over the ongoing language dispute linked to the National Education Policy (NEP), stating that as long as he and the DMK exist, no anti-Tamil activities will be allowed in the state. Responding to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's remarks urging Tamil Nadu to "rise above politics," Stalin accused the BJP-led Centre of attempting to impose Hindi and using education funds as leverage.

The dispute escalated after Pradhan advised Stalin to prioritize young learners' interests over political differences. The Tamil Nadu government, led by the DMK, has consistently opposed the NEP's three-language policy and accused the Centre of withholding funds until the state accepts Hindi as a compulsory language.

Rejecting Pradhan's stance, Stalin accused the BJP of political interference in education. "Is the blackmail that fund release only if the trilingual policy was accepted, not politics? Is imposing Hindi in the name of NEP not politics? I warn the Centre—don't throw stones at a beehive. Don't aspire to see the unique fighting spirit of the Tamils," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin also reaffirmed Tamil Nadu's commitment to the two-language policy, emphasizing that the state is only demanding its rightful share of funds.

The row has further intensified with an online campaign titled "GetOutStalin," spearheaded by BJP Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai, criticizing the DMK government's handling of various issues. This follows Udhayanidhi Stalin's earlier remark that any attempt to suppress Tamil Nadu's rights would be met with a "Get Out Modi" campaign in response.

Govt Reviews Need for Digital Content

Regulation Amid Crass Remarks Row

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is reviewing existing statutory provisions and considering a new legal framework to regulate "harmful" digital content following complaints of "obscenity and violence" on online platforms. In its response to a parliamentary panel, the ministry acknowledged growing concerns that the right to freedom of expression is being misused to display obscene content. "This ministry has taken note of these developments and is in the process of examining current statutory provisions and the need for a new legal framework," the ministry stated. The issue has gained prominence af-

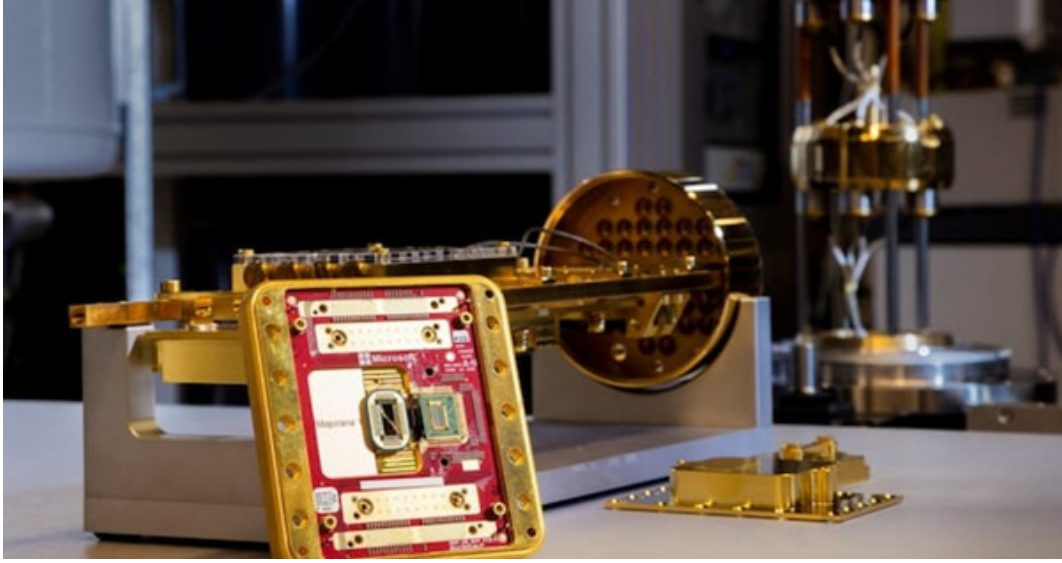
ter social media influencer Ranveer Allahbadia's controversial remarks triggered outrage. Despite his apology, criminal cases have been filed against him, and while the Supreme Court granted him protection from arrest, it made critical observations about his comments. The ministry noted that high courts, the Supreme Court, MPs, and statutory bodies like the National Commission for Women have raised concerns about digital content regulation. It informed the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, led by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, that a detailed note on the issue will be submitted after further deliberations.

On February 13, the committee asked the ministry about necessary amendments to existing laws in response to the rise of new digital platforms. Unlike traditional print and broadcast media, which are governed by specific regulations, OTT platforms and social media services operate without a clear legal framework, leading to increasing demands for stricter oversight. While some worry about potential misuse of new regulations to curb free speech, recurring controversies, including the latest involving Allahbadia, have intensified calls for stronger laws to regulate digital content. The committee is set to hold its next meeting on February 25.





India's Quantum Leap: Harnessing AI and Quantum Computing for a Viksit Bharat



India stands at the threshold of a technological revolution that could redefine its future. With the advent of quantum computing and generative AI, India has a unique opportunity to leapfrog traditional technological progress, positioning itself at the global forefront.

Recent breakthroughs in quantum computing, such as Microsoft's unveiling of the Majorana 1 chip, have brought practical quantum computing closer than ever. Unlike traditional qubits, the topological qubits in Majorana 1 are stable, offering the potential for solving problems once thought unsolvable, such as climate change, drug discovery, and materials science. Meanwhile, advancements in generative AI, like xAI's Grok 3, are pushing the boundaries of creativity, problem-solving, and automation. These technologies, while transformative, also introduce challenges, including ethical concerns and potential job displacement. However, for India, they present a powerful opportunity to take a giant leap in technology.

India's strong public digital infrastructure, coupled with a thriving startup ecosystem and a growing tech workforce, gives it a unique edge to integrate quantum computing and AI directly into its governance and economic systems. Initiatives like the National Quantum Mission (NQM) launched in 2023 aim to develop quantum technologies, with a focus on applications for India's needs—opti-

mizing transportation, energy grids, and agriculture.

In AI, India's vast population generates massive datasets that can be leveraged to develop region-specific solutions. From translating educational content into multiple languages to improving monsoon predictions and AI-driven healthcare, India is well-positioned to use generative AI for social advancement and economic growth.

To fully capitalize on this opportunity, India must invest in indigenous quantum and AI ecosystems. This includes establishing quantum computing infrastructure, expanding AI supercomputing centers, and developing in-house AI models and chips to reduce reliance on foreign technologies. The government's Skill India initiative must also be aligned to create a workforce of quantum and AI specialists.

Moreover, fostering deep-tech startups is crucial. By offering incentives such as tax breaks and venture capital, India can fuel innovation in quantum and AI sectors. Strategic policy frameworks must also address AI governance, ensuring ethical use while mitigating risks like deepfakes. By embracing these technologies and building in-house capabilities, India can not only accelerate its journey to a Viksit Bharat but also become a global leader in the digital age. The future is quantum, the future is AI, and the future is India's to seize.



BJP Ready to Accelerate After Lok Sabha Speedbreaker

The BJP's victories in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi have not only reinforced its political dominance but also revived its confidence following a minor setback in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Despite losing around 30 seats, which some saw as a major blow, the party has come back stronger, proving the previous defeat was just a temporary hurdle.

Just months after the 2024 Lok Sabha results, many Congress leaders and regional figures expressed optimism about the BJP's challenges ahead, especially with Rahul Gandhi positioning himself to lead the Opposition. However, those prospects now seem distant, as the BJP has firmly consolidated its position, especially in states like Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi, where it was previously considered to have lost its grip. The Delhi win, in particular, was seen as impossible due to the Aam Aadmi Party's dominance, but BJP's resilient strategy led to an unexpected

victory.

The BJP's success can be attributed to a careful and continuous course correction. Campaigning was adjusted with a focus on smaller, targeted meetings rather than large rallies, reaching out to voters through door-to-door interactions. The party's messaging was refined, with a strong emphasis on achievements and promises, avoiding any overstatements about possible outcomes.

One crucial aspect of the BJP's campaign strategy was its ability to neutralize the 'Constitution in danger' narrative that had caused trouble during the Lok Sabha elections. Leaders like Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Shah made concerted efforts to dispel fears about reservations and highlighted the government's welfare steps for marginalized sections of society. These efforts were reinforced by the extensive outreach from RSS workers, who ensured that no misconceptions about the party's

stance gained ground.

The BJP's alliance, initially viewed with skepticism due to its dependence on regional leaders, has now become more stable. Issues like the Waqf Amendment have been handled diplomatically, allowing the central government to function smoothly despite coalition dynamics.

Behind the scenes, the RSS played a pivotal role in strengthening the BJP's ground game, providing real-time feedback and strategizing minute-to-minute adjustments. The RSS's intense outreach, particularly through data-driven campaigns and local gatherings, ensured that every voter received key messages directly related to their concerns.

With momentum on its side, the BJP is now looking to capitalize on this success in upcoming state elections, especially in Bihar and West Bengal, where workers are rejuvenated and ready to continue the party's progress.

A Window of Opportunity: President's Rule and the Future of Manipur

The imposition of President's Rule in Manipur marks a critical juncture in the state's turbulent political and ethnic landscape. With Chief Minister Biren Singh's resignation on February 9, 2025, amid political instability and escalating ethnic violence, the state has entered a period of governance under direct control of the Union Government. This presents a crucial opportunity for the BJP and the Centre to address the underlying causes of the ongoing conflict and lay the foundation for lasting peace between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

The violence in Manipur has claimed over 200 lives and displaced more than 50,000 people. The need for constructive intervention has never been more urgent. The BJP, having failed to form a consensus on a successor to Biren Singh, opted for President's Rule to stabilize the situation and avoid a constitutional crisis. The central leadership now has a window to take the necessary steps to address ethnic tensions and create a sustainable political environment for the state.

One of the first priorities for the Centre is the role of Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla. With his neutral stance—neither aligned with the Meitei nor the Kuki-Zo community—Bhalla's leadership can facilitate dialogue and reconciliation between these divided groups. His efforts thus far, including visiting relief camps and engaging with displaced people, set the tone for a more inclusive approach to restoring peace. However, while President's Rule has garnered support from Kuki-Zo groups, it has been met with opposition from



the Congress and Meitei organizations. The Centre must, therefore, balance these diverse views and ensure a fair and comprehensive peace process. To this end, the BJP must take proactive steps. First, it needs to re-engage with the Kuki-Zo legislators who have distanced themselves from the party

since the ethnic violence erupted. Establishing communication between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo factions within the party is critical for fostering unity. A new peace committee, inclusive of all stakeholders, must also be formed to facilitate meaningful dialogue. Previous efforts have faltered due to lack of

action and resistance from influential groups like Kuki-Inpi and COCOMI. A more robust and dynamic approach is required this time.

The BJP's next chief ministerial candidate will likely be from the Meitei community, which dominates the state assembly. However, the party must en-

sure that the selected leader represents all communities and is capable of making decisions in the broader interest of the state, fostering a sense of inclusivity. Additionally, the BJP needs to strengthen its relationships with current allies like the Naga People's Front (NPF) and the National People's Party (NPP) to ensure a stable and united government.

Moreover, extending an olive branch to the Kuki People's Alliance (KPA), which had withdrawn support from the BJP due to disagreements with Biren Singh, could signal a commitment to reconciliation. Restoring ties with this faction will send a positive message to the Kuki-Zo community and help heal the rift that has deepened over the past year. Finally, the Centre must take a firm stance against militant groups from both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. The recent crackdown on militants is a step in the right direction, but it must be sustained without compromise. The continued dismantling of armed groups will play a pivotal role in ensuring long-term peace and stability in Manipur.

In conclusion, President's Rule in Manipur offers a temporary yet crucial opportunity for the BJP and the Centre to address the root causes of the state's ethnic strife. By taking strategic actions—engaging in dialogue, restoring trust, and fostering political consensus—the BJP can pave the way for a more peaceful and stable future for Manipur. The next few months are critical, and how the Centre handles this period will shape the state's trajectory for years to come.

Trump's third attack on \$21mn USAID

'Why are we caring about India's turnout?'

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Former US President Donald Trump has once again criticized the \$21 million USAID funding for 'voter turnout' in India, questioning why American taxpayers' money is being spent on foreign elections. His remarks, made during an address to US governors, mark the third time he has publicly raised concerns over the issue.

"USD 21 million going to my friend Prime Minister Modi in India for voter turnout. Why are we caring about India's turnout? What about us? I want voter turnout too," Trump said in a video shared by National Desk. He also took aim at another USAID allocation, stating, "\$29 million to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh went to a firm that nobody ever heard of."

On Friday, Trump went further, calling the funding a "kickback scheme." He said, "Why do we need to spend \$21 million for voter turnout in India? I guess they were trying to get somebody else elected." He also compared the controversy to allegations of Russian interference in US elections, adding, "When we hear that Russia spent about two thousand dollars on internet ads here, it was a big deal. But this is a total breakthrough."



India's response

The Indian government has taken note of Trump's statements, with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirming that the matter is under review. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "Relevant departments and authorities are looking into the information put out by the American ad-

ministration regarding certain US activities and funding. These are obviously very deeply troubling."

The issue has raised concerns about the transparency of foreign funding in political processes, with both Trump's campaign and Indian authorities closely monitoring further developments.

Drive Against Illegal Poppy Cultivation in Arunachal Faces Death Threats

TPN Correspondent | Arunachal Pradesh

A large-scale crackdown on illegal poppy cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh has uncovered direct links between narcotics and insurgency for the first time. Led by the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) and supported by security forces and the state government, the operation targeted poppy plantations across multiple districts, including Lohit, Namsai, and Changlang.

Over 6,000 hectares of poppy fields were destroyed in the past two months, despite insurgent groups issuing death threats to officials and workers involved in the operation. The estimated value of the destroyed poppy plantations exceeds ₹500 crore.

Insurgent outfits such as the NSCN (K-YA) and ULFA (Independent) reportedly threatened those participating in the drive, warning them to withdraw or face fatal consequences. These threats led to a shortage of workers, affecting the operation's overall progress.

Despite these challenges, security forces, particularly the Assam Rifles, played a crucial role in ensuring the operation proceeded as planned. However, due to bad weather and other logistical issues, officials were able to achieve only 60% of their initial target.



Over 150 Nepalese Students Leave Odisha University After Student's Death

TPN Correspondent | Nepal

Days after the alleged suicide of a Nepalese student at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha, 159 Nepalese students have returned home, citing mistreatment and safety concerns. The students crossed the Raxaul border, according to Assistant Chief District Officer of Parsa, Suman Kumar Karki.

Prakriti Lamsal, a 20-year-old third-year B-Tech (Computer Science) student, was found dead in her hostel room on February 16. Following her death, unrest broke out on campus, and Nepalese students claimed they were forced to vacate the hostel under harsh conditions.

A group of students who returned to Nepal alleged they were subjected to "inhuman treatment" by university staff and security guards.

"We were beaten up in the presence of university teachers and forced to leave immediately," they said, adding that they no longer felt safe to continue their studies at KIIT despite reassurances from the administration. The students have demanded a thorough investigation into Lamsal's death and justice for those mistreated. Protests were held in Birgunj and Bhairahawa, Lamsal's home district, calling for accountability.

Nepal's Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba confirmed that the issue had been taken up diplomatically. She stated that after discussions with Odisha Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, the Odisha government formed a high-level inquiry committee to ensure a fair investigation. The college administration has since apologized and taken action against staff involved in the alleged mistreatment.

BBC World Service India Fined ₹3.44 Crore For Foreign Exchange Violation

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has imposed a penalty of ₹3.44 crore on BBC World Service India for allegedly violating foreign direct investment (FDI) regulations. The agency has also fined three of its directors ₹1.14 crore each under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

A BBC spokesperson, responding to PTI, stated that neither the company nor its directors had received any adjudication order from the ED. "The BBC is committed to operating within the rules of all countries we are based in, including India. We will carefully review any order when it is received and consider next steps as appropriate," the spokesperson added.

The adjudication follows a show-cause notice issued on August 4, 2023, to BBC WS India, its three directors, and the finance head for alleged violations. The ED's FEMA probe was initiated a few months after an Income Tax survey at the BBC's Delhi office in February 2023.

According to sources, BBC WS India, a 100% FDI company, was engaged in streaming news and current affairs on digital media but did not comply with the FDI limit of 26% mandated by the Indian government under the Press Note 4 of 2019 issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry



and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The total penalty includes ₹5,000 per day for non-compliance beyond October 15, 2021. The three fined directors—Giles Antony Hunt, Indu Shekhar Sinha, and Paul Michael Gibbons—were allegedly responsible for overseeing operations during the period of violation.

Following the 2023 Income Tax survey, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) stated that the income and profits reported by BBC's entities were "not commensurate" with their Indian operations and that certain foreign remittances had not been taxed.

The BBC had then maintained that it would continue cooperating with authorities and hoped for a resolution soon.

Bhutan PM Calls Modi 'Elder Brother, Mentor' at Leadership Conclave

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay on Friday praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him an "elder brother" and "mentor" during his keynote address at the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) conclave in New Delhi. Speaking in Hindi at several points, Tobgay's remarks received enthusiastic applause from the audience.

"Without a doubt, I see an image of an elder brother in you, who always guides me and helps me ('Nisandeh, aap mei ek bade bhai ki chhavi dekhta hun, jo sadaiv mera margdarshan karte hain, aur mujhe sahayta dete hain')," he said, addressing Modi directly. Tobgay lauded the SOUL initiative as a "brainchild of Modi," emphasizing that it reflected his dedication to nurturing leadership and empowering individuals to serve India. He stated that he had come to the event not as a leader but as a student eager to learn.

"Leadership is not about titles or positions; it is about vision, courage, and the ability to inspire change. It is about trans-



formation, about guiding society toward a more prosperous and peaceful future," Tobgay said.

He highlighted the role of great leaders in history, who have not only led nations but also inspired revolutions in thought and progress. "Aadarniya Pradhan Mantri, mere bade bhai,

aapne apni buddhimani, saahas aur karuna se bhare netritav se Bharat ko das hi varshon mein pragati ke path par agrasar kiya hai" (Hon'ble Prime Minister, my elder brother, with your wisdom, courage, and compassionate leadership, you have led India on the path of development in just ten years), he added.

"Cheating Passengers": Shivraj Chouhan Slams Air India Over "Broken" Seat

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday criticized Air India for allotting him a "broken" seat during his flight from Bhopal to Delhi. The Minister alleged that despite the airline being aware of the seat's poor condition, it was still sold to passengers.

Chouhan, who was traveling to Delhi to inaugurate the "Kisan Mela" and attend meetings on natural farming, shared his experience on X. He stated that he was assigned seat 8C on Air India flight AI436, which was damaged and uncomfortable.

"When I asked the airline staff why the seat was broken, they admitted that the management had already been informed about it and that it should not have been sold," Chouhan wrote in Hindi. He further claimed that multiple seats on the flight were in a similar condition.

Despite being advised by co-passengers to switch to another seat, the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister chose to complete his journey in the same seat, arguing that he did not want to inconvenience another passenger.

Expressing his disappointment, Chouhan remarked, "I thought Air India's service would improve after Tata took over, but I was mistaken." He also criticized the airline for



charging passengers full fare while offering defective seating, calling it "unethical" and equating it to "cheating passengers."

Air India responded to his complaint, apologizing for the inconvenience and assuring that the issue would be addressed to prevent such occurrences in the future. The airline also requested an opportunity to discuss the matter with Chouhan.

India slams Turkish President's Kashmir remark



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

India has strongly objected to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's remarks on Kashmir during his recent visit to Pakistan. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) called his comments "objectionable and unwarranted," reaffirming that Jammu and Kashmir remain an integral part of India.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "We reject such objectionable comments on matters that are internal to India. We have lodged a strong protest with the Turkish ambassador. Such unwarranted statements on India's territorial integrity and sovereignty are unacceptable."

India also criticized Pakistan's continued involvement in cross-border terrorism, suggesting that Erdogan should have instead condemned it rather than commenting on India's internal affairs. "No other country has any locus standi to comment on Jammu and Kashmir. It would have been more appropriate if Pakistan's policy of using cross-border terrorism against India, which remains the biggest threat to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, had been called out," the MEA said.

Erdogan's remarks, made during his two-day visit to Pakistan, called for resolving the Kashmir issue through UN resolutions and dialogue while expressing solidarity with the people of Kashmir. India's strong response underscores its firm stance against any external interference in its territorial matters.

PM Modi to be guest of honour at Mauritius' National Day celebrations

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the 'Guest of Honour' at Mauritius' 57th National Day celebrations on March 12, as announced by Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam. Modi is set to visit Port Louis on March 11-12, underscoring the deep ties between India and the island nation.

Addressing the Parliament, Ramgoolam expressed his delight over Modi accepting the invitation despite his packed diplomatic schedule, which recently included visits to Paris and the United States. "It is indeed a singular privilege for our country to host such a distinguished personality who is doing us this honour," he said.

Highlighting the historical and cultural ties between the two nations, Ramgoolam noted that Modi's visit reaffirms the enduring friendship between India and Mauritius. "The visit of Modi is a testimony to the close re-



lations between our two nations," he added.

Mauritius marks its National Day on March 12, commemorating its independence from British rule in 1968 and its transition to a republic within the Commonwealth in 1992.

India and Mauritius share strong

diplomatic and cultural relations, with nearly 70% of Mauritius' 1.2 million population being of Indian origin. Modi had earlier congratulated Ramgoolam on his electoral victory in November 2024, emphasizing his commitment to strengthening their "special and unique partnership."

Hamas completes first phase of hostage release

TPN Correspondent | Tel Aviv

Hamas released six Israeli hostages from Gaza on Saturday, marking the completion of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement that began last month. However, uncertainty looms over the next stage of the truce as negotiations continue. Among those released, Tal Shoham and Avera Mengistu were handed over to the Israeli military by the Red Cross in Rafah and have crossed into Israel, according to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Three others—Omer Shem Tov, Eliya Cohen, and Omer Wenkert—were transferred to the Red Cross in Nuseirat, while Hisham al-Sayed was



released at a separate site in Gaza City.

These six individuals are the final living hostages whose release was agreed upon during last month's negotiations in Qatar. Following this exchange, Hamas and its allies continue

to hold 63 Israeli hostages in Gaza, at least 32 of whom are believed to be deceased, as per the Israeli government. Hamas stated that it expects Israel to release 602 Palestinian prisoners and detainees as part of the agreement. Among them, 50 have been sentenced to life imprisonment, 60 are serving long sentences, and 445 were detained in Gaza since October 7, 2023.

While the current phase has concluded, Hamas has signaled readiness to release all remaining Israeli hostages in a single exchange if Israel agrees to withdraw its troops from Gaza as part of the next ceasefire stage.



Trump Announces Reciprocal Tariffs on India and China

TPN Correspondent | Washington DC

Former US President Donald Trump has announced plans to impose reciprocal tariffs on countries like India and China, stating that the United States will match the tariffs these nations impose on American goods. "We will soon impose reciprocal tariffs—they charge us, we charge them. Whatever a company or a country, such as India or China, charges, we want to be fair; hence, reciprocal," Trump said during a press conference on Friday. He added that the US was prepared to take this step earlier but was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before his recent bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump had criticized India's tariff structure, calling it the "highest" and describing the country as a difficult place to conduct business. He reiterated these concerns when discussing Tesla CEO Elon Musk's meeting with PM Modi. "India is a very hard place to do business because of the tariffs. They have the highest tariffs... It's a hard place to do business," he remarked.

Trump also referenced India's past trade policies, citing the example of Harley-Davidson motorcycles, which faced high import duties, forcing the company to establish manufacturing units in India. "India charges tremendous tariffs. I remember when Harley-Davidson couldn't sell their motorbikes in India because the tax was so high. Harley was forced to build," he said, according to US Network Pool via Reuters.

His comments reflect long-standing concerns about India's trade practices, which have been a point of contention in US-India economic relations.

New Bat Coronavirus Found in China Scientists Assess Human Transmission Risk

TPN Correspondent | Beijing

A new bat coronavirus, HKU5-CoV-2, has been discovered in China, raising concerns about its potential to infect humans. The virus, identified by a team of virologists led by Shi Zhengli, shares similarities with SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the South China Morning Post (SCMP), HKU5-CoV-2 belongs to the merbecovirus subgenus, which also includes the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) virus. The researchers found that it can bind to human ACE2 receptors, a key mechanism used by SARS-CoV-2 to infect human cells.

Lab tests revealed that the virus could infect human cell cultures in mini-organ models, suggesting a potential zoonotic risk. The study, published in Newsweek, stated that "bat merbecoviruses, which are phylogenetically related to MERS-CoV, pose a high risk of spillover to humans, either through direct transmission or facilitated by intermediate hosts." However, it emphasized that the possibility of human transmission "remains to be investigated."

Despite the discovery, experts caution against panic. Dr. Michael Osterholm, an infectious disease expert at the University of Minnesota, called concerns about another pandemic "overblown," citing increased immunity in the population against SARS-like viruses since 2019.



Kash Patel Sworn In as FBI Director, Takes Oath on Bhagavad Gita

TPN Correspondent | Washington DC

Indian-American Kash Patel has been sworn in as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), taking his oath on the Bhagavad Gita. Patel, confirmed by the US Senate, succeeds Christopher Wray in leading the agency.

The ceremony took place at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, where US Attorney General Pam Bondi administered the oath. Patel's family and girlfriend stood beside him, with other relatives seated in the front row.

Following the oath, Patel spoke about his journey, calling it a testament to the American dream. "Anyone who thinks the American dream is dead, look right here. You are talking to a first-generation Indian who is about to lead the law enforcement agency of the greatest nation on earth," he said. He also promised accountability within the FBI, both internally and externally.

US President Donald Trump praised Patel's appointment, calling him

"tough and strong" and highlighting the respect he commands among FBI agents. "He will go down as the best ever at that position," Trump said. He added that Patel's approval was easier than expected, citing strong endorsements, including one from former congressman Trey Gowdy. The White House welcomed Patel's confirmation, stating that it aligns with Trump's agenda to restore integrity and uphold the rule of law. In a post on X, the White House wrote, "@FBI Director Kash Patel's confirmation as FBI Director is a crucial step in executing President Trump's agenda to restore integrity and uphold the rule of law."

Patel, a close ally of Trump, expressed gratitude for the support of the President and Attorney General Bondi, vowing to rebuild the FBI as a "transparent, accountable, and committed" agency.

His nomination faced opposition from Republican Senators Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, but he secured confirmation with a narrow 51-49 vote, as all Senate Democrats voted against him.

Germany's Gen Z Tilts Right as Nation Prepares for Sunday Vote



TPN Correspondent | Berlin

As Germany approaches its national election this Sunday, a notable shift is underway among Generation Z voters, born between 1997 and 2012, who are increasingly favoring right-of-center parties. Once staunch supporters of environmental and social justice causes, young Germans are now prioritizing immigration, a faltering economy, and the fallout from the Ukraine war, marking a dramatic departure from their 2021 preferences.

Germany's right-wing political spectrum includes the moderate CDU/CSU coalition, currently the second-largest party with strongholds in the west, and the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which is gaining traction, particularly in the east. In last year's eastern regional elections, the AfD saw significant support from 18- to 24-year-olds, outpacing the Greens, according to polling institute infratest dimap. The CDU/CSU, focusing on immigration and economic stability, topped the youth vote in the 2024 European elections, with the AfD close behind.

This shift contrasts sharply with 2021, when the Greens, bolstered by the Fridays for Future movement, led among young voters with their green energy and multicultural agenda. However, backlash against these policies has eroded their support. Unlike older generations tied to party loyalty, Gen Z voters are pragmatic, seeking solutions to immediate concerns. Analysts note that this cohort, distanced from World War II's legacy, views the AfD's rise with less apprehension than their predecessors.

Social media, particularly TikTok, has amplified this trend, with both the AfD and far-left Die Linke leveraging platforms to polarize and mobilize young voters. Recent surveys underscore this rightward lean, though 30% of all voters remain undecided, potentially deciding the election's outcome. As Europe tilts right, immigration remains a flashpoint, challenging left-leaning parties' liberal stance. With the CDU/CSU and AfD capitalizing on these shifts, Germany's political landscape faces a transformative moment this weekend.



Ex-RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Appointed Principal Secretary to PM

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi
Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has been appointed as the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a government notification issued on Saturday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) confirmed that Das' tenure will be co-terminus with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders, whichever is earlier. His appointment comes as a significant move, given his vast experience in economic policy and governance.

Das, who served as RBI Governor for six years since December 2018,

played a crucial role in steering India's financial policies, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. His tenure saw critical interventions in monetary policy, liquidity management, and regulatory reforms aimed at stabilizing the economy amid global and domestic challenges.

A 1980-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, Das has held key positions in the central and state governments in areas including finance, taxation, infrastructure, and industry. His expertise in fiscal management and economic policy-making was instrumental in shap-

ing several government initiatives. In another key decision, the government extended the tenure of NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam by one year, starting from February 24, 2025. A 1987-batch IAS officer, Subrahmanyam was initially appointed for a two-year term in February 2023. His extension signals continuity in policy advisory at the country's premier think tank.

With Das assuming the crucial role of Principal Secretary to the PM, his experience in macroeconomic management and financial governance is expected to further strengthen the decision-making process at the highest level of government.

CIE Automotive India Q4 2025 Profit Rises 9.49% YoY Despite Revenue Dip



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

CIE Automotive India reported its Q4 2025 financial results on February 20, 2025, posting a profit of ₹184.98 crore, reflecting a 9.49% year-over-year (YoY) increase. However, revenue declined 5.82% YoY to ₹2,109.95 crore.

Quarter-over-quarter, revenue fell 1.16%, and profit declined 5.25%, indicating a slowdown. Operating income also witnessed a 12.9% q-o-q and 12.41% YoY decline. Meanwhile, Selling, General & Administrative expenses increased 0.67% q-o-q but dropped 1.42% YoY.

Earnings per share (EPS) for Q4 stood at ₹4.72, up 1.29% YoY, signaling financial stability despite revenue pressures.

CIE Automotive India's stock performance has been mixed, delivering a 0.27% return in the last week, but experiencing a 26.48% decline over six months and 10.6% year-to-date losses.

The company holds a market capitalization of ₹15,995.81 crore, with its stock trading between a 52-week high of ₹622.4 and a low of ₹405.3. Analysts maintain a 'Buy' recommendation, signaling long-term confidence despite near-term revenue challenges.

Debock Industries Reports ₹0.2 Cr Loss in Q3 2025 as Revenue Plunges 97.01% YoY
Debock Industries announced its Q3 2025 financial results on February 21, 2025, re-

vealing a sharp revenue decline of 97.01% year-over-year (YoY), resulting in a ₹0.2 crore loss. In the same quarter last year, the company had posted a profit of ₹0.32 crore.

Compared to the previous quarter, revenue fell 95.74%, reflecting severe financial challenges. The company's operating income also suffered, dropping 107.84% quarter-over-quarter and 155.56% YoY, further highlighting its struggles in the current market.



Earnings per share (EPS) for Q3 stood at ₹-0.01, marking a 125% YoY decline, emphasizing the ongoing financial downturn.

Despite a 0.39% return in the last week, Debock Industries has seen a 63.87% decline in the past six months and a negative 17.83% year-to-date return.

The company currently holds a market capitalization of ₹41.99 crore, with its stock trading between a 52-week high of ₹9.6 and a low of ₹2.43.

Zomato Faces Scrutiny Over Ticket Sales for Honey Singh's Concert



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Cyber Cell is set to issue a show-cause notice to Zomato for allegedly selling tickets for singer Honey Singh's Millionaire India Tour concert without including buyers' names. The move comes as part of efforts to curb black marketing and ensure ticketing transparency for high-profile events.

Officials have raised concerns that omitting buyer names on tickets could lead to potential security risks and unauthorized resales. According to an NDTV report, the cyber cell has sought an explanation from Zomato regarding this practice and whether it violates ticketing regulations.

However, Zomato has denied the allegations, stating that it has not received any notice yet. In response to the controversy, a company spokesperson told Livemint, "This is not true. We have not received any notice yet. As and when we receive it, we will work with the authorities to demonstrate that our practices comply with applicable laws. We have always ad-

hered to the laws of the land and will continue to do so. Further, every M-ticket issued through the District app for music events or other experiences, including the Honey Singh concert, has consistently included the buyer's name." The scrutiny on Zomato follows the Maharashtra Cyber Cell's directive last year, instructing ticketing platforms like Zomato and BookMyShow to print buyers' names on tickets for major events to prevent resale at inflated prices.

Maharashtra Cyber Cell Chief Yashasvi Yadav highlighted the issue, stating, "A problem arose that many people held many tickets with themselves and resold them through social media platforms, with a manifold increase in ticket prices."

The Millionaire India Tour marks Honey Singh's major comeback, covering ten cities across India. The tour kicks off in Mumbai, with the first concert scheduled for February 22 at Nesco Pvt Ltd. Tickets for the event have been made available on Zomato and Insider.

Coldplay Concert Black Marketing Controversy

The show-cause notice against Zomato comes shortly after a similar controversy involving BookMyShow over the alleged black marketing of Coldplay concert tickets. The concert, held between January 19-21, 2025, faced backlash after fans accused BookMyShow of enabling third parties to resell tickets at exorbitant prices.

Advocate Amit Vyas filed a complaint against the platform, alleging that genuine users were logged out or blocked, allowing scalpers to sell tickets initially priced at ₹2,500 for up to ₹3 lakh.

BookMyShow had started selling Coldplay concert tickets on September 22, 2024, and they were sold out within minutes. The platform later issued warnings against illegitimate resellers.

With growing concerns over black marketing, the Maharashtra Cyber Cell is expected to tighten regulations further, ensuring that ticketing platforms comply with transparency measures.



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Tesla's much-anticipated entry into the Indian market is set to come with a hefty price tag, even if the government reduces import tariffs. A recent report by global capital market company CLSA has highlighted

that despite lower duties, Tesla's electric vehicles (EVs) will remain significantly more expensive than their domestic competitors, including Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra.

Tesla's Expected Price in India
With the Indian government

Tesla's Entry into India

Higher Costs Expected Despite Lower Tariffs

considering slashing import duties to as low as 15-20%, the cheapest Tesla model is still expected to cost between ₹35 lakh and ₹40 lakh. Currently, the Tesla Model 3, which is the company's most affordable EV in the United States, is priced at approximately \$35,000 (around ₹30.4 lakh).

The CLSA report explains that, even with reduced tariffs, the cost will further increase due to additional charges such as road tax, insurance, and other levies. "With tariffs lowered to around 15-20% in India, along with other costs, the on-road price would be close to USD 40,000 (₹35-40 lakh)," the report states.

Tesla vs Domestic EV Makers
Tesla's arrival in India has gen-

erated significant excitement, but the high pricing of its vehicles may prevent it from disrupting the domestic EV market. Competitors like Mahindra, Hyundai, and Maruti Suzuki already have established electric vehicle models at significantly lower price points.

These domestic players already dominate India's EV market with competitive pricing and established production lines. In contrast, Tesla's Model 3, even at its lowest projected price, remains at least 15-20% more expensive than these options.

According to industry experts, unless Tesla introduces a locally manufactured entry-level model under ₹25 lakh, it may struggle to gain a major

market share. The CLSA report also notes that concerns about Tesla's entry have already impacted Mahindra & Mahindra's stock prices.

Tesla's India Plans & Hiring Process

To overcome cost barriers, Tesla would need to establish a manufacturing facility in India, allowing the company to reduce its dependency on imports and make its vehicles more competitively priced. However, no official announcement has been made regarding setting up a local factory.

In a significant step towards its Indian entry, Tesla has begun hiring for key positions. On February 18, the company listed a job opening for the position of

Consumer Engagement Manager in Mumbai. This marks the beginning of Tesla's recruitment drive in India, with a total of 13 roles currently listed for the country.

Tesla is expected to launch its initial models in key metro cities like Delhi and Mumbai in the coming months. Industry analysts believe the EV giant will use these cities as testing grounds before expanding further. While Tesla's arrival is expected to bring innovation to India's electric vehicle market, its high price point and strong domestic competition could pose challenges to its success unless it commits to local production.

NASA Lowers Risk of Asteroid 2024 YR4 Impact in 2032



TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C. NASA has significantly reduced concerns regarding asteroid 2024 YR4, revising its estimated impact probability in 2032 from 1 in 32 to 1 in 360. The 55-meter-wide asteroid, initially considered the most hazardous object on NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies (CNEOS) Sentry Risk Table, now has a 99.72% chance of completely missing Earth.

The reassessment follows new observational data collected between February 18 and February 20, allowing for refined calculations of the asteroid's trajectory. As a result, NASA has downgraded its classification to Level 1 on the Torino Scale, which assesses the threat posed by near-Earth objects. Richard Binzel, creator of the Torino Scale, indicated that further observations might move

2024 YR4 to Level 0, signifying no risk. Despite the risk reduction, asteroid 2024 YR4 remains the most concerning object on the Sentry Risk Table, followed by asteroid 1950 DA, which has a 0.039% chance of impacting Earth in the year 2880. Experts stress that continuous monitoring will provide greater clarity, especially when the asteroid makes another approach in 2028.

David Rankin, an astronomer with the Catalina Sky Survey, explained that small uncertainties in measurements could result in large trajectory shifts over time. However, he reassured that additional observations will likely continue lowering any remaining impact probabilities.

NASA also acknowledged a minor possibility that 2024 YR4 could collide with the Moon, though the likelihood remains extremely low. The asteroid is now moving away from Earth and will not be visible to ground-based telescopes until 2028, when further tracking will refine its projected path. Scientists remain confident that it will continue its orbit around the Sun without posing any danger to Earth.

Amazonian Town Faces Crisis as Massive Sinkholes Expand



TPN Correspondent | Buriticupu

The city of Buriticupu in Brazil's northeastern Amazon is facing a growing crisis as massive sinkholes continue to expand, threatening the homes of at least 1,200 residents. The municipal government recently declared a state of emergency as the situation worsened.

In a decree issued earlier this month, officials warned that the sinkholes have been expanding "exponentially" in recent months, putting more homes at risk. Several buildings have already collapsed, and the danger continues to increase.

The issue has been unfolding for nearly 30 years due to heavy rains eroding sandy soils, worsened by deforestation and poorly planned construction. Known

as "voco-roca" in Brazil—a term of indigenous origin meaning "to tear the earth"—these sinkholes have now reached a critical stage.

The situation is particularly dire during the current rainy season, according to geographer Marcelino Farias of the Federal University of Maranhao. Long-time resident Antonia dos Anjos, 65, expressed her fears, saying, "There's this danger right in front of us, and nobody knows where the next hole will open up."

Buriticupu's secretary of public works, Lucas Conceicao, admitted that the municipality lacks the resources to handle the crisis. "The challenges range from stopping the erosion to relocating people from risk areas," he said.

Boult Launches Mustang Q Headphones, Torq and Dyno TWS Earbuds in India



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Boult has introduced its latest range of audio products in India, unveiling the Mustang Q over-the-ear Bluetooth headphones alongside Mustang Torq and Mustang Dyno truly wireless (TWS) earbuds. Developed in collaboration with Ford's Mustang, these new offerings feature a design inspired by the iconic car, complete with Mustang-themed stripes, logos, and color shades.

The Boult Mustang Q is priced at ₹2,499 and comes in a single Blue variant. The Mustang Torq and Mustang Dyno earbuds are priced at ₹1,499 and ₹1,299, respectively. The Torq model is available in Silver and Yellow, while the Dyno variant comes in Grey. All three products are now available for purchase in India.

The Boult Mustang Q headphones boast

an IP67-rated water-resistant build and promise up to 70 hours of battery life on a single charge with active noise cancellation (ANC) enabled. They are equipped with 12mm drivers, environmental noise cancellation (ENC), and Bluetooth 5.4 connectivity, ensuring seamless compatibility with Android and iOS devices. The headphones also offer four EQ modes—Bass, Rock, Vocal, and Pop—and support dual-device pairing. A 10-minute charge provides up to 10 hours of playback time. The Mustang Torq and Mustang Dyno earbuds feature 13mm drivers for enhanced bass and support AAC and SBC codecs. With a quad-mic setup and ENC, these earbuds aim to provide clear call quality with minimal background noise. They also support AI voice assistants and

offer touch controls for managing calls and media playback.

For gamers, both models feature a low-latency mode with a 45ms response time, which can be activated through the Boult Amp app. They are IPX5-rated for sweat and water resistance, ensuring durability for workouts and outdoor use. With Bluetooth 5.4 connectivity, the earbuds support dual-device pairing and USB Type-C fast charging. The Mustang Torq offers up to 60 hours of total playback and provides two hours of listening time with just a 10-minute charge.

Boult's latest lineup aims to cater to music lovers and gamers alike, combining extended battery life, enhanced durability, and premium design inspired by Ford's Mustang.

Digital photo snan at Maha Kumbh goes viral, sparks debate



TPN Correspondent | Prayagraj

A viral video from the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj has left the internet amused, showing a man offering a "digital photo snan" service for remote devotees. For a fee of ₹1,100, he claims to purify people's souls by immersing a photocopy of their picture in the sacred waters of the Triveni Sangam.

Identified as Deepak Goyal, the man in the video explains that devotees can send their photos via WhatsApp, which he prints and

dips in the holy river within 24 hours. The unusual service, which he refers to as his "startup," has sparked mixed reactions online.

The video, shared by Instagram user Akash Banerjee, has garnered over 4.3 million views and more than 124,000 likes. Many users mocked the idea, calling it "next-level AI" and comparing it to a "billion-dollar startup," while others criticized it as exploiting people's faith. "China has DeepSeek, so what we have is DeepSnaan," one user joked, while another

commented, "This is what Digital India looks like." Some, however, defended him, saying he was simply using an opportunity.

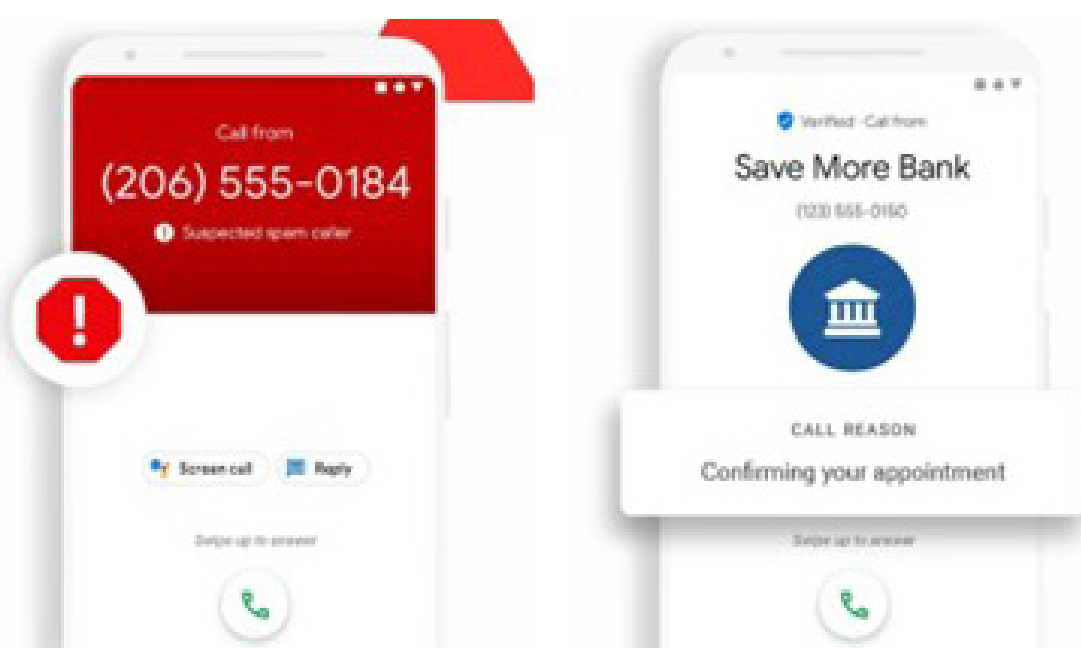
The Maha Kumbh Mela, which began on January 13 and will conclude on February 26, has drawn millions of devotees, including top political leaders, foreign dignitaries, industrialists, and film personalities. Many have participated in the ritual of taking a holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers.

Google rolls out new filters for call history sorting on Android

Google is introducing a new feature in its Phone app that enhances call history sorting by categorizing calls based on type, such as spam, contacts, or unknown callers. This update, initially available to beta users, is now reportedly rolling out to all Android users.

According to a report by Android Authority, the new feature allows users to filter call history into categories like all, missed, contacts, spam, and non-spam. This makes it easier to find specific callers without scrolling through an extensive list of unrelated calls. However, users currently do not have the option to filter calls by incoming or outgoing status.

Call filters were first introduced with the 159.0.718038457-public-beta-pixel2024 update of the Phone app last month. At that time, it was limited to beta users with no official announcement on a public rollout. The latest report indicates that the feature is now becoming



widely available, though it may be a phased rollout controlled via a server-side update. As a result, some users, including Gadgets 360 staff members, have yet to see the feature on their devices, including Pixel phones.

Additional Spam Protection Features
The new call sorting feature

adds to Google's ongoing efforts to improve spam protection and enhance user convenience. One of the key tools in this regard is the Call Screen feature available on Pixel devices. It acts as an intermediary, screening calls by asking the caller their name and reason for calling, then providing a transcript to the receiver

before they decide whether to answer.

Another notable feature is reverse lookup, which helps users identify unknown numbers and filter out spam calls. These measures are part of Google's broader strategy to reduce call spam and improve the overall calling experience for Android users.

Andreeva Becomes Youngest WTA 1000 Finalist



Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva made history by becoming the youngest player to reach the final of a WTA 1000 event. The 17-year-old defeated sixth-seeded Elena Rybakina 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 at the Dubai Championships. Andreeva, who trailed 1-3 in the third set, won the last five games to secure her spot in the final. "If I lose 6-0, 5-0 or win 7-5, 6-4, it doesn't matter. I just go for my shots and try to bring out my best level," Andreeva said after the match.

Magnus Carlsen Auctions Jeans for Charity After Dress Code Dispute



Chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen is turning his controversial jeans into a charitable contribution. The Norwegian player is auctioning off the pair of Italian luxury brand Corneliani jeans that led to a dress code dispute at the December World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships. After being fined \$200 for wearing the jeans, Carlsen quit the competition in protest, although the tournament's governing body later loosened the dress code.

Now, fans and collectors have the opportunity to own Carlsen's infamous size 32 regular fit jeans, which are being sold on eBay with proceeds going to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. The auction, set to end on March 1, had already reached an offer of \$8,200 as of February 21.

The proceeds will support the charity's mission of mentoring youth, including funding chess clinics and community events. According to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, chess has long been a favorite activity that helps participants develop critical thinking and life skills. Carlsen's jeans will now help inspire the next generation of young minds.

India vs Pakistan: A Crucial Clash in ICC Champions Trophy 2025



The highly anticipated Pakistan vs India match in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is set to take place on February 23 at Dubai International Stadium. This thrilling encounter will be pivotal for both teams, especially Pakistan, who must win to stay in contention for the title. India enters as the favorite, having won 8 of their last 12 ODIs against Pakistan in the past 15 years. Pakistan's squad includes key players like Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi, while India will rely on the form of Shubman Gill and Mohammed Shami. The match will start at 2:30 PM IST and is expected to feature a slow pitch, favoring spinners, with dew playing a significant role in the latter stages. The game will be broadcast live on Star Sports in India and PTV Sports in Pakistan, with online streaming available on JioHotstar and Myco. Fans can purchase tickets via the PCB website.

Manu Bhaker to Lead 35-Member Indian Shooting Team at South America World Cups



ACE shooter Manu Bhaker will lead a 35-member Indian shooting team at the upcoming ISSF World Cups in South America, scheduled for April. The events will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina (April 1-11) and Lima, Peru (April 13-22). The squad includes several Paris Olympians, and Bhaker, recently awarded the Dhyana Chand Khel Ratna for her performance in Paris, will compete in the women's 10m air pistol and

25m pistol events. Prominent shooters such as Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu, Esha Singh, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, and Sift Kaur Samra will also be part of the team. Ahead of the World Cups, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) will hold a training camp from March 14 at the Karni Singh Shooting Range, with expert coaches like Jaspal Rana and Jitu Rai.

Manu Bhaker to Lead 35-Member Indian Shooting Team at South America World Cups



Mumbai Indians secured a thrilling four-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in the Women's Premier League on Friday, with key contributions from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Amanjot Kaur. RCB posted a competitive total of 167/7, thanks to Ellyse Perry's explosive 81 off 43 balls, which included 11 fours and two sixes. Despite being at 57/4 at one stage, Perry, along with Richa Ghosh (28) and Smriti Mandhana (26), helped RCB recover. In reply, Harmanpreet Kaur's 50 off

38 balls, along with Nat Sciver-Brunt's quick-fire 42 off 21 and Amanjot's unbeaten 34 off 27, guided Mumbai to victory with one ball to spare. Amanjot was named Player of the Match for her all-round performance, including 3/22 with the ball. Brief Scores: • Royal Challengers Bangalore: 167/7 (Perry 81, Ghosh 28; Amanjot 3/22) • Mumbai Indians: 170/6 in 19.5 overs (Harmanpreet 50, Sciver-Brunt 42, Amanjot 34*; Wareham 3/21, Garth 2/30)

Ranji Trophy: Kerala Makes History, Set to Face Vidarbha in Final



Kerala has created history by reaching their first-ever Ranji Trophy final, setting up a thrilling title clash against Vidarbha. This milestone came after a dramatic two-run first-innings lead over Gujarat in the semifinal. Despite Gujarat needing only 29 runs to surpass Kerala's score, left-arm spinner Aditya Sarwate took all three remaining wickets to bowl them out for 455. Kerala, who made their debut in the Ranji Trophy 68 years ago, had previously reached only their second semifinal. Vidarbha Reaches Final with 80-Run Victory Over Mumbai. In the other semifinal, Vidarbha's Harsh Dubey

stole the show with a match-winning five-wicket haul, leading his team to an 80-run victory over defending champions Mumbai. Dubey's 66-wicket season performance brought Vidarbha closer to their fourth Ranji Trophy final. They will now face Kerala in a highly anticipated final.

Brief Scores: • Vidarbha: 383 & 292 • Mumbai: 270 & 325 all out (Thakur 66, Mulani 46; Dubey 5/127) • Kerala: 457 & 114/4 (Saxena 37*; Hingrajia 2/22) • Gujarat: 455 all out (Panchal 148, Patel 79, Desai 73; Sarwate 4/111, Saxena 4/149)

Rahul Dravid Comes Out of Retirement to Play Alongside Son Anvay

Former Indian cricket captain and coach, Rahul Dravid, made an unexpected return to the cricket field on Saturday, joining his son Anvay for a match with the Vijaya Cricket Club (Malur) in the Third Division (Group I) for the Nassur Memorial Shield. This marks a rare father-son cricketing moment, with Dravid, who had retired from professional cricket

years ago, playing alongside his son. Dravid, who had been in Guwahati for the Rajasthan Royals' pre-season camp, returned to the city recently and took the field for this special occasion. The match saw AG Aditya take four wickets (4/60) for the Young Lions.





Chiranjeevi to Share Screen with Bollywood Actress Rani Mukerji in Upcoming Film



Megastar Chiranjeevi is gearing up for a series of projects, with his current focus on the film Vishwambhar. However, another exciting venture is on the horizon with director Srikant Odela, who recently hit a major success with Dasara. In this untitled project, there is buzz that Bollywood actress Rani Mukerji will star opposite

Chiranjeevi. The role of the heroine holds significant importance in the storyline, and Srikant Odela has recommended Rani Mukerji for the part. After considering the suggestion, Chiranjeevi reportedly gave his approval, and this news is creating a stir in Bollywood circles. The film will be presented by actor Nani.

Rakul Preet Singh's Movie "Mere Husband Ki Biwi" Offers Bumper Deal to Audiences



Rakul Preet Singh's latest Hindi film Mere Husband Ki Biwi was released yesterday, starring Arjun Kapoor and Bhumi Pednekar. To attract more viewers, the producers have come up with a "Buy One, Get One Free" offer for movie tickets, similar to promotional tactics often seen in business to boost sales. However, the film's

collections have not been as impressive as expected. Meanwhile, Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna's Chhava is creating waves at the box office. Despite the exciting offer, the audience turnout for Rakul's movie remains lukewarm. The promotional strategy hopes to draw more crowds into theaters.

SSMB 29 Shooting Underway in Hyderabad, SS Rajamouli's Press Meet Expected Soon

Superstar Mahesh Babu's eagerly awaited film SSMB 29, directed by SS Rajamouli, is currently under production, with the team using advanced technology, including 35mm/70mm scanners, similar to those used by Hollywood director Christopher Nolan. The film, with a budget surpassing Rs. 1000 Crores, promises a global-scale adventure. The first schedule is taking place in

Hyderabad, featuring large sets such as a replica of Varanasi's Manikarnika Ghat. The movie will take audiences on a journey from Varanasi to African jungles. Mahesh Babu stars in a powerful role, with Priyanka Chopra Jonas playing the female lead. A press meet with Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu is expected soon, where more details on the film's story and characters will be shared.

"Odela 2" Teaser Unveiled: Tamannaah's Intense Role Raises Anticipation

The teaser of Odela 2, starring Tamannaah in the lead role, has been released, and it promises to deliver thrilling moments. The film, a sequel to the successful 2022 movie Odela Railway Station, has generated massive expectations among fans. Directed by Akosh Teja, with renowned director Sampath Nandi providing the story and producing the film, Odela 2 has captured attention for its intense scenes.

The teaser, released during the Mahakumbh Mela, showcases Tamannaah as a fierce character resembling a "lady Aghora," adding to the suspenseful vibe. Her portrayal as Shiva Shakti leaves the audience intrigued, and the overall visual experience has caught the public's eye. The film's music is composed by Ajneesh Loknath, with Madhu Creations producing under the banner of D. Madhu.



Mahath Raghavendra's Romantic Comedy Series "Emoji" Set to Stream on Aha



A new romantic comedy series Emoji, aimed at the youth, is all set to stream on the OTT platform Aha starting February 28th. This series, originally a hit in Tamil in 2022, is now making its way to Telugu audiences. The story revolves around love and marriage, blending humor and emotions.

Starring Mahath Raghavendra, Manasa Chaudhari, and Devika in key roles, Emoji

follows the journey of a young man and woman who fall in love, only for a series of events to pull them apart. The young man, deciding to move on, begins a new relationship with another girl, but his first love reappears, creating tension. Directed by Sampath, this series is expected to captivate viewers with its light-hearted yet meaningful storyline.

Vicky Kaushal Honoured After PM Modi Praises "Chhaava"



Actor Vicky Kaushal expressed his immense gratitude after Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised his historical action drama Chhaava. During the inaugural function of the 98th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (ABMSS), Modi highlighted the success of the film, stating, "Chhaava is making headlines everywhere right now." The film, which has grossed over Rs 300 crore globally, features Kaushal portraying Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, son of the

Maratha empire's founder, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Kaushal took to Instagram, saying, "Honoured beyond words! Grateful to Hon. PM Narendra Modi ji. #Chhaava." Rashmika Mandanna, who plays Yesubai in the movie, also shared her thanks on social media. Chhaava has been declared tax-free in Goa and Madhya Pradesh, and the film has received widespread recognition for its portrayal of Sambhaji Maharaj's legacy.



Ali Fazal and Sonali Bendre Join Forces with "Paatal Lok" Director Prosit Roy for an Action Thriller



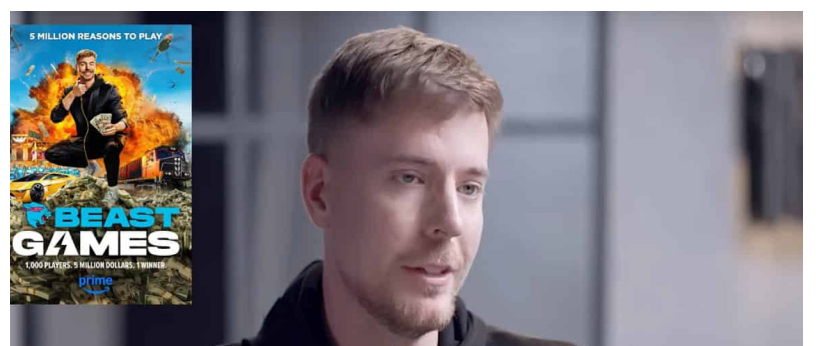
Ali Fazal is set to star in a high-octane action thriller series helmed by Prosit Roy, the director of Paatal Lok Season 1. Alongside Fazal, Bollywood actress Sonali Bendre will play a key role in the series, adding to the excitement of the project. The shoot is scheduled to begin in April, with Fazal expected to showcase a never-before-seen avatar.

The series, which remains untitled, promises to be a large-scale action spectacle, combining intense sequences

with a compelling narrative. A source close to the production shared that Prosit Roy's storytelling expertise and Fazal's dedication, combined with Bendre's strong screen presence, will make this an exceptional project.

In addition to this, Fazal is busy with Rakht Brahmmand, a period fantasy drama by Raj & DK, and is also preparing for several upcoming projects, including Mirzapur: The Film, Metro In Dino, Lahore 1947, Thug Life, and Rule Breakers.

MrBeast Admits Losing Rs 86 Crores on "Beast Games" Show, Talks Mental Health Struggles



YouTube star MrBeast, real name Jimmy Donaldson, revealed that his biggest project, Beast Games, ended up costing him a staggering Rs 86 crores in losses. Despite being one of the most popular YouTubers with a net worth of around Rs 5000 crores, the

show, although a massive success on Prime Video, didn't recoup its massive production cost. In an interview on The Diary of a CEO podcast, MrBeast shared that he spent over Rs 860 crores on the project, with Rs 440 crores coming from his own savings.