



Weather Forecast

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

Greater Bengaluru Administration Bill submitted to Speaker

The Bill proposes seven new corporations to improve administration in Bengaluru.

Speaker U.T. Khader received the final report, with the Bill expected in the Budget Session.

Electronic City, Kumbalagodu, and surrounding areas to be added to BBMP.

A single mayor and commissioner model to be replaced with multiple corporations.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The much-anticipated Greater Bengaluru Administration (GBA) Bill, aimed at restructuring the governance of Bengaluru by expanding the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and creating seven

new corporations, has been officially submitted to Legislative Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader. The Bill is expected to be introduced in the upcoming Budget Session beginning March 3. The report on the Bill was present-

ed at Vidhana Soudha on Monday by Karnataka Legislative Assembly Joint Review Committee Chairman Rizwan Arshad, along with committee members S.T. Somashekhar, A.C. Srinivas, and others. The review committee had collected inputs from Bengaluru's MLAs and conducted public consultations across eight existing municipal corporations to incorporate feedback into the proposed legislation.

The proposal for restructuring BBMP stems from widespread agreement across political parties that a single mayor and commissioner cannot efficiently govern an area as vast as Bengaluru. The Congress government plans to address this by creating smaller municipal corporations under a reformed administrative structure.

The Bill, initially introduced last year, faced strong opposition, prompting the Speaker to establish a committee to review its provisions. After multiple deliberations and

stakeholder meetings, the committee has recommended significant changes, including the expansion of BBMP to incorporate key areas such as Electronic City, Kumbalagodu, and other localities adjacent to the existing corporation limits.

As per the Bill, a cap of 10 municipalities and 400 wards has been set, ensuring the governance structure remains manageable. If additional areas are incorporated, new wards will have to be created within the proposed municipal framework. The Congress government, under these new provisions, aims to decentralize governance and enhance service delivery by introducing localized administrative units.

While the opposition has raised objections, the final decision will be based on legislative discussions in the upcoming session. The Congress government is confident that the restructuring will lead to better urban management, addressing Bengaluru's growing civic challenges.

Karnataka eyes Hogenakkal tourism boost, competes with Tamil Nadu



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka
In a bid to boost tourism and compete with Tamil Nadu, the Karnataka tourism department is preparing a detailed project report to develop Hogenakkal Falls, one of the state's major scenic attractions. The move aims to increase tourist footfall from Karnataka and offer a competitive alternative to the more popular access point in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu. Despite Hogenakkal Falls being accessible from Karnataka, restrictions exist due to its location within the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. At present, most tourists prefer Dharmapuri for activities like coracle rides, trekking, and water sports. The Karnataka government is looking to change that by improving accessibility and facilities on its side. A senior tourism official

stated, "We want to ensure that more tourists visit from Karnataka. The location will be developed under a public-private partnership in coordination with the forest department. This will encourage healthy competition with Tamil Nadu while strengthening Karnataka's tourism sector."

Development Plan

A ₹12 crore project report is being prepared for government approval. The plan includes:

- A gazebo for visitors to enjoy panoramic views
- Parking facilities to accommodate more tourists
- A recreation centre for family-friendly activities
- Restrooms and food courts to enhance convenience
- Eco-friendly infrastructure for sustainability

Additionally, the department is also preparing a separate report to improve facilities at Gaganachukki and Barachukki waterfalls, further ex-

panding Karnataka's waterfall tourism potential.

Strategic Expansion Officials believe that Karnataka's proximity to Bengaluru and Mysuru gives it an advantage. The Gopinatham trails, guesthouses, and trekking facilities recently introduced by the forest department will further enhance the region's tourism potential. "A well-packaged tourism experience can be offered to visitors," an official noted. Addressing Tourist Concerns Many tourists have previously complained of overcharging and mismanagement at Hogenakkal, which is under Tamil Nadu's control. Karnataka's tourism officials have taken these grievances into account while drafting the development plan. "Earlier, we had to tell tourists that Tamil Nadu manages the site. Now, we are working on solutions to ensure that Karnataka's tourism in the area is more structured and effective," a department official stated.

With strong government backing, Karnataka hopes to capture a share of Hogenakkal tourism, offering a viable alternative to Tamil Nadu's monopoly over the waterfall's tourist economy.

DK Shivakumar asserts leadership, says he will lead Congress in 2028

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has sent a strong message to his political opponents by declaring that he will lead the Congress in the 2028 Assembly elections and remain active in politics for another 8-10 years. His statement is seen as a checkmate to internal party leaders who are reportedly attempting to replace him as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president.

Addressing a gathering at the state government employees' conference, where supporters chanted his name, Shivakumar assured them of his leadership in the next elections. "You can raise such slogans when I win the next election and run the show under my leadership. My health is good, and I will continue in politics for another 8-10 years. Have faith in me," he said.

The remarks come amid speculation that a section of ministers close to CM Siddaramaiah is working to have Shivakumar removed as KPCC chief. With Siddaramaiah hinting that he may not contest the 2028 Assembly polls, Shivakumar is now positioning himself as the future leader of the party in Karnataka, a move that could strengthen his hold over Congress ticket allocations for new candidates.

Strategic Moves and Party Influence

Shivakumar's growing influence within the party is evident in his recent political maneuvers. His loyalist Manjunatha HS has been appointed president of the Karnataka unit of the Indi-

an Youth Congress, while his close aide GC Chandrashekar, a two-time Rajya Sabha MP, has defended him, stating that "Shivakumar can remain active in politics for 20 more years, not just 8-10." Political analysts note that Shivakumar is portraying himself as a strong, energetic leader, contrasting himself with senior leaders who are nearing the end of their political careers. His assertion of fitness and longevity in politics is being viewed as a strategic positioning ahead of the next elections.

Meeting with Congress High Command

Shivakumar is set to meet senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge in Delhi on February 25. While officially visiting to invite them for the foundation-laying ceremony of the new Congress Bhavan in Bengaluru, he is also expected to discuss Karnataka's political developments and the party's strategy for upcoming elections.

Additionally, he will meet Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil to push for the clearance of stalled irrigation projects, including the Mekedatu balance reservoir, Kalasa Banduri project, and the Rs 5,300 crore Upper Bhadra Project, for which funds were allocated in the 2024-25 Union Budget but not yet released.

With three-and-a-half years left before the 2028 elections, Shivakumar's strong declaration of leadership signals his intent to consolidate power within the Karnataka Congress and position himself as the party's chief strategist and candidate for the future.

Tension at Karnataka-Maharashtra border - NWKRTC services to Kolhapur suspended

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

Bus services between Karnataka and Maharashtra have been disrupted after a North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) bus conductor was assaulted in Belagavi for refusing to speak in Marathi. The incident has led to widespread protests along the border, forcing authorities to temporarily suspend bus services to Kolhapur.

Tensions escalated after Shiv Sena and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) activists vandalized Karnataka buses in Nashik and Pune, blackening four buses and spray-painting slogans like 'Jai Maharashtra' and 'MANASE'. In Pune alone, three Karnataka buses were defaced on Sunday, while on Saturday, Shiv Sena activists tied saffron flags to Karnataka



buses in Kolhapur.

In retaliation, Karnataka Rakshana Vedike activists blackened a Maharashtra bus and its driver's face in Chitradurga on Friday night. The suspension of services has badly affected daily commuters on both sides of the border.

According to Chikkodi Divisional Controller M Shashidhar, bus services to Kol-

hapur remain suspended, but operations on other routes like Kagwad-Miraj and Chikkodi-Ichalkaranji have resumed. Rajesh Huddar, NWKRTC divisional controller, Belagavi, stated, "Bus services are normal except to Kolhapur, where operations were affected on Sunday morning due to a Shiv Sena protest. On average, 90 buses operate daily from Belagavi to Maharashtra. We are coordinating with Maharashtra depot managers to ensure the safety of buses, drivers, and conductors."

Meanwhile, Chikkodi NWKRTC subdivision, which operates 80 daily trips to Kolhapur and other cities, is closely monitoring the situation. The restoration of services will depend on the prevailing security conditions, officials said.

World looking at India for spiritual, mental wellbeing - Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot

TPN Correspondent | Tumakuru

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot emphasized that the world is looking towards India for spiritual and mental well-being, citing the ongoing Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj as a testament to this global interest. He was speaking after inaugurating the newly constructed Navagraha temple and the new gopura of Sri Basaveshwara Mutt in Bidanagere, Kunigal taluk, Tumakuru district.

Addressing the gathering in Kannada, the Governor said that Bidanagere Basaveshwara Mutt is not only a religious place but also a source of spiritual peace and cultural inspiration.

He highlighted that the teachings of Lord Basaveshwara remain relevant today and that India's eternal culture, preserved by sages and gurus, continues to promote world



peace, equality, and harmony.

He noted that saints and spiritual leaders have upheld India's religious and cultural traditions on the global stage, pointing out the installation of the 161-foot-tall Panchamukhi Anjaneya statue, which draws devotees from across the country and beyond.

He added that visitors also have darshan of Sri Shaneshwara Swamy and the Navagrahas, with the temple being referred to as the 'Shani Shingnapur of Karnataka.'

Governor Gehlot praised Sri Dhananjaya Guruji, the head of the mutt, for his role in preserving religious and cultural values while contributing to social progress.

He highlighted the mutt's commitment to serving thousands of devotees daily through annadanam and its efforts in addressing social challenges under Guruji's leadership.

Another arrest in NWKSRTC bus conductor assault case

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

The Marihal police have arrested another accused in connection with the assault on a NWKSRTC bus conductor, bringing the total number of arrests in the case to five. The latest suspect, Mohan Hanchinmani (25), is a resident of Balekundri village. Earlier, police arrested Tumari Dattu Chandgadkar (33), Rahul Raju Naidu (28), and Balu Suresh Gunjekar (28), all from Balekundri village, along with a minor.

Transport Minister assures action

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy confirmed that the injured conductor is recovering. "Our officials have visited him and enquired about his condition. I am in constant touch with the Belagavi police and monitoring the investigation," he said. Reddy, who will pass through Belagavi on Monday en route to Mudhol for Ranna Utsava, stated that he will visit if necessary. Meanwhile, KSRTC senior officials are monitoring the situation closely.

KRV chief slams MES

In a video statement, Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV) president Narayanagouda condemned the attack, allegedly carried out for refusing to speak in Marathi.

He accused the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) of escalating violence in Belagavi and demanded immediate action. "MES hooliganism is increasing. We have weakened their influence over the years, and we will continue our fight," he said.

Narayanagouda also issued a challenge: "I will visit



Belagavi on Tuesday. If MES leaders have the courage, let's meet." He emphasized that Belagavi remains an undivided part of Karnataka.

BJP warns against targeting Kannadigas

BJP state president BY Vijayendra strongly condemned the incident, stating, "People enjoy Karnataka's facilities but still target Kannadigas. This is unacceptable and a crime. The government must take strict action."

Meanwhile, senior BJP leader Basangouda Patil Yatal asserted, "If Maharashtra demands Belagavi, then Karnataka should demand Solapur and Sangli. Instead of indulging in goondaism, both states should focus on farmers' welfare, healthcare, and employment."

As tensions rise, political leaders across parties have urged for strict action against the attackers and protection of Kannada-speaking citizens in Belagavi.

80% of fire calls in Karnataka recorded in first five months of the year

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Fire Department receives 80% of fire calls in the first five months of the year, with the highest incidents occurring during summer. According to Fire and Emergency Services data, the department recorded 23,832 fire calls in 2024, of which 18,900 were between January and May.

Last year, 48 people lost their lives in fire accidents across the state, while 201 others were injured. Property worth over ₹330 crore was destroyed in these incidents. Bengaluru alone received 2,947 fire-related calls, resulting in 13 deaths and several injuries.

A senior department officer stated that March recorded the highest number of fire incidents (5,700), followed by February (4,800), April (4,700), January (2,000), and May (1,700). The lowest number of calls was reported in June and July (400 each). Fire & Emergency Services Director T.N. Shivashankar identified electrical short circuits as the primary cause of fires, noting a decline in incidents caused by LPG leaks, industrial fires, and chemical accidents.

"Summer months are the busiest for us. Our personnel are always on high alert," Shivashankar said, em-



phasizing that nearly ₹1,000 crore worth of property has been lost in fire accidents over the last three years. He stressed that greater public awareness could prevent most fire incidents. The department conducts fire prevention programs, including training sessions at the RA Mundkur Academy on Bannerghatta Road, and organizes mock drills and safety demonstrations in high-density residential and industrial areas.

A senior officer pointed out that negligence remains a major factor in fire accidents. "For example, 99% of LPG cylinder leaks and blasts happen in the morning. These can be prevented if people switch off gas knobs after use and regularly check regulators and hoses for damage," he explained. He added that North Karnataka districts with forested areas report a higher number of fire incidents.

Lack of parking at Metro stations frustrates Bengaluru commuters

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Despite ongoing discussions on improving last-mile connectivity, a crucial aspect—parking—remains a major concern at Bengaluru Metro stations. Out of the 68 operational Metro stations, 14 lack designated parking spaces, leaving commuters struggling to find alternatives. While three of these stations might get parking facilities in the future, the rest will remain without this essential amenity, according to top officials of the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRL).

Garudacharpalya and Sri Sathya Sai Hospital Metro stations on the Purple Line recently joined the list of stations without parking, despite initially having designated spaces. A senior BMRL official explained that licensees at these stations abandoned their contracts after a year, citing unprofitability. "Most commuters were not using the facility. Since they walked out mid-way, we had to blacklist them. Despite two rounds of tendering, no one has shown interest," the official said, adding that the spaces have now been handed over for property development. Currently, only Metro staff are allowed to park at these stations.

The other Metro stations without parking include MG Road, Cubbon Park, Vidhana Soudha, Sir M Visvesvaraya, Goraguntepalya, Yeswanthpur, Srirampura, KR Market, Lalbagh, South End Circle, RV Road, and Benniganahalli. The parking facility at Benniganahalli has been temporarily shut due to escalator installation work and will reopen once the project is completed. For RV Road Metro station, tenders will soon be called



to ensure parking is available before the launch of the Yellow Line. Similarly, land has been identified near Srirampura station, and tenders will be invited soon. In areas like Goraguntepalya and Yeswanthpur, parking remains unfeasible due to the lack of available space. "Even where land is available, the quoted prices are too high, making it financially unviable to develop parking facilities," the official stated.

Rice for February, March to be distributed together under Anna Bhagya

TPN Correspondent | Kolar

Food and Civil Supplies Minister K H Muniyappa announced on Sunday that rice under the Anna Bhagya scheme for February and March will be distributed together, with instructions already issued to distributors.

Addressing the media, Muniyappa stated that the Union government has agreed to sell rice to Karnataka, which will be procured at Rs 22.5 per kg, with an additional Rs 2.50 per kg spent on transportation, bringing the total cost to Rs 25 per kg for the state. He noted that the scheme requires 2.10 lakh tonnes of rice every month, benefiting nearly 4 crore people.

He also defended the state government's welfare initiatives, emphasizing that the five guarantee schemes, along with on-



going development projects, are proving beneficial for the people. "The opposition had claimed there were no funds left for development due to the guarantee schemes. But now, seeing the progress, they have gone silent," he remarked.

Regarding the upcoming taluk and zilla panchayat elections, Muniyappa asserted that the Congress remains strong in Karnataka and expressed confidence that the people will back the party's candidates, citing the recent by-poll victories.



At 33.2°C, Bengaluru experiences summer-like heat in February

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru:

The Garden City is already feeling the heat of summer in February, with temperatures soaring to 33.2°C on Sunday. While the official onset of summer is in early March, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) reported that Bengaluru Urban recorded a maximum temperature of 33.2°C, while the minimum temperature stood at 19.7°C.

With dry weather expected to continue, residents are taking precautionary measures to stay cool and hydrated. "Usually, winter ends after Shivaratri, but now February itself feels like peak summer. I avoid stepping out at noon, and if I do, I carry an umbrella, water bottle, and apply sunscreen," said Darshini, a college student.

Weather Forecast

According to IMD Bengaluru, the city will remain dry throughout the week, though Coastal Karnataka may receive light rainfall. The forecast predicts:

- Partly cloudy skies
- Fog/mist in some areas during early mornings till February 27
- Maximum temperature of 33°C and minimum temperature of 19°C

As temperatures continue to rise, citizens are bracing for an early and intense summer in Bengaluru.

Three in Five Cancer Patients in India Die After Diagnosis: Study



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A recent study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has revealed that three out of every five people diagnosed with cancer in India succumb to the disease, with women facing a disproportionate burden. The study, published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia, found that India ranks third in global cancer incidence, after China and the US, and accounts for over 10% of the world's cancer-related deaths. Researchers warn that India's cancer burden is set to rise sharply over the next two decades, with cases expected to increase by 2% annually due to an aging population. The study, based on data from the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN) 2022 and Global Health Observatory (GHO), analyzed trends in 36 types of cancer across different age groups and genders over the past 20 years.

Among women, breast cancer remains the most prevalent, accounting for 13.8% of new cases across both genders, while cervical cancer ranks

third at 9.2%. The study highlights that breast cancer alone contributes to nearly 30% of new cases and over 24% of related deaths among women, followed by cervical cancer, which accounts for 19% of cases and 20% of deaths.

For men, oral cancer is the most common, making up 16% of new cases, followed by respiratory (8.6%) and esophageal (6.7%) cancers.

The study also observed a shift in cancer prevalence across age groups, with individuals aged 70 and above experiencing the highest burden. However, the reproductive age group (15-49 years) also recorded a significant share of cases, contributing to a fifth of all cancer-related deaths.

The findings emphasize the urgent need for targeted interventions, as around 70% of cancer cases and deaths occur in middle- and older-age groups. Researchers stress that this is the first comprehensive evaluation of cancer trends in India, underscoring the need for improved cancer care, awareness, and early detection strategies to tackle the growing crisis.

Metro fare hike keeps public away, say experts

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
 Experts and citizens have voiced their strong opposition to the recent Metro fare hike, emphasizing that it discourages public transport usage and worsens Bengaluru's traffic congestion. At the 'Citizens Convention against Metro fare hike' organized by the Bangalore Metro Commuters Association (BMCA) on Sunday, over 200 participants called for a rollback of the hike.

Prof. Ashish Verma from the Department of Transportation Systems Engineering, IISc, stated that public transport should focus on affordability, accessibility, and reducing congestion and pollution. "The fare hike goes against these principles and negatively impacts the quality of life in Bengaluru," he said, stressing that at least 80% of a city's mobility should be through public transport, walking, and cycling. "It is the government's social obligation to ensure affordable transport, but they seem to have forgotten their core function," he added. Dr. Sudha Kamath, president of the Medical Sciences Centre, Karnataka,



highlighted the health hazards caused by traffic congestion. "Bengaluru was once a 'Pensioners' Paradise,' but rising pollution is causing respiratory illnesses. The corporatization of public transport, similar to the health sector, should not be allowed," she warned. VN Rajashekar of the Save Bangalore Committee criticized BMCL's methodology for calculating fare hikes, which includes infrastructure costs and interest. "If this approach continues, by 2029-30, the loan amount and interest will reach ₹2,780 crore, requiring BMCL to generate ₹7.8 crore in daily rev-

enue—far above the current ₹3 crore target. This would lead to further fare increases," he explained.

BMCA adviser M N Sriram announced the formation of a core committee with 25 members to intensify the movement against the fare hike.

Meghana Verma, Head of the Centre for Sustainability at Ramaiah Institute of Management, called the hike "a gross injustice." Her research on Gender Inclusive Mobility revealed that people with disabilities and low-income groups already found Metro fares high before the hike. "With this increase, Metro travel is now out of reach for them," she noted.

Participants also suggested alternative revenue sources for BMCL. M. Pavithra, one of the attendees, recommended renting out station spaces to branded stores, citing Hyderabad Metro stations as an example. "Some Hyderabad Metro stations resemble airports with shopping options. Bengaluru Metro should explore similar opportunities instead of burdening commuters with fare hikes," she said.

Residents Near Bengaluru Jail Struggle With Network Blackout Due to Phone Jammers

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru:

Residents living near Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara are facing severe digital disruptions due to the Tower Harmonics Call-Blocking System (T-HCBS) installed at the prison. The intensified signal jammers are affecting not just mobile networks but also WiFi connectivity, causing major inconvenience.

Locals, including IT professionals and students, have reported call interruptions, difficulty receiving OTPs for banking transactions, and unreliable WiFi calls. Atish Bandyopadhyay, a resident and software engineer, claimed the prison department may have increased jammer amplitude, making online communication nearly impossible.

The residents' association is now planning to submit a petition to the DGP of prisons demanding the removal of jammers. They have also decided to stage protests under the banner 'Say No to Jail Jammer Towers (T-HCBS)', citing disruptions to online classes, emergency services, food deliveries, and UPI



payments. Santhosh, another resident, argued that effective prison security should eliminate the need for jammers. "If jail authorities prevent inmates from accessing phones, why do we need jammers that infringe on our rights? Many IT employees work from home, and now even ordering food is a challenge," he said.

On social media, citizens have urged the Karnataka CM's office to intervene. Arivarasu, a resident, pointed out that a man had died recently because an ambulance could not be called due to the blackout. He also questioned why Bengaluru's central prison has multiple jammers when Tihar Jail, spanning over 400 acres, has only one.

Residents are now waiting for a response from authorities as digital connectivity remains crippled in the area.



Rape Survivor Assaulted Again by Police Constable in Hotel

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A 17-year-old rape survivor in Bengaluru has faced yet another harrowing ordeal, this time allegedly at the hands of a police constable, officials reported on Monday. The incident, which occurred in December, has led to the arrest of two individuals, including the constable identified as Arun and another accused, Vicky.

According to police officials, the teen was initially assaulted by Vicky, whom she had befriended. Vicky allegedly raped her under the false pretense of promising marriage and physically assaulted her as well. Following the assault, the survivor's mother lodged a complaint with the Bommanahalli police station. However, the case took a disturbing turn when Constable Arun, assigned to assist in the investigation, reportedly exploited the situation.

Officials stated that Arun gained the trust of the survivor by assuring her justice and promising to help her secure a job. Under this pretext, he allegedly

lured her to a hotel in December. There, he is accused of mixing sedatives into a liquor bottle, forcing her to consume it, and subsequently raping her. Adding to her trauma, Arun allegedly threatened to circulate private videos of her if she spoke out about the incident.

The Bommanahalli police have since arrested both Arun and Vicky.

The accused have been charged under multiple provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), India's newly enacted criminal law framework.

Following their arrest, a local court remanded the duo to judicial custody for 14 days as the investigation continues.

The case has sparked outrage, raising serious questions about the safety of survivors seeking justice and the conduct of law enforcement officials. Authorities have assured a thorough probe into the matter, with further details yet to emerge as the legal process unfolds.

112 cases booked for drinking water wastage in Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Amid concerns of a potential water crisis this summer, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has intensified its crackdown on drinking water wastage, registering 112 cases in a week and collecting ₹5.60 lakh in fines.

Following a circular issued on February 17 to prevent misuse and ensure adequate supply, BWSSB officials have taken strict action against violators. The highest number of cases were recorded in the South Zone (33), followed by the West and East Zones (28 each) and the North Zone (23).

Under Sections 33 and 34 of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Act, 1964, the use of drinking water for non-essential activities like vehicle washing, gardening, construction, and decorative fountains is prohibited. However, officials noted continued violations despite the looming crisis.

BWSSB Chairman Dr. Ram Prasad Manohar emphasized that Bengaluru's drinking water is sourced from nearly 100 kilometers away, making conservation crucial. He urged residents to prevent wastage and assured that the fine campaign would be expanded in the coming days to further curb misuse.

BJP Using Mysuru Police Station Attack as Political Tool: Karnataka Home Minister

TPN Correspondent | Tumakuru
Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara accused the BJP of turning the Mysuru police station attack into a political weapon. He asserted that the police have already taken necessary action, arresting all those involved in the Udayagiri police station violence.

Speaking to reporters in Tumakuru on Monday, Parameshwara dismissed BJP's claims and alleged that the party was making baseless statements for political gain. He noted that while BJP sought permission for a protest in Mysuru over the incident, the police denied it, leading the party to approach the High Court. "Now, we must wait for the court's decision," he added.

He cautioned that politicizing the Mysuru violence would not be beneficial and urged everyone to let the legal process take its course.

On the narcotics found in Mangaluru jail, the minister stated that authorities have been ordered to conduct a thorough probe. "The investigation will determine the source of the drugs and how they were smuggled in. Legal action will be taken as required. A new jail is under construction, and inmates will be shifted there soon,"



he said. Regarding language-based clashes along the Karnataka-Maharashtra border, Parameshwara advised Maharashtra residents to act within the law. "Whenever such incidents happen on our side, we take action. It is not right for Maharashtra residents to act unlawfully," he warned.

Addressing speculation about his resignation, he clarified that his remarks were based on discussions with party workers in Koratagere and should not be overanalyzed. On his aspirations for the Chief Minister's post, he stated, "In our party, such matters are conveyed to the High Command, and decisions are made accordingly."

BJP Leader PC George Remanded to Judicial Custody in Hate Speech Case

TPN Correspondent | Kottayam
BJP leader and former MLA PC George was remanded to judicial custody on Monday after the Erattupetta Munsif Magistrate Court rejected his bail application in a hate speech case. He was earlier placed in police custody until 6 pm the same day for questioning.

George surrendered before the court around 11:05 am, and the case was taken up at 12:30 pm. After hearing arguments from both sides, the court adjourned the matter to 2 pm, eventually denying his bail plea. His lawyer argued that his statements did not incite religious hatred or hurt sentiments, claiming custodial interrogation was unnecessary. However, the prosecution highlighted his previous cases and alleged violations of bail conditions, insisting on questioning him in custody. Following the court's order, George was taken for a medi-



cal examination at Kottayam Government Medical College. His surrender came after the Kerala High Court rejected his anticipatory bail plea, dismissing his request for more time to appear before the police. The court observed that granting bail in such a case would send the wrong message to society. The case was registered based on a complaint by Muslim Youth League leader Muhamed Shihab, who accused George of making remarks that could incite religious hatred during a TV channel discussion.

Transport Minister to Visit Belagavi Amid Border Tensions Over Conductor Assault

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi
Karnataka Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy will visit Belagavi on Monday, February 24, as tensions persist over the assault of a bus conductor for insisting that a passenger speak in Kannada. His visit comes amid ongoing disruptions in transport services between Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The incident, which occurred on February 21, led to the suspension of bus services between both states after protests and vandalism. Minister Reddy emphasized the need for strict action against those involved in the assault and vandalism of Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) buses, urging linguistic communities to maintain peace.

Belagavi police have arrested another individual in connection with the assault, bringing the total number of arrests to five, including one minor. The latest suspect,



Mohan Hanchinal from Chikka Balekundri village, was taken into custody on Sunday. Meanwhile, the assaulted conductor, Mahadevappa Hukkeri, remains in critical condition.

However, the case took a new turn on Saturday when a counter-complaint was filed against the conductor, alleging that he attempted to molest a minor girl on the bus. A case has been registered under the

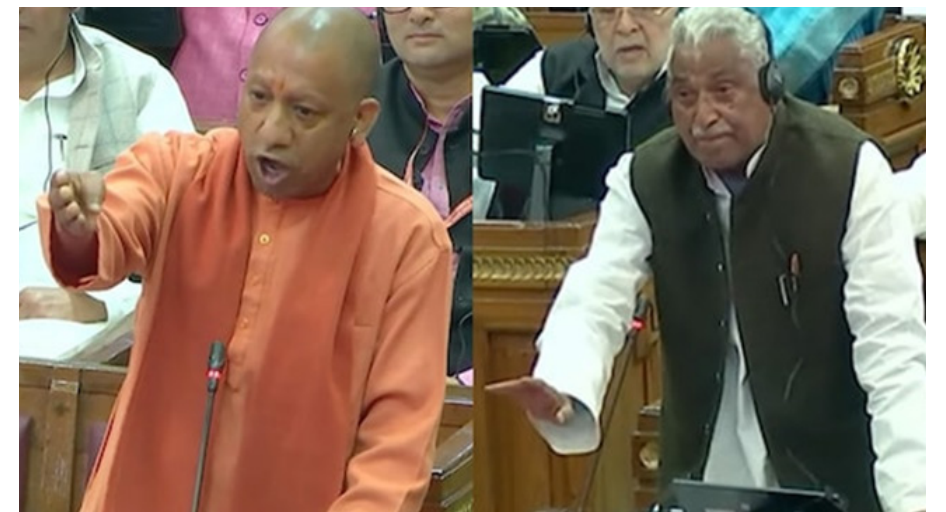
Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Following the incident, Shiv Sena (UBT) activists vandalized KSRTC buses in Pune and Kolhapur, while Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV) members stopped Maharashtra buses in Belagavi's Athani and Ramdurg. Currently, buses are operating only up to the inter-state border. NWKRTC services are expected to resume inter-state operations from Monday if the situation improves.

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik has confirmed that Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) buses will remain suspended until discussions take place between ministers from both states.

In a related development, KRV president Narayana Gowda is set to visit Belagavi on Tuesday to condemn the assault on the conductor and demand justice.

"Pigs, Vultures": Yogi Adityanath Targets Critics Of Maha Kumbh"



TPN Correspondent | UP
Vultures got dead bodies. Pigs got filth... whereas sensitive people got a beautiful picture of relationships, traders got business, devotees got clean arrangements," Yogi Adityanath said in state assembly Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, days ahead of the grand finale of the Maha Kumbh, ripped into critics with a barbed speech at the state assembly. Kumbh, he said, was the repository where people found whatever they sought.

"Vultures got dead bodies. Pigs got filth... whereas sensitive people got a beautiful picture of relationships, traders got business, devotees got clean arrangements," he said. The reference was to the Opposition, whose leaders had kept a tight focus on the Kumbh -- especially after the stampede that killed 18 people and injured multiple others. "You (opposition) said that a particular caste was stopped from going there. No caste was stopped. Anybody with good intentions should go to Kumbh with respect, but whoever goes there with ill intentions will definitely suffer if he tries to create chaos in Kumbh," Yogi Adityanath added.

"We have not played with faith like you. In your time, the chief minister did not have time to see and review the event and therefore he appointed a non-Sanatani as the in-charge of Kumbh," he said targeting Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav during his tenure as the Chief Minister.

"But here I myself was reviewing Kumbh and am still doing it. This is the reason that whoever went to the Kumbh in 2013 saw chaos, corruption, and pollution. There was no water fit for bathing in the Trive-

ni of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. The prime minister of Mauritius is an example of this who refused to take a bath," he said.

Starting with the stampede earlier this month that killed 18 people to reports of fecal content in the Sangam waters, the Opposition has found much ammunition in the Kumbh to target the government. It was started by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, with his "tributes to the thousands who died in Kumbh," had sparked uproar in parliament. Samajwadi Party leader Jaya Bachchan claimed the bodies of the Mahakumbh stampede victims were "being thrown into the river".

Days later, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee sparked fresh row, referring to the massive religious gathering as "Mrityu Kumbh". Her remarks had drawn support from even the Shankaracharya of Uttarakhand's Jyotish Peeth. Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took on the critics of the ongoing Maha Kumbh mela, equating them to "foreign powers who try to weaken the country" and claimed they have "slave mentality".

Speaking at a public function in Madhya Pradesh, he said, "Nowadays we see that there is a group of leaders who mock religion, ridicule it, are engaged in dividing people and many times foreign powers also try to weaken the country and religion by supporting these people..."

People who hate the Hindu faith have been living in some phase or the other for centuries. People who have fallen into slave mentality keep attacking our faith, beliefs and temples, our religion, culture and principles".

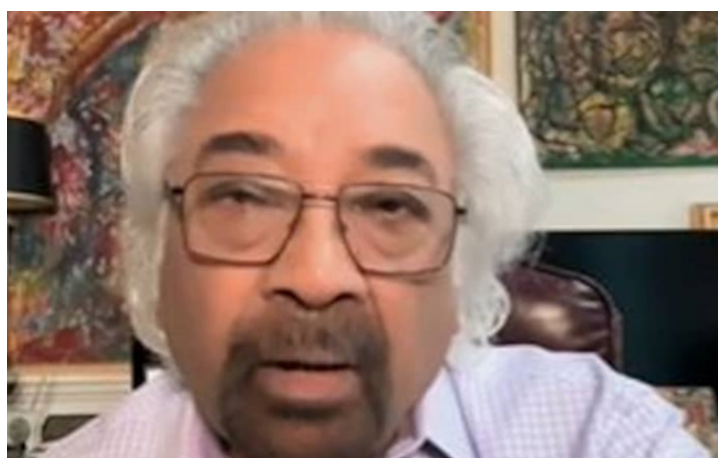
Complaint Filed Against Sam Pitroda in Bengaluru Land Scam Case

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A complaint has been filed against Congress leader Sam Pitroda with the Karnataka Lokayukta and Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with an alleged ₹150 crore Bengaluru land scam. The complaint, lodged by senior BJP leader and activist N.R. Ramesh, accuses Pitroda, a close associate of Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, of illegal acquisition of Karnataka Forest Department land.

The complaint also names former Additional Chief Secretary of Karnataka's Forest and Environment Department Javed Akhtar, who is now Chairman of the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC), along with Principal Chief Conservators of Forests R.K. Singh and Sanjay Mohan, and Deputy Conservators of Forests N. Ravindra Kumar and S.S. Ravishankar. The allegations include fraud, corruption, illegal land acquisition, and abuse of power.

According to Ramesh, Pitroda had registered an organization, Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT), in 1991. He claims that in 1996, Pitroda sought and obtained a lease from the Karnataka Forest Department for 12.35 acres of reserved forest land in Jarakabande Kavalu, Yelahanka, for medicinal plant conservation and research. The initial five-year lease was later extended for 10 more years until December 2, 2011. The complaint alleges that despite the lease expiring 14 years ago, the land was never reclaimed by the Forest De-



partment due to alleged bribery and political influence. It further claims that FRLHT has continued using the land for cultivating rare medicinal plants and profiting from their sale, generating crores in revenue annually. Ramesh has accused high-ranking forest officials of failing to report the lease expiration to the central government, allowing Pitroda's organization to retain control of the land. He demanded immediate action against those involved and the recovery of government property. Sam Pitroda, originally from Odisha, has held advisory roles in India's telecom sector under former Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Manmohan Singh.



SC cautions against interfering with individual liberty

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has reaffirmed that individual liberty is a fundamental right under the Constitution and should not be interfered with lightly by courts. A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan set aside a Himachal Pradesh High Court order that had cancelled the bail of an accused in an attempt-to-murder case, ruling that there was no material evidence to justify such a decision.

The Supreme Court set aside the Himachal Pradesh High Court's order cancelling bail, stating that there was no valid reason for revocation. It found no evidence of misconduct post-bail, as there were no claims of threats, evidence tampering, or trial delays. The court also cautioned against conducting mini-trials at the bail cancellation stage, emphasizing that courts must focus on legal principles rather than reassessing the case merits.

With this ruling, the sessions court's order was restored, allowing the accused to remain on bail while ensuring compliance with all conditions.

The Supreme Court observed that the high court failed to establish any prima facie reason for cancelling bail. It emphasized



that unless an accused misuses bail, influences witnesses, tampers with evidence, or engages in conduct justifying revocation, their liberty should not be curtailed. The bench cited its 2024 ruling in *Ajwar vs. Waseem*, which clarified that bail could only be revoked if new circumstances arise post-grant, or if the original order was perverse or illegal. The Himachal Pradesh High Court, however, had not considered these

principles and instead conducted what the Supreme Court termed as a "mini-trial" to assess the case at an inappropriate stage. Restoring the August 28, 2024, order of the sessions court that had initially granted bail, the Supreme Court ruled that the accused must continue attending trial dates unless exempted. If he violates bail conditions or absents himself without a valid reason, the trial court can revoke his bail.

Special court questions IO for sparing top officials in Karnataka TDR scam

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A special court for Lokayukta cases has criticized investigation officers for selectively sparing top officials while filing chargesheets, alleging that their decisions are influenced by the status, position, power, and influence of the accused.

The court directed the Lokayukta DGP to conduct further investigations into the multi-crore Transferable Development Rights (TDR) scam in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and submit a report within two months.

Judge KM Radhakrishna made these observations while rejecting the discharge applications of four accused in a suo motu case taken up



in 2019 concerning TDR irregularities in Kowdenahalli village, Bengaluru East taluk. However, the court discharged Geetha HR, an Assistant Engineer at BBMP, from the case. The court noted that the chargesheet, filed by then Anti-Corruption Bureau SP Uma Prashanth, ignored the

involvement of high-ranking officials, including the Superintending Engineer (Road Infrastructure), Deputy Commissioner, Joint Commissioner, Additional Commissioner, and Special Commissioner (Planning) of BBMP, despite incriminating evidence.

"The most unfortunate as-

pect of the investigation is the exclusion of these officials from the chargesheet without any justification," the court observed, adding that such selective omissions raise concerns about transparency and public trust in the system.

It emphasized the need for further investigation to ensure justice. According to the chargesheet, in 2009, BBMP had acquired 652 square meters of land in Kowdenahalli to widen TC Palya and Varanasi roads. The accused allegedly conspired to manipulate records, forge documents, and inflate compensation rates for 2012-13 instead of the applicable 2013-14 rates, causing significant financial losses to rightful landowners and BBMP.

Automated testing stations to be set up at 32 locations in Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Transport Department is set to replace manual vehicle inspections for Fitness Certificates (FC) with Automated Testing Stations (ATS) at 32 locations across the state under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The first such station has already been introduced in Nelamangala.

Transport Commissioner Yogeesh AM stated that the move aims to enhance efficiency, transparency, and reduce corruption, as ATS will directly issue pass or fail certificates without human intervention. Currently, FC renewals are conducted manually at Regional Transport Offices (RTOs).

Under the existing rules, private vehicles must renew their FC after 15 years from registration and subsequently every five years. Commercial vehicles need



renewal every two years if they are less than eight years old, and annually thereafter.

"With automated testing, vehicles will be examined by machines through multiple tests, ensuring only fit vehicles receive certification," the commissioner added.

The department plans to set up ATS facilities at 13 locations where land is available under the DBFOT (Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Transfer) model. At 19 locations where land is unavailable, stations will be established under the BOO (Build, Own, Operate) model, grouped into five clusters for efficiency.

Police Busts Luxury Car Scam Using Traders' Details



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police Crime Branch has arrested seven people for allegedly using fake Aadhaar and PAN cards to fraudulently purchase and resell luxury vehicles, duping banks and multiple individuals in an inter-state racket. Officials said on Monday that four of the accused already have criminal records.

The gang reportedly used stolen PAN card details of traders, obtained through GST numbers, to generate fake Aadhaar and PAN cards. They then checked CIBIL scores and targeted businessmen with high ratings to secure bank loans. The accused manipulated loan applications by pasting their own photographs on documents, enabling them to purchase high-end vehicles.

The racket involved the purchase of cars worth ₹7.30 crore in Mumbai, with 16 vehicles seized so far, including a BMW convertible and eight Toyota Fortuners. Police suspect the number of affected vehicles could rise to 35. After acquiring the cars, the accused altered engine and chassis numbers before selling them through agents in Delhi, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

A detailed investigation is underway to track other suspects and recover more vehicles, officials said.

Karnataka farmer takes 10 women workers on Goa flight trip



TPN Correspondent | Davanagere

Vishwanath, a farmer from Shiraganahalli village in Harapanahalli taluk, has won praise for fulfilling the dream of his 10 women farm workers by taking them on a flight trip to Goa. The group flew from Shivamogga to Dabolim and enjoyed a tour of the beaches and tourist attractions.

Vishwanath, who previously worked as a police constable in the state intelligence department, turned to full-time farming on his 14-acre areca plantation. Wanting to keep his permanent farm workers happy, he decided to give them the experience of flying. "I have the satisfaction of fulfilling their dreams. They always wanted to fly in an aeroplane, and I made it happen," he said.

Initially, he planned a trip to Tirupati for darshan, but due to Aero India, he changed the plan and opted for Goa. "Since Shivamogga is the nearest airport, I used the opportunity," he added.

The women, flying for the first time, were nervous during takeoff and landing but felt more comfortable on the return journey. During their trip, they visited Calangute and Baga beaches, took a boat ride on the Mandovi River, and toured Panaji.

"Their smiles and excitement brought me immense happiness," Vishwanath shared.

Reflecting on his career change, he said, "After leaving the police department, I am leading a healthier and tension-free life as a farmer."

Woman hacked to death over son's dispute in Belagavi village

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

A 45-year-old woman was brutally murdered in Kalahal village, Ramdurg taluk, on Sunday following a longstanding family feud linked to her son's actions. The victim, Shekhavva Madar, was allegedly attacked with an axe by Manjunath Madar, a resident of the same village. According to sources, tensions between their families had been brewing since 2018, when a violent altercation forced Shekhavva's family to relocate to Kagadal village in Savadatti taluk. However, she frequently returned to Kalahal to maintain their ancestral home.

The latest conflict erupted after Manjunath's sister got engaged to a man from Bagalkot. However, Shekhavva's son reportedly sent a message to the groom, claiming to be in love with the bride-to-be, leading to the engagement being called off. Enraged by this, Manjunath allegedly ambushed Shekhavva while she was in Kalahal to collect ration supplies and fatally struck her on the head with an axe.

Following the attack, Sureban police arrested Manjunath and launched an investigation into the murder.



American Airlines flight diverted to Rome over bomb scare

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

American Airlines is set to operate a flight from Rome to Delhi today, ferrying passengers stranded after its New York-Delhi flight AA292 was diverted due to a suspected bomb threat. The aircraft was escorted by Italian Air Force fighter jets to Leonardo Da Vinci Airport in Rome on Sunday evening, where it landed safely.

As per airport information, flight AA9603 is scheduled to depart for Delhi at 12 PM local time on February 25.

The flight was initially scheduled to leave on Monday at 2 PM but was later canceled.

Sources said that on February 23, upon receiving the threat message for AA292, Delhi Airport's BTAC de-

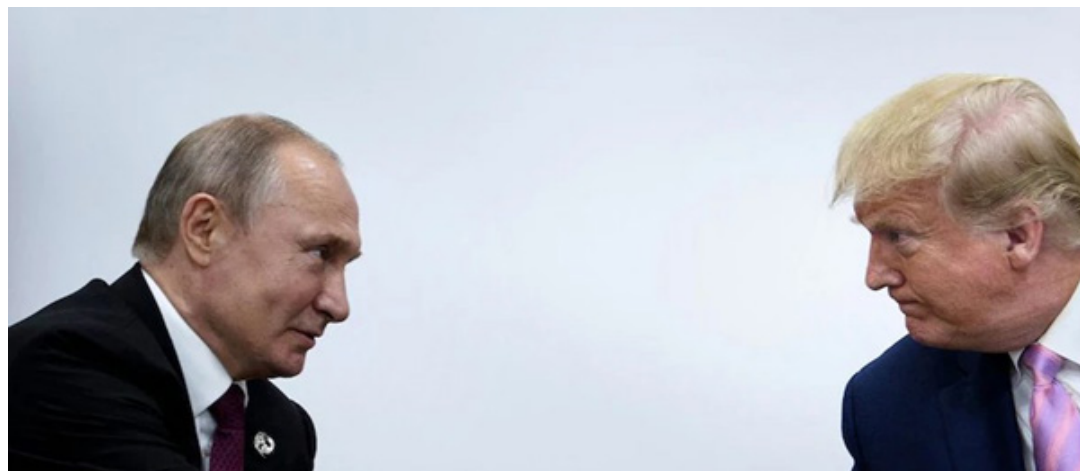
cidated the aircraft should be inspected at the nearest airport, leading to its diversion to Rome. American Airlines later stated that the possible security issue was found to be non-credible, but an inspection was necessary before landing in Delhi.

Leonardo Da Vinci Airport spokesperson Federica Pistola confirmed that passengers with valid European visas were accommodated in hotels, while those without were housed in airport lounges. Italian news agency ANSA reported that the diversion was initiated at the airline's request for security checks related to a suspected bomb threat. Further details regarding the investigation remain unavailable.

The Ukraine Conflict: A Global Power Struggle and Lessons for India

The ongoing Ukraine conflict, which has been a focal point of global geopolitics, has created significant shifts in alliances and tensions, particularly between Europe, the US, and Russia. Amidst these developments, Ukraine has found itself excluded from key diplomatic conversations. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, feeling sidelined, has declared that Ukraine will not honor any agreements reached without its participation. This discontent was further exacerbated when the Trump administration pressed Ukraine for a bilateral agreement that would provide preferential access to its natural resources in exchange for the \$500 billion of American aid to sustain its war against Russia. However, Zelenskyy rejected this proposal, insisting on security guarantees for Ukraine instead.

The political tensions were heightened when President Trump, in his second term (Trump 2.0), labeled Zelenskyy a "modestly successful comedian" and blamed him for starting the war. Zelenskyy, in turn, accused Trump of being influenced by Russian misinformation. These sharp exchanges and the calls for a new direction in the US foreign policy towards Russia have rattled European NATO members, who have long relied on American support to counter Russian aggression. The swift shift by Trump 2.0 towards repairing relations with Russia, without consulting NATO allies, has left Europe uneasy, especially as they continue to support Ukraine militarily and financially. This friction between the US and Europe is compound-

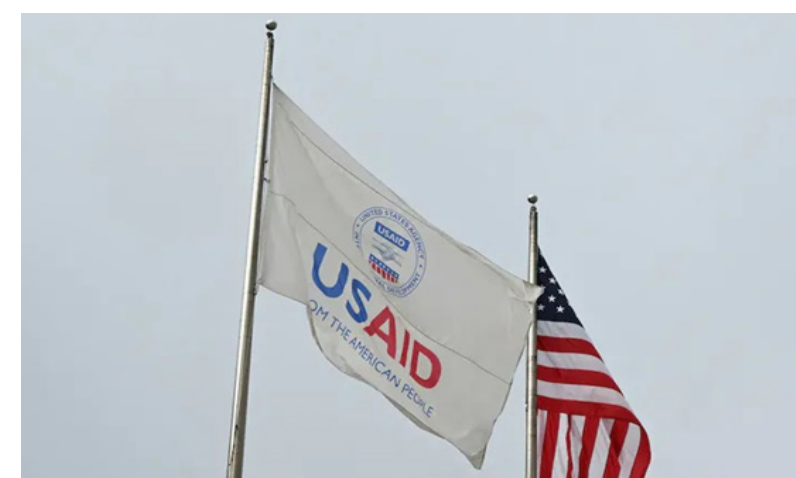


ed by Trump's criticism of European policies, particularly their approach to immigration and defense spending. Trump has pressured European NATO members to meet higher defense spending targets, further deepening the divide. Many European countries, especially those in Eastern Europe facing Russia directly, fear the erosion of NATO's collective security guarantee and the possibility of Ukraine being forced into a "Finlandization" scenario—where it would retain independence but be neutralized in terms of NATO membership.

Russia, meanwhile, has made it clear it will not make territorial concessions and continues to escalate its military campaign, hoping to exploit NATO's divisions. As the war drags on, the devastating human and economic costs for both Russia and Ukraine are mounting, with losses in the hundreds of thousands and profound economic setbacks for both nations.

The war's broader impact has led to global economic disruptions, including higher inflation and supply chain issues, particularly in hydrocarbons and precious metals. The conflict has also driven political polarization, with many countries reluctant to be forced into choosing sides.

For India, the conflict presents an opportunity to recalibrate its foreign policy. A resolution would allow India to strengthen its relations with both Russia and the US, lifting Western sanctions and improving economic interactions. Most importantly, the conflict underscores the importance of India's campaign for "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India), particularly in areas critical to national security and economic stability. The lessons from the Ukraine crisis highlight the vulnerabilities in global supply chains and the necessity for India to build resilience against such geopolitical shocks.



USAID and Its Role in India's Electoral Processes: Whose Interests Are Being Served?

The involvement of USAID in India's electoral processes raises serious questions about its motivations and the interests it serves. Ahead of the 2014 parliamentary elections, USAID funneled large sums into initiatives targeting voter turnout among marginalized communities in India. This sparked concerns about the true objectives of this funding and whose interests were being advanced.

US President Donald Trump criticized USAID's actions, arguing that the agency was not promoting democracy in India but rather undermining it. Trump's statement highlighted the US government's potential influence in shaping political outcomes in foreign countries. USAID's Democratic Elections and Political Processes (DEPP) programme allocated over \$318,000 annually to India-specific projects, with disbursements peaking during election years. In FY2014, a staggering \$21 million was spent on "voter awareness" campaigns, coinciding precisely with India's national election period. The funding dropped drastically after May 2014, suggesting that the primary goal was electoral rather than institutional.

In 2019, a similar pattern emerged, with \$486 million allocated regionally, though Indian agencies blocked some of these funds due to concerns over violations of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). This raised suspicions that USAID's efforts might align with political agendas rather than genuine democratic objectives.

Furthermore, USAID awarded funds to programs like a \$750,000 initiative aimed at "alleviating loneliness among migrant garment workers" in India. The vague nature of this program and the lack of clear beneficiaries call into question whether these initiatives truly serve the communities they claim to support or if they have ulterior motives.

Another contentious issue is the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India's Election Commission (ECI) and the US-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). While former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi insists that no USAID funds were received directly by the ECI, leaked audits suggest that USAID's focus was on increasing voter participation in marginalized communities, which some critics argue aligns with specific political agendas.

The funding from USAID and its alignment with election cycles, as well as the involvement of organizations like IFES and private tech giants, raises concerns about foreign influence on India's democratic processes. With transparency lacking, these revelations call for a deeper investigation into how foreign interests may be shaping the nation's electoral landscape.

India Must Read the Fine Print in Trump's F-35 Fighter Jet Offer

The recent offer by U.S. President Donald Trump to sell India the advanced F-35 fighter jet has raised a crucial question: will the Indian Air Force (IAF) soon sport U.S. F-35s? While the F-35 is a cutting-edge fifth-generation stealth fighter, the IAF's decision to acquire it must be carefully considered in light of several challenges and potential conditions.

During his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House on February 13, Trump announced that the U.S. was willing



to negotiate an F-35 deal with India. This aircraft, already in service with key U.S. allies like Israel, the United Kingdom, and Japan, offers significant advantages, such as stealth technology and advanced combat capabilities. For India, the offer comes at a time when the IAF is grappling with a shortage of fighter aircraft. With only 31 active squadrons, well below the sanctioned 42, the IAF is eager to modernize and replenish its fleet. The MRFA (Multirole Fighter Aircraft) program, aimed at adding 114 fighters, has been delayed for over seven years, leaving India's defense forces in need of immediate solutions.

Given the growing threat posed by China's increasing fleet of fifth-generation J-20 fighters and Pakistan's acquisition of stealth J-35 jets, the IAF urgently needs advanced aircraft to maintain an edge. The F-35 could potentially fill this gap. However, before rushing into a deal, India must consider the complex conditions surrounding the F-35 offer. The U.S. has previously shown more interest in selling its F-21 aircraft, a variant of the F-16, to India, which is tailored to Indian needs but comes with more modest capabilities. The offer of the F-35 could be part of a transactional strategy, possibly requiring India to first purchase the F-21.

The Waning India-Pakistan Cricket Rivalry: A Battle of Unequals



The India-Pakistan cricket rivalry, once a fierce, breathless contest, has lost much of its intensity and significance over time. While the nostalgia of past moments — such as Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag's exploits during the 2003 World Cup, or Javed Miandad's iconic last-ball six in Sharjah in 1986 — still lingers in the minds of fans, the stakes of these encounters have changed significantly. What once was a do-or-die spectacle now feels less consequential, both in terms of the cricket field and the geopolitics that once revolved around these matches.

In the past decade, India has dominated their cricketing contests with Pakistan. Out of 10 ODI encounters since 2015, India has triumphed in eight, with Pakistan securing just one win in the 2017 Champions Trophy at The Oval. The two nations have also met in seven T20 internationals, with India winning five of those and Pakistan two. The last Test between them was back in 2007. These

figures reflect a one-sided rivalry, where India begins every contest as the overwhelming favorite, and Pakistan's sporadic victories are increasingly seen as rare surprises.

A key factor behind the shift in this rivalry is the stark contrast in the political and economic trajectories of both nations. India, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, has experienced political stability and economic growth. With Modi at the helm for three consecutive terms, India has become the world's fifth-largest economy and is on track to become the third-largest in the near future. The country has made remarkable strides in areas such as space exploration, with ISRO recently completing its 100th launch, and boasts 117 unicorns in the tech sector. Indian citizens today rarely discuss the prospect of war with Pakistan, focusing more on security concerns along the Chinese border.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's situation has be-

come increasingly dire. With mounting debt and an economy teetering on the brink, the country relies heavily on loans from China and the IMF. Its finance minister recently acknowledged Pakistan's lost credibility in the international arena. The country has been plagued by political instability, with no Prime Minister completing a full term in recent years, and the former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, now imprisoned. Internal insurgencies and rising sectarian violence continue to destabilize the nation, further exacerbating its economic and social woes.

Today, the India-Pakistan cricket encounter feels more like a contest between two unequally matched teams, with India's well-paid, confident squad facing a Pakistan team that is struggling amidst a battered economy and fractured political landscape. The intense rivalry that once captivated the imagination of millions has faded, leaving behind a sense of nostalgia for what was once a fiercely contested battle on and off the field.

PM Modi Transfers Rs 22,000 Crore to 9.8 Crore Farmers Under PM Kisan Scheme

- 19th PM Kisan installment boosts agricultural support
- Bihar event highlights rural and infrastructure growth

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday transferred over Rs 22,000 crore directly into the bank accounts of 9.8 crore farmers across India, marking the release of the 19th installment of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. The event took place in Bihar, where the PM also inaugurated several developmental projects, furthering the government's commitment to strengthening infrastructure and promoting growth in the state.



Accompanied by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, several Union ministers, MPs, MLAs, and officials from both state and central ministries attended the event. The PM's visit aimed to highlight the government's ongoing efforts to uplift the agricultural sector, particularly focusing on the well-being of farmers across the nation.

During the event, Prime Minister Modi expressed the government's pride in India's 'annadatas' (farmers) and reiterated the govern-

ment's dedication to improving their lives. In a post shared on the social media platform X, responding to a thread by MyGovIndia, the PM reaffirmed, "We are proud of our annadatas and our commitment to improve their lives."

The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, launched in 2018, aims to provide financial assistance to farmers to support their agri-



cultural needs and enhance their livelihoods. This installment will continue to benefit millions of farmers, who receive direct cash transfers to support their farming activities and reduce financial burdens. The government's ongoing push to aid farmers aligns with its broader objective of enhancing rural development and promoting agricultural growth.



Omar joins Modi's anti-obesity relay campaign, ropes in Supriya Sule too

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subrahmanyam concluded by underscoring the effectiveness of the state rating system in encouraging reforms and highlighting the importance of fiscal health and efficient budget management for states.

Those who got Muslim votes could not stop riots: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar

TPN Correspondent | Patna

On Monday, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar criticized the opposition JRD-Congress alliance, accusing them of seeking Muslim votes without taking any substantial action to prevent communal clashes. Kumar made the remarks during a function in Bhagalpur, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Governor Arif Mohammad Khan.

The event took place in Bhagalpur, a region historically remembered for the devastating communal riots of 1989, which resulted in the loss of nearly 1,000 lives. Speaking about the situation in Bihar when his government took over in 2005, Kumar highlighted the prevailing law and order problems. He emphasized that, under the previous administration, people were afraid to step out after dark due to the frequent Hindu-Muslim clashes. Without directly naming any party, he stated that those who relied on Muslim votes did nothing to stop these conflicts, but things started to improve only after his government assumed power.



Kumar, who is also the president of the JD(U), has often pointed to the trial and punishment of those responsible for the Bhagalpur riots as one of his government's key achievements. He has long claimed that during the 15-year rule of the JRD, the guilty parties were not punished because many of the accused were close to the party. At the event, Kumar expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Modi for the financial assistance provided to the state by the Union government. He praised the latest budget for Bihar, which included several announcements for the state's development.

Gautam Adani Unveils Rs 1.1 Lakh Crore Investment Plan for Madhya Pradesh

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani made a significant announcement at the Madhya Pradesh Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2025, revealing a new wave of multi-sectoral investments worth over Rs 1.1 lakh crore for the state. Speaking at the event on Monday, Adani outlined a comprehensive investment blueprint of Rs 2.1 lakh crore, which is expected to generate more than 1.2 lakh jobs in Madhya Pradesh by 2030.

The announcement comes as part of Adani Group's ongoing efforts to contribute to the economic development of Madhya Pradesh, with a focus on infrastructure, energy, manufacturing, and other key sectors. The massive investment will help boost the state's industrial growth and attract more global investors, positioning Madhya Pradesh as an attractive hub for business and innovation.



Adani emphasized that the investments would have a long-term impact on the state's economy, contributing to job creation, skill development, and overall industrial modernization. With the planned investments, Adani Group aims to foster new opportunities across various sectors and ensure sustainable growth for Madhya Pradesh.

India, UK Aim To Triple Bilateral Trade In 10 Years. Leaders Meet In Delhi

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the United Kingdom resumed today after a months-long pause. The meeting between UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Jonathan Reynolds, and India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi marks a significant step towards a mutually beneficial trade deal.

The proposed agreement aims to drastically increase bilateral trade between the two nations, currently valued at \$20 billion annually. Mr. Goyal described the potential FTA as "pathbreaking," emphasizing its potential to triple this trade within the next decade. While negotiations are advanced, he refrained from committing to a fixed timeline, stressing that the process should be thorough and focused on long-term benefits for both countries. He added, "Speed is important, but haste is not, as this agreement will benefit citizens for years to



come." Reynolds echoed the sentiment, calling the FTA a top priority for the UK

government and highlighting its long-term significance for both economies. A joint statement following the

meeting confirmed the resumed talks, noting the goal of a balanced, forward-looking deal that will strength-

en trade ties and unlock opportunities for businesses and consumers on both sides.

In addition to the FTA, the two ministers discussed parallel negotiations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and a Double Contribution Convention Agreement, which aim to further cement economic cooperation. When asked about immigration, Mr. Goyal made it clear that it has never been part of trade negotiations, while Mr. Reynolds emphasized the UK's welcoming stance on Indian professionals, students, and business mobility.

The India-UK FTA talks began on January 13, 2022, with the goal of eliminating or reducing tariffs and customs duties on goods traded between the nations. In 2023-24, bilateral trade between India and the UK rose to \$21.34 billion, up from \$20.36 billion in the previous year. The UK remains one of India's top investors, with \$35.3 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) since 2000.

Conservative Merz set to be new German Chancellor

- Merz set to be Germany's next chancellor
- Far-right AfD surges to second place in historic result
- Coalition talks uncertain as parties avoid AfD tie-up

TPN Correspondent | Berlin

In a national election on Sunday, opposition leader Friedrich Merz of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) emerged poised for a victory, while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) achieved a historic surge in support. Projections from ARD and ZDF public television show Merz's conservatives leading with a modest win, while the AfD nearly doubled its support, marking its strongest showing since World War II.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) conceded defeat, calling it a "bitter election result" as his party finished in third place with its worst postwar performance in a national election.

Merz, who had led the CDU opposition, vowed to act swiftly in forming a coalition government. However, uncertainties remain regarding the coalition-building process, as no mainstream parties are keen on partnering with the AfD due to its far-right positions. This complicates the formation of a stable majority in the Bundestag, and the path to a functional government remains unclear.



The election was called seven months earlier than scheduled after Scholz's coalition government, which had been marked by internal conflicts, collapsed in November. His tenure had been characterized by growing discontent among voters, with little enthusiasm for any of the main political leaders. The dramatic rise of the AfD has set alarm bells ring-

ing across Europe, as it reflects a broader shift toward far-right populism in the region. Despite the setback for Scholz's SPD, the outcome of the election highlights the volatile political climate in Germany, with the focus now shifting to Merz's ability to navigate complex coalition talks and address the growing influence of the far-right.

Will have to create NATO within Ukraine: Zelenskyy continues to bid for Kyiv's seat



TPN Correspondent | Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to advocate for Ukraine's NATO membership, emphasizing that it is the "simplest and most logical solution" to end the ongoing war with Russia. In a post marking the third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Zelenskyy argued that NATO membership is the most cost-effective way to prevent further conflict, warning that without joining the alliance, Ukraine would have

to "create a NATO within" itself.

Zelenskyy, who has been vocal in his push for NATO membership, outlined a strategy where Ukraine would be forced to build and maintain its own strong military, finance it, produce weapons, and work with international partners to deter Russian aggression. He highlighted the necessity of securing comprehensive security guarantees, including military, economic, and political support, in the absence of NATO membership.

In a bold move, Zelenskyy recently expressed his willingness to resign from office if it would lead to Ukraine's accession to NATO. "If there is peace for Ukraine, if you really need me to leave my post, I am ready... I can exchange it for NATO," he stated during a press conference. His willingness to step down underscores the high stakes Ukraine faces in its ongoing struggle against Russian forces.

Despite facing criticism from the Donald Trump-led U.S. administration, Zelenskyy remains firm in his stance, thanking those who continue to support Ukraine's quest for real security. Tensions have escalated between Zelenskyy and Trump, who has made disparaging remarks about the Ukrainian president, even calling him a "dictator." Trump, however, has expressed confidence that peace talks with Russia could soon resolve the conflict, even as Zelenskyy insists that NATO remains Ukraine's best path forward. Zelenskyy's calls for NATO membership continue to be a central focus in Ukraine's strategy to bolster its defenses and seek international support as the war with Russia grinds on.

Indonesia's Prabowo Subianto officially establishes new sovereign wealth fund

TPN Correspondent | Jakarta

President Prabowo Subianto of Indonesia officially launched the nation's new sovereign wealth fund, "Danantara Indonesia," on Monday, marking a significant step toward economic growth and development. The fund, which is modeled after Singapore's Temasek, is set to manage government stakes in state-run enterprises and is expected to play a crucial role in driving the country's economic future.

In a televised address, Prabowo announced the creation of Danantara Indonesia, which will manage assets worth over \$900 billion with the goal of achieving 8% economic growth over the next five years. While the president did not reveal the identities of the fund's executives and advisors, he stated that the team had already been appointed to steer the fund's operations.



Danantara Indonesia will focus on investing in high-impact, sustainable projects in several key sectors, including renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, food production, and downstream industries. The fund will oversee all government holdings in state companies currently managed by the State-Owned Enterprises Ministry, which includes major financial institutions such as Bank Mandiri, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, and Bank Negara Indonesia.

This strategic move aims to stimulate Indonesia's economy, create jobs, and support the government's long-term development goals. By leveraging the wealth generated from state-owned companies, Danantara Indonesia will promote sustainable investments and help fund projects that are essential for the country's growth. The fund's establishment is part of a broader effort to modernize Indonesia's economic infrastructure and attract global investors.

Danantara Indonesia is seen as a pivotal tool in Indonesia's efforts to diversify its economy and achieve sustainable growth, as it will help fund critical sectors that are vital for the country's future. With its vast financial backing, the fund is expected to make a significant impact on Indonesia's economic trajectory, providing the necessary capital for development while ensuring that resources are managed efficiently for long-term prosperity.

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif's Big Claim On India Might Cost Him His Name



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has found himself embroiled in controversy after making a bold claim during a public rally in Dera Ghazi Khan. Known for his animated speeches, Sharif went beyond his usual rhetoric, stating that his name will cease to exist if Pakistan does not surpass India in terms of economic development and progress.

Sharif, visibly passionate during the rally, was seen gesturing fervently, raising his fist in the air, and occasionally jumping on the podium. In an emotional outburst, he assured the crowd that his government was working tirelessly to improve the nation's situation. However, it was his following statement that stirred controversy: "My name won't be Shehbaz Sharif if due to our efforts Pakistan does not leave India behind in development and progress."

Sharif further emphasized his commitment by swearing on his elder brother, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's life, saying, "I am Nawaz Sharif's fan, his follower. I swear on his blessed life that we will work together to take Pakistan to greatness and defeat India."

The statement quickly spread across social media, triggering widespread mockery and criticism. Critics accused Sharif of making "tall promises" without offering any substantial evidence of progress on the ground. Many questioned his ability to fulfill such lofty claims, given Pakistan's ongoing economic and financial struggles.

Just weeks earlier, Sharif had called for dialogue with India, but India has made it clear that any talks must first address the issue of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. With this latest inflammatory remark, Sharif's rhetoric has only added fuel to an already complex diplomatic situation.

Sharif's visit to Dera Ghazi Khan, during which he announced new infrastructure projects, was intended to assure locals that his government was addressing their concerns. However, his ambitious statements seem to have overshadowed his promises of development and economic recovery.

People Tired Of: Trump Hails Conservative Wave In German Election



TPN Correspondent | Berlin

In a landmark national election, Germany's conservative alliance emerged victorious, with Friedrich Merz set to become the next Chancellor. According to exit polls, the result marks a major shift in Germany's political landscape, with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) achieving record gains, securing second place. US President Donald Trump praised the election results, stating that the German people had rejected the "no common sense" policies of the Olaf Scholz-led centre-left government, particularly in energy and immigration. Trump expressed his belief that this was a "great day for Germany."

Meanwhile, Merz, 69, vowed to strengthen Europe's independence from the United States, criticizing Washington's influence. While he previously supported transatlantic ties, Merz declared his intention to help Europe become "real independent" from the US. He called for unity within Europe, citing external pressures from both Russia and the US. He even questioned the future of NATO in its current form.

Despite his victory, Merz faces complicated coalition talks. His Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) bloc emerged as the largest group, but it secured its second-worst post-war result, making it unclear whether Merz will need one or two coalition partners to form a majority. The surge of the far-right AfD, which garnered 20.5% of the vote, complicates coalition possibilities, as mainstream parties have ruled out working with the AfD due to its far-right stances.

The election also saw a decline for Chancellor Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), which achieved its worst result since World War II, securing only 16.5% of the vote. The Greens and the far-left Die Linke party also saw reduced support, while the pro-market Free Democrats (FDP) and new party Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) struggled to reach the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation. Voter turnout was a high 83%, with male voters leaning right and female voters showing more support for left-wing parties.

Stock Markets Face Heavy Losses Amid Mixed Global Signals, Nifty and Sensex Decline



Domestic stock markets endured significant losses on Monday, as investor sentiment was weighed down by mixed signals from international markets, weak US consumer data, and continued selling by Foreign In-

stitutional Investors (FIIs). The indices opened lower and struggled throughout the session, with the Nifty and Sensex both closing deep in the red.

The day began with a gap down open-

ing as global market indicators were less than favorable. The lackluster data from the US, coupled with earnings downgrades by rating agencies for some companies, added to the negative sentiment. While sectors such

as auto, FMCG, and pharma showed some resilience, sectors like IT, media, metal, and realty saw mixed performances. The selling pressure pushed the Nifty to a loss of 242 points, ending at 22,555, significantly lower than the 200-day exponential moving average (DEMA).

The BSE Sensex opened at 74,893 and went on to touch an intraday low of 74,387 before peaking at 74,907. Eventually, it closed at 74,454, down 856 points from the previous session's close of 75,311. Meanwhile, the NSE Nifty started at 22,609, hitting a low of 22,518, and managed a high of 22,668 before closing at 22,555. The Nifty Bank, a key indicator of the banking sector's performance, fell 329 points to end at 48,561.

Out of the 50 stocks in the Nifty50 index, only 12 gained, while 38 experienced declines. Some of the top gainers included Mahindra & Mahindra, Dr. Reddy's, Eicher Motors, Hero MotoCorp, and Nestle India. On the other hand, major losers included Wipro, HCL Technologies, TCS, Infosys, and Bharti Airtel. While the Auto, FMCG, and pharma sectors posted slight

gains, the overall market breadth favored the sellers, with a significant number of stocks declining.

Market data revealed a clear dominance of selling pressure on the NSE, with 775 stocks advancing against 2,097 decliners. Notably, 20 stocks hit 52-week highs, while 214 touched 52-week lows. In terms of market movements, 82 stocks reached their upper circuit limits, and 177 stocks hit lower circuits.



MURTHY NAIDU PAADAM
Stock Market Analyst
+91 988 656 9709

The rupee closed flat at 86.70 against the US dollar. On the corporate front, notable developments included Adani Green Energy's launch of a 250 MW solar power project in Rajasthan, Rail Vikas Nigam's bid for a Rs 156.35 crore project in South Western Railway, and Bharti Airtel increasing its stake in Airtel Africa. India's crude oil imports reached an eight-month high in January, and economists are predicting a cut in the repo rate to 5.75% by mid-2025 due to ongoing growth concerns. Additionally, IRFC secured a bid to finance NTPC Renewables' Rs 7,500-crore project, while Varun Beverages and Power Finance Corporation saw notable trading volumes.

ICRA Predicts 7-8% Revenue Growth for India Inc in Q4

Domestic rating agency ICRA projected that Indian companies are likely to see a 7-8% revenue growth during the March quarter of the current fiscal year, driven by a revival in rural demand and increased government spending. However, the agency also highlighted that the private capital expenditure (capex) cycle is expected to remain subdued due to geopolitical uncertainties and a relatively weak outlook on merchandise exports from India.

ICRA noted that despite these challenges, certain sectors, particularly those receiving government support through production-linked incentive schemes, will continue to thrive. These include sunrise industries such as electronics, semiconductors, and electric vehicles (EVs), which are set to see increased investments. The agency further mentioned that the recovery in operating profit margins (OPM) for India Inc. observed in the past quarter is likely to be sustained, with expectations of margins staying between 18.2-18.4%. This growth will be support-



ed by rising demand, bolstered by improved consumer sentiments.

ICRA also emphasized the outlook for rural demand, which is expected to remain robust in the first half of CY2025. This will be supported by strong output from the kharif crops and a favorable forecast for the ongoing rabi season. However, the outlook for agriculture will depend on the arrival of a normal and well-distributed monsoon in 2025.

Urban demand, which has been weak in recent quarters, is anticipated to improve. This recovery will be driven by factors such as the significant income-tax relief in the Union Budget for 2025, monetary easing by the Reserve Bank of India, and expectations of a moderation in food inflation, which would aid discretionary consumption, according to Kinjal Shah, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head of Corporate Ratings at ICRA.

Retail inflation eases slightly to 4.61% for farm workers, 4.73% for rural labourers

Inflation rates for agricultural and rural labourers in India have eased slightly, as the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) dropped in January 2025. According to the government data released on Monday, CPI-AL stood at 4.61 percent, while CPI-RL was recorded at 4.73 percent. These figures showed a decline from December 2024, when the inflation rates were 5.01 percent for CPI-AL and 5.05 percent for CPI-RL.



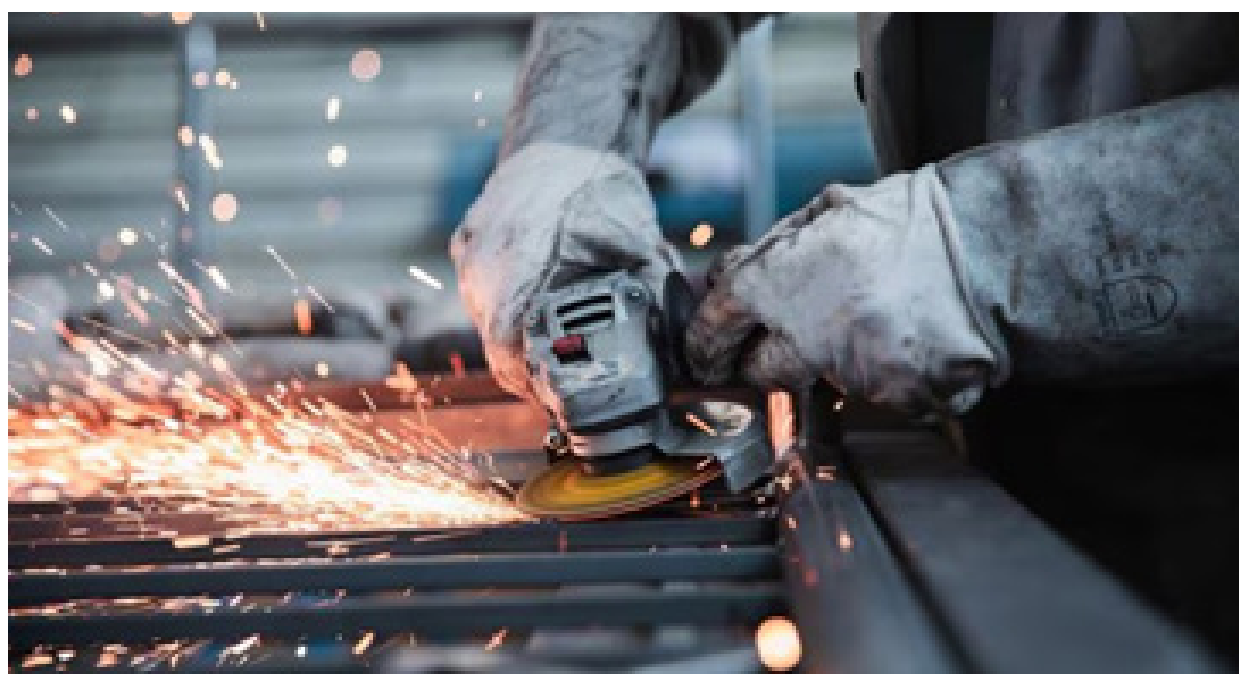
The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) decreased by 4 points and 3 points, respectively, for January 2025, reaching 1,316 points and 1,328 points. In comparison, the CPI-AL and CPI-RL were at 1,320 points and 1,331 points, respectively, in December 2024.

In terms of year-on-year inflation, the figures for January 2025 showed a significant reduction in the inflation rates compared to the same month in the previous year. CPI-AL inflation fell from 7.52 percent in January 2024 to 4.61 percent in January 2025, while CPI-RL inflation dropped from 7.37 percent to 4.73 percent during the same period.

The CPI-AL and CPI-RL are important indicators of the cost of living for agricultural and rural workers in India, reflecting the price changes for essential goods and services. The decline in inflation is likely to bring some relief to these workers, as the cost of basic goods such as food, fuel, and household items has seen a slowdown in price increases.

The decrease in inflation also comes amid efforts by the government to control rising prices and ensure economic stability, particularly in rural areas where a large proportion of India's population depends on agriculture and manual labour for livelihood.

India's PMI Shows Strong Growth in February, Driven by Services Sector



India's private sector growth showed a notable uptick in February, as the Composite Flash Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 60.6, significantly higher than the previous month's reading of 57.7, according to an HSBC report. This increase follows three consecutive quarters of softening in the PMI, indicating a positive shift in the current quarter. The rise was primarily driven by a sharp acceleration in services sector activity, though the manufacturing sector also saw a healthy, albeit slower, expansion.

The report highlights that January and February data combined suggest that after a period of decline, the PMI composite index is likely to show an upward trend this quarter. The global restocking process continues to fuel India's new goods export orders, while a depreciation of the currency is expected to boost the country's rapidly growing services exports sector.

HSBC further noted that easing input prices have helped improve profit margins for businesses. Given the favorable economic indicators, the report anticipates a 25 basis point rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the upcoming April monetary policy meeting.

The flash PMI figures provide an early preview of the final manufacturing, services, and composite PMI data for the month. These flash readings, typically based on 80-90% of survey responses, are released about a week ahead of the final PMI figures, offering valuable insights into the health of India's economy.

Overall, the February PMI data suggests a positive outlook for the private sector, with growth momentum in both manufacturing and services continuing to strengthen.



Flying Car Worth Rs 2.5 Crore Rules The California Sky, Internet Say It 'Looks Fake'

Alef Aeronautics, a US-based company, has taken a major leap toward the future of transportation by releasing a video of its concept flying car, the Alef Model Zero, executing a vertical take-off. Priced at approximately \$300,000 (around Rs 2.6 crore), the futuristic vehicle has quickly gone viral, thanks to its impressive design and capabilities. In the video, the car is seen cruising down a California road before lifting off vertically and soaring over an SUV, creating a scene straight out of a science fiction movie.

The vehicle in the video is a special ultralight version of the Alef Model Zero. The test flight was conducted on a closed-off road for safety reasons. Powered by distributed electric propulsion with propeller blades hidden beneath the car, the vehicle successfully demonstrated its ability to transition from road travel to flight. Alef Aeronautics CEO Jim Dukhovny compared this breakthrough to the Wright Brothers' first flight, saying, "This drive and flight test represents an important proof of technology in a real-world city environment."

Alef Aeronautics is also working on a commercial version of the flying car, called the Alef Model A. This two-seat-

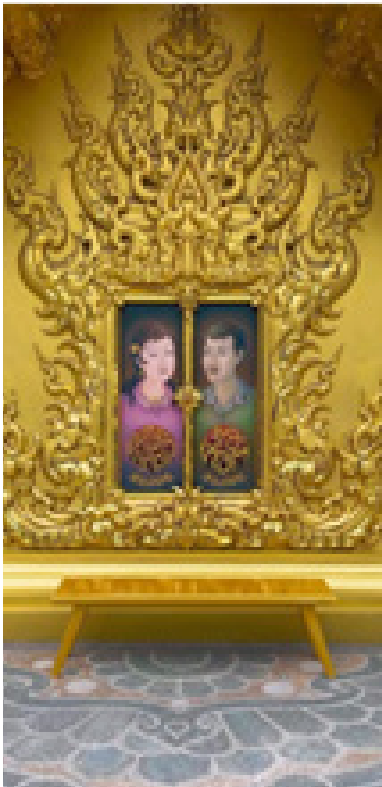
er vehicle is designed for both road and air travel and will feature a flying range of 110 miles and a driving range of 200 miles. Additionally, it will come equipped with autopilot flight capabilities. The company has already received 3,300 pre-orders for the electric flying car, signaling significant interest in the innovative vehicle.

The concept has sparked a flurry of reactions on social media, with users ex-

pressing excitement about the potential of flying cars. Some compared it to the animated series *The Jetsons*, while others raised concerns about safety and practicality. One user even warned, "Air traffic is going to be our next worry!" Despite these concerns, the Alef Model Zero has generated widespread attention, marking a significant step towards transforming transportation as we know it.



Lavish Washroom in Thailand Resembling a Palace Stuns Social Media Users



A lavishly designed washroom in Thailand has taken the internet by storm, leaving social media users in complete disbelief. The video, shared on Instagram by user Krishangi, has gone viral, capturing the extravagant design of the restroom.

The video opens with Krishangi saying, "I never thought I would make a video about a washroom, but today I could not stop myself. I mean look at this." The camera then pans to reveal a massive bathroom in cool tones, featuring intricate design details throughout. The sheer grandeur of the space is enough to astonish viewers, but what truly adds to its opulence is a garden outside the restroom,

further elevating its luxurious atmosphere.

Since being posted, the video has amassed over 4 million views and garnered more than 62,000 likes. The stunning visuals have led to an outpouring of amazement in the comments section, with many users expressing their astonishment at the level of detail and luxury in the washroom's construction.

One user commented, "Such a royal washroom!!!!!! Man, I want to go here, dress up nicely, and take so many pictures outside. The design on this is so beautiful, I am mesmerized." Another user jokingly wrote, "I'm going to sleep there no matter who says what. That's a whole palace."

Some users even shared background information about the washroom's location. One Instagram user revealed, "This (Wat Rong Khun) is in the Wat Rong Khun, which is popularly known as the White Temple of North Thailand's Chiang Rai. Had the opportunity to meet the owner Chalermchai in a programme."

The video continues to capture the attention of viewers around the world, with many commenting on how "amazing" and "beautiful" the washroom is. Others simply expressed awe at the opportunity to witness such a luxurious space. This viral post has shown just how far design innovation can go, even for something as everyday as a bathroom.

Japanese Police Academy Introduces Makeup Training for Male Cadets



A police academy in Japan has introduced a unique course teaching male cadets the basics of makeup application, which has garnered significant attention. In January, 60 police cadets, including those nearing graduation, started a beauty training program at the Fukushima Prefecture Keisatsugakko, a police academy in Fukushima Prefecture. The initiative quickly became a topic of online discussion.

The course focuses on essential beauty techniques such as applying primers, moisturising the skin, using eyebrow pencils, styling hair, and trimming eyebrows. To ensure a professional approach, the academy partnered with Shiseido, a leading Japanese cosmetics brand, for the training.

According to Takeshi Sugiura, the vice-principal of the academy, the goal is for police officers to maintain a clean and professional appearance as they frequently interact with the public. He explained that "as both members of society and future police officers, maintaining a proper appearance is crucial."

One of the male cadets who

participated in the course expressed his thoughts, saying, "I have never worn makeup before. I believe that being a police officer means often being in the public eye, so I want to ensure that I present myself well before going to work."

The introduction of the makeup training course has sparked mixed reactions on Japanese social media. Some users joked about the initiative, with one commenting, "Now they can throw loose powder into the suspects' eyes to catch them!" while others supported the idea, saying, "This may seem absurd, but isn't it a good idea for both men and women to take the make-up course?"

Traditionally, police academies in Japan have focused on legal and physical training, but the introduction of beauty courses is seen as a move to encourage more polite and courteous interactions with the public. In addition to Fukushima, a similar program is also being implemented at a police academy in Yamaguchi, where male cadets are even taught proper facial cleansing techniques.

Chinese Influencer Gu Xixi Earns ₹35 Lakh in One Day by Lying in Bed



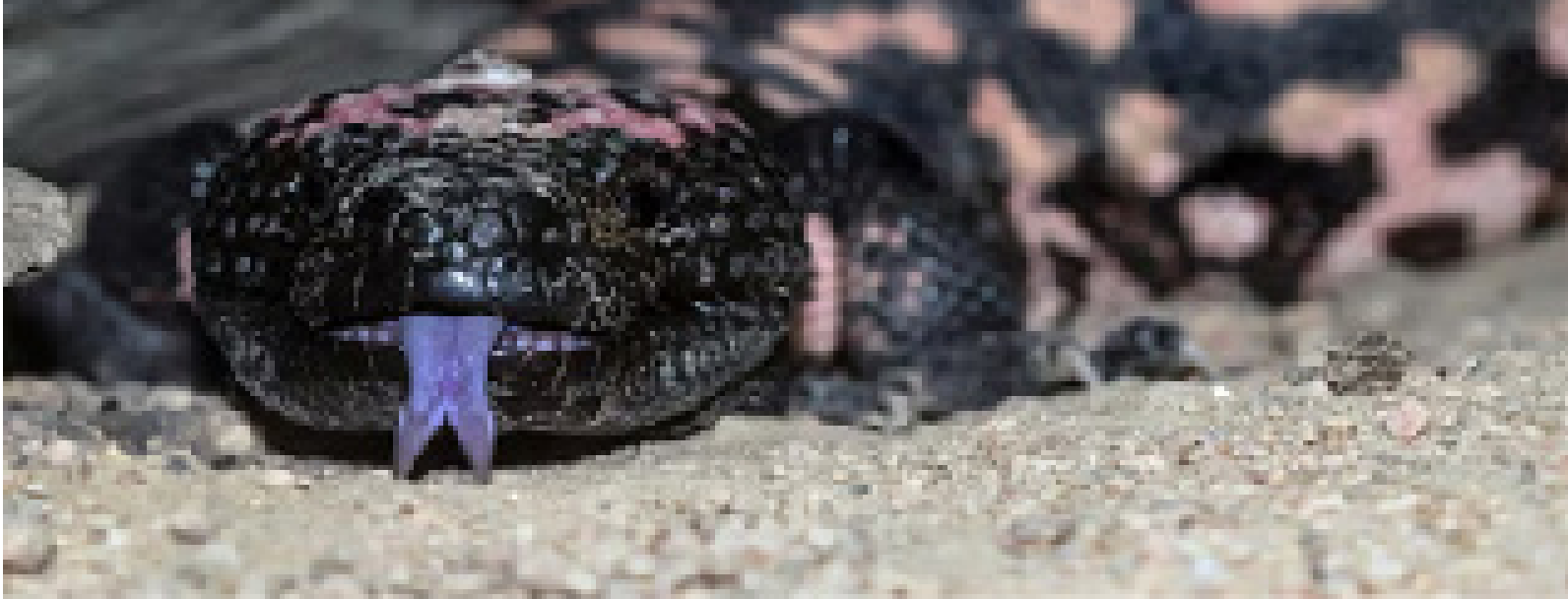
Chinese influencer Gu Xixi is making waves after revealing that she earned a staggering 3.03 lakh yuan (approximately Rs 35 Lakh) in a single day—all by simply lying in bed. The 25-year-old influencer, who operates a shop on Douyin (the Chinese equivalent of TikTok), shared the details of her impressive earnings between February 8 and 16. Over that period, Xixi raked in a total of 1.039 crore yuan (approximately Rs 12 Crore) on one platform, with a commission of around 27.9 lakh yuan (approximately Rs 3 Crore). On another platform, her

sales reached 89.4 lakh yuan within a week. In a recent live stream, Xixi described her earnings as "hard-earned" and revealed an interesting twist—she claimed that the more people criticize her, the more money she makes. "Today, I spent the entire day lying in bed, did nothing, and still made 11.6 lakh yuan in sales on my Douyin shop, with an estimated commission of 3.03 lakh yuan," she said. "The more you cannot stand seeing me doing well and the more you criticize me, the more I make." Xixi, who has amassed a large

following, made it clear that she doesn't just aim to earn a few hundred thousand yuan monthly. Her goal is far more ambitious: earning that much every single day. "It is not about earning hundreds of thousands of yuan per month; it is about earning hundreds of thousands of yuan per day. Understand?" she added.

Her unorthodox approach to business and success has garnered both admiration and criticism. While some are impressed by her entrepreneurial skills, others argue that such claims perpetuate unrealistic expectations. Regardless, Gu Xixi's rise in the influencer world demonstrates the growing power of social media platforms, where individuals can generate enormous income with innovative approaches.

Ozempic: How The Venom Of A Lizard Paved Way For Popular Diabetes Drug



The venom of the Gila monster, a lizard known for its toxic bite, has led to groundbreaking discoveries in medicine, particularly in the development of GLP-1 agonists like Ozempic and Wegovy, used for treating diabetes and obesity. Science Alert reports that while the Gila monster's venom is dangerous, it contains vital components that have led to life-changing treatments.

At the turn of the 20th century, endocrinologist Daniel Drucker sought a hormone that could mimic the appetite-suppressing and blood sugar-regulating effects of human GLP-1, but without breaking down too quickly. His research led him to endocrinologists John Eng and Jean-Pierre Raufman, along with biochemist John Pisano, who discovered

proteins in Gila monster venom that resembled human GLP-1.

Drucker and his team obtained a Gila monster from a zoo breeding program to investigate further. Their findings revealed that the venom of the Gila monster contained Exendin-4, a protein similar to GLP-1 but more stable in the body. This discovery eventually led to a synthetic version of the protein, which became an FDA-approved treatment for type 2 diabetes in 2005. The same compound has since been used for obesity management. The Gila monster is not the only animal to inspire medical advancements. Lisinopril, one of the world's top-selling drugs for heart failure and hypertension, originates from the venom of the Brazilian viper. Similarly, the Caribbean sea sponge

produces nucleosides that led to the chemotherapy drug cytarabine, which effectively treats leukemia and lymphoma.

Even scorpion venom has been used for cancer treatment. In 2004, oncologist Jim Olson discovered chlorotoxin, a peptide from the deathstalker scorpion, which specifically targets brain tumor cells. This discovery led to the development of Tozuleristide, a fluorescent dye that illuminates cancerous cells during surgery. These discoveries highlight the invaluable contributions of nature's most dangerous substances to modern medicine. However, as we continue to unlock these medical marvels, it is vital to protect the biodiversity that makes such life-saving innovations possible.

Virat Kohli: King of the Chase, Marks Milestone in India's Win Over Pakistan



In a thrilling India vs Pakistan Champions Trophy match on Sunday, Virat Kohli led India to a six-wicket victory with a brilliant 100* off 111 balls. His knock, which included only seven fours, was marked by intelligent running between the wickets, focusing on quick singles and doubles. The win nearly secured India's spot in the semifinals while pushing Pakistan to the brink of elimination. Kohli's performance was not just about the match-winning hundred. He also crossed a major milestone, becoming only the second Indian and third overall to reach 14,000 ODI runs. He achieved the feat in just 287 innings, faster than both Sachin Tendulkar and Kumar Sangakkara, who took more in-

nings to reach the mark. Kohli's remarkable consistency has made him the fastest to 13,000 and 14,000 ODI runs. Reflecting on his approach, Kohli explained his game plan—taking on pacers and being cautious against spinners. He credited his teammates, including Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, and Shreyas Iyer, for their contributions. Kohli also set a record for the most catches by an Indian fielder, surpassing Mohammad Azharuddin with his 158th catch during Pakistan's innings. As Kohli's form continues to shine, his impact on Indian cricket remains invaluable.

Ahlawat Struggles in Kenya Open, Benzema Shines in Saudi Pro League



Veer Ahlawat had a challenging third round at the Kenya Open, carding an 8-over 79 to slip to T-67 on the leaderboard. The Indian golfer's round included a nightmare 11 on the par-5 seventh hole, as well as four bogeys and just two birdies. Ahlawat had earlier posted rounds of 70 and 72. South Africa's Jacques Kruyswijk took the lead with a 7-under round, moving one stroke ahead as he aims for his first DP World Tour title. In France, Indian Grandmaster P Niyan finished as runner-up at the 41st Cappelle La Grande International Open Tournament. Niyan scored 7.5 points, including

six wins and three draws, but lost in the tie-breaks to French IM Mahel, who emerged victorious after nine rounds. Meanwhile, in Riyadh, former France striker Karim Benzema helped Al-Ittihad secure a dominant 4-1 win over Al-Hilal in the Saudi Pro League. Benzema sealed the win with a stunning goal, extending Ittihad's lead to seven points, while also continuing his strong scoring form with 16 goals in the league. Lastly, cricket legend Ian Chappell retired from journalism after five decades, marking the end of an era of insightful writings and stories from his playing days.

Barcelona Reclaims Top Spot with 2-0 Win Over Las Palmas



Barcelona secured a vital 2-0 win against Las Palmas on Saturday, returning to the top of the LaLiga table. Dani Olmo and Ferran Torres came off the bench to seal the victory, which sent Barca back to the summit with 54 points, tied with Real Madrid and one ahead of Atletico Madrid. The match was a dull affair for much of its duration, with both teams struggling to create meaningful chances. Barcelona finally broke the deadlock in the

62nd minute when Olmo scored from inside the box. Torres added a second in added time, capitalizing on a defensive error by Las Palmas to score from close range. Olmo expressed his satisfaction after the match, acknowledging the importance of the three points in the title race. "We had to be patient," he said. "Las Palmas defended very well, and in the second half, we found more chances and secured the win."

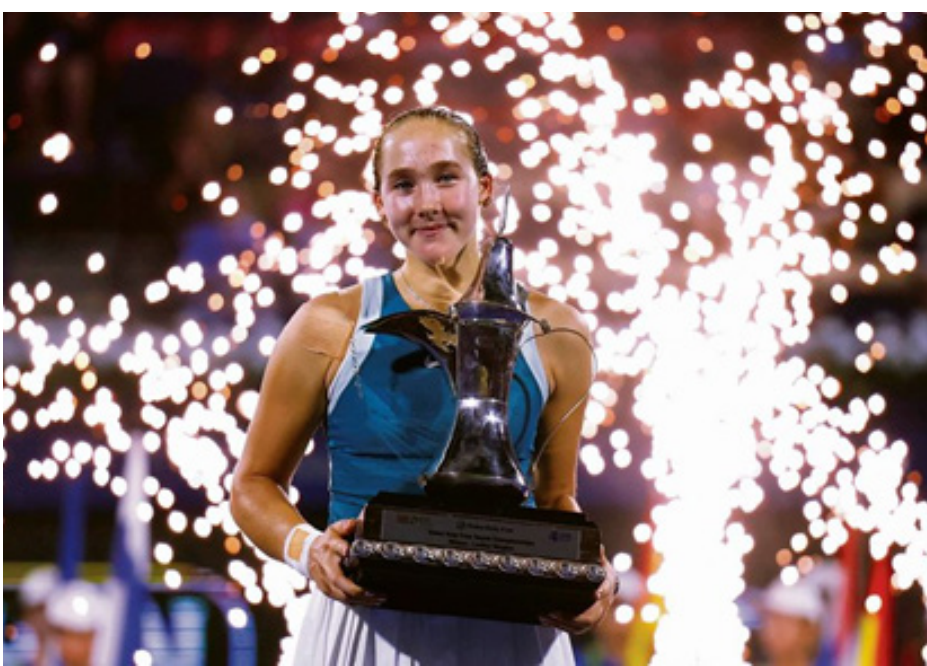
SFI Announces 2025 National Surfing and Stand-Up Paddle Event Calendar



The Surfing Federation of India (SFI) has revealed its 2025 National Surfing and Stand-Up Paddle (SUP) Event Calendar, aiming to further elevate the country's position in global surfing. After a historic 2024, where India secured its first-ever quotas for the 2026 Asian Games in Japan, the SFI is focusing on increasing ocean time and competitive exposure for the nation's top surfers. The 2025 calendar includes nine national-level events across Surfing and SUP, with competitions scheduled across key coastal regions to enhance training and provide valuable experience for Indian athletes. The season kicks off in February with the Varkala Surfing Championship in Kerala, followed by the Indian Open of

Surfing in May. The East Coast Pro Tour will feature stops in Pondicherry, Mahabalipuram, and Covelong in August, while SUP events will be held in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala throughout the year. SFI President Arun Vasu emphasized that these events are crucial for maintaining momentum from India's impressive international performances, including a 5th-place ranking in Asia. The support from local governments and international partners is key to India's rapid progress in the sport. India's surf scene continues to gain global recognition, with upcoming international events and growing support from the International Surfing Association.

Mirra Andreeva Clinches Dubai Championship Title



Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva claimed the biggest title of her career on Saturday, defeating Clara Tauson 7-6(1) 6-1 in the Dubai Championships final. The win will propel Andreeva into the top-10 of the WTA rankings for the first time in her career next week, making her the youngest player to achieve this feat since Nicole Pietrangeli in 2007. It was a remarkable week for the 17-year-old, who had previously secured impres-

sive victories over 2023 Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, five-time Major winner Iga Swiatek, and 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina. With this achievement, Andreeva becomes the youngest player to defeat three Major champions at a single event since Maria Sharapova's 2004 WTA Finals performance. Andreeva's strong performance throughout the tournament signals the rise of a promising talent in women's tennis.

Savita Punia Reaches 300 International Caps; Hockey India Extends Congratulations

Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita Punia achieved a remarkable milestone on Monday, earning her 300th international cap during India's match against the Netherlands in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024/25 at Kalinga Hockey Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. This achievement places her in an elite club, alongside Vandana Katariya as only the second Indian woman to reach this milestone. Savita is also the second In-

dian goalkeeper, after PR Sreejesh, to achieve this feat. Savita, who made her senior debut at 20, has been a cornerstone of Indian hockey, playing a crucial role in the team's historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics and in other key tournaments, including the 2016 Rio Olympics and the 2018 World Cup. She has captained India to significant successes, including a bronze medal at the 2022 Common-

wealth Games and back-to-back golds in the Women's Asian Champions Trophy (2023-2024). Honored with the Arjuna Award and multiple FIH Goalkeeper of the Year awards, Savita expressed gratitude for her journey. Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey and Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh both lauded her leadership and dedication, celebrating her as a source of inspiration for aspiring athletes.





'Hari Hara Veeramallu' Second Song Released: A Mass Beat That Will Win Fans' Hearts!



The makers of Hari Hara Veeramallu have released the second song from the film, titled "Kollagottinadhiro," just ahead of its theatrical release on March 28. This energetic track has already become a sensation among fans, thanks to its vibrant mass beat and catchy lyrics. Pawan Kalyan, who stars as the titular character, is shown in all his glory in this song, which praises the valiant heroism of the character Hari Hara Veeramallu. The song is composed by the Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani, with lyrics by Chandrabose. Singers Mangli, Rahul Sipligunj, Ramya Behara, and Yamini Ghantasala have given life to this energetic anthem. Directed by Krish Jagarlam

and produced under the Mega Surya Productions banner, the film also stars Nidhi Agerwal as the lead actress, with Bollywood stars Bobby Deol, Nargis Fakhri, and Nora Fatehi playing key roles. Hari Hara Veeramallu promises to be an epic historical action film, and with Pawan Kalyan's powerful performance, it is set to create a storm in theaters worldwide. Directed originally by Krish, the film had a major shift in direction when Krish stepped down from the project midway, and Jyothi Krishna, the son of producer A.M. Rathnam, took over. Fans are eagerly awaiting the film's release, with anticipation building over this high-budget spectacle.

"Partners": Malayalam Movie Gaining Popularity on OTT!



Partners, a Malayalam film, is currently creating a buzz on OTT platforms. The movie, which was initially released in theaters on July 5 last year, is now streaming on the Saina Play OTT platform since January 31, and it has been receiving remarkable feedback from viewers. Directed by Naveen John and produced by Dinesh, Partners revolves around a fake bank and the intriguing events surrounding it. The story follows a protagonist who starts working as a cashier in a small private bank. As he observes the bank's operations, he begins

to suspect something unusual. His suspicions grow when he realizes that everyone working at the bank has a criminal record, and he uncovers that the bank itself is a fraudulent operation. The film features performances by Dhyana Srinivasan, Sanju Sivaram, Kalabhavan Shajon, and Rony David Raj in pivotal roles, with music composed by Prakash Alex. While the film initially received positive responses in theaters, its content has found a strong audience on OTT platforms, bringing in more attention.

'HIT-3' Teaser Released: Nani as a Fierce Mass Cop!



On the occasion of Natural Star Nani's birthday today, the makers of HIT-3 released the highly anticipated teaser of the

film. The teaser, packed with unexpected shocks, has already left viewers excited and curious for more.

In this crime thriller, Nani is seen in the role of a tough, mass police officer, Arjun Sarkar. The teaser hints at a series of shocking murders in Srinagar and how the police officer investigates and solves these gruesome crimes. Nani's intense and powerful performance as a no-nonsense cop adds a gripping element to the teaser.

The visuals of HIT-3 are spine-chilling, with Mickey J. Meyer's background score taking the intensity to another level. Although a

few key characters like Rao Ramesh are revealed, the teaser deliberately keeps other important roles under wraps, building suspense.

The film, set to release on May 1, also stars Sreevidya Shetty alongside Nani. Directed by Sailesh Kolanu, the film promises to deliver a violent, edge-of-the-seat narrative, continuing the HIT Universe saga. After Nani's Dasara, HIT-3 seems to take the visuals to a whole new, thrilling level. Fans are eagerly awaiting this action-packed thriller.

Katrina Kaif Visits Maha Kumbh 2025 with Mother-in-Law Veena Kaushal



Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif visited the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj with her mother-in-law, Veena Kaushal, making a spiritual journey to the sacred event. Katrina, dressed in a powder pink Indian attire, was seen interacting with spiritual leaders Swami Chidanand Saraswati and Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati. Photos from her visit have gone viral, showcasing her connection with the event.

Parmarth Niketan, a spiritual ashram led by Pujya Swami Chidanand, shared a tweet highlighting Katrina's presence at the Maha Kumbh. The tweet emphasized how her visit blended spirituality with entertainment, inspiring youth to recon-

nect with their roots.

Katrina Kaif is among several Bollywood personalities who visited the Maha Kumbh, including Akshay Kumar, Sonali Bendre, Vidhut Jambwal, and Vicky Kaushal, her husband. These stars participated in the holy dip, adding to the spiritual significance of the event.

In related news, Katrina recently praised her husband Vicky Kaushal's performance in Chhaava. She lauded his portrayal of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, calling him "outstanding" and sharing her admiration for the film's brilliance. Katrina also congratulated the entire team, including director Laxman Utekar, for their efforts.

IIFA Digital Awards 2025: Celebrating Digital Cinema and Creativity



The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) is set to mark a special milestone in 2025, celebrating 25 years of showcasing Indian cinema globally. This year, IIFA introduces a new highlight—the Sobha Realty Presents IIFA Digital Awards, Co-Presented by NEXA, a unique addition to the iconic event. The awards, which will take place in Jaipur, Rajasthan, aim to recognize the rapidly growing world of digital and OTT entertainment, shining a spotlight on talented storytellers who are shaping the future of

cinema.

Scheduled for March 8, the Sobha Realty IIFA Digital Awards will honor the best in digital content across various categories, including Best Film, Best Series, Best Performance in a Leading Role (Male & Female), Best Director, Best Reality or Non-Scripted Series, Best Docuseries/DocuFilm, and Best Music/Soundtrack. These awards will celebrate the creativity and innovation that define digital entertainment and its growing impact on the entertainment industry.

The event will be hosted by Vijay Varma, Abhishek Banerjee, and Aparshakti Khurana, ensuring an engaging atmosphere throughout the evening. Performances by music legends like Sachin-Jigar, Shreya Ghoshal, and Mika Singh will add to the excitement.

The nominations for the IIFA Digital Awards are out, with Panchayat leading with 10 nominations, followed by Amar Singh Chamkila and Heeramandi, each receiving 6 nods.

Chiranjeevi Celebrates India's Win with Cricketers Tilak Varma and Abhishek Sharma

Chiranjeevi took to Instagram to share a few pictures and glimpses from the high-energy India vs Pakistan Champions Trophy match that took place on Sunday, where India registered a stunning six-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan. The match was especially thrilling as Virat Kohli scored his 51st ODI ton, guiding India to a remarkable win in Dubai.

In the pictures, Chiranjeevi can be seen interacting with fans and posing for a selfie with Indian cricketers Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma. GMR Chairman Srinivas Bommidala and Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur also made appearances in the photos. The megastar's excitement

was palpable, as he expressed his joy at witnessing the spectacular match live.

Chiranjeevi wrote on Instagram, "Hurrahhhhhh!!! India spectacularly triumphs over Pakistan!!! What a match!!!! Kudos to the Entire Team!!! Such a treat to watch the fireworks from the SENSATIONAL Virat Kohli. Bravo, Shreyas Iyer, Shubman Gill, Kuldeep Yadav & Captain Rohit Sharma and the entire team!!!"

He added, "It's been Absolutely Electrifying watching this Super Thrilling match Live with some dear friends Anurag Singh Thakur, Bommidala GMR, & young cricketer Tilak Varma among others!!! More power to India!!! Jai Hind!!!"

