



**Weather Forecast**

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

# CM Siddaramaiah Slams Amit Shah's Delimitation Assurance, Calls It Misleading

**CM terms Amit Shah's promise on delimitation as misleading**

**Claims southern states face unfair reduction in parliamentary seats**

**Southern states planning united front to oppose unfair delimitation**



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka  
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has strongly criticized Union Home Minister Amit Shah's assurance that southern states will not lose any parliamentary seats due to the upcoming delimitation process. Siddaramaiah termed Shah's statement as unreliable and misleading, alleging that it either stems from lack of accurate information or is a deliberate attempt to weaken southern states like Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh.

Amit Shah, speaking at a party event in Coimbatore, had stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will ensure southern states do not lose a single seat and that the region will receive its fair share of any increases. Siddaramaiah countered this, urging the Centre to maintain the status quo and expressing concern that the proposed delimitation, if based on future census data, would disproportionately reduce the parliamentary representation of southern states.

The Karnataka Chief Minister's Office released projections highlighting potential seat reductions in the south if delimitation is conducted based on 2021 or 2031 census data:

- Karnataka: 28 to 26 seats
- Andhra Pradesh: 42 to 34 seats
- Kerala: 20 to 12 seats
- Tamil Nadu: 39 to 31 seats

**In contrast, northern states would gain additional seats:**

- Uttar Pradesh: 80 to 91 seats
- Bihar: 40 to 50 seats
- Madhya Pradesh: 29 to 33 seats

Siddaramaiah said this imbalance would severely weaken the political influence of the south, which has been more successful in implementing family planning programs and controlling population growth. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin also voiced similar concerns, saying the south is being punished for its development efforts.

Siddaramaiah further alleged that the BJP is using delimitation as a political tool to consolidate power by boosting representation in northern states while cutting down seats in the south, where the party has traditionally faced resistance. With concerns mounting across the southern region, discussions are underway to form a united front among southern states to challenge any unfair delimitation exercise. A coordinated movement is expected to be launched soon to protect the interests and voice of the southern states.

The Delimitation Commission has so far been constituted four times—in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002. Though census data was collected in 1981 and 1991, no delimitation followed. Even after the 2001 census, the number of seats remained unchanged. In September 2024, Amit Shah had told Parliament that census and delimitation would follow the 2024 general elections.



## Bengaluru to Become Global Digital Content Creation Capital: Minister Priyank Kharge

- Karnataka aims to contribute \$26 billion to the global AVGC market by 2030
- Bengaluru to be positioned as the global digital content creation capital
- Government plans to generate 30,000 AVGC sector jobs by 2028

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru  
Karnataka's Minister for IT and BT Priyank Kharge announced that the state is actively working towards making Bengaluru the global capital of digital content creation, backed by strong policies and investments in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics (AVGC) and Extended Reality sectors. Speaking at the inaugural session of GAFX 2025, India's premier event for animation, visual effects, and gaming, Kharge highlighted that the global AVGC market is projected to grow from \$596.7 billion to \$882 billion by 2030. Currently, India contributes less than 1 percent to this market, but with the right policies, the country could contribute up to 3 percent, amounting to \$26 billion by 2030, he said.

**The Minister emphasized the State Government's AVGC Policy, which focuses on:**

- Establishing Centres of Excellence to provide world-class training and research support
  - Enhancing industry-academia collaboration to equip students with job-ready skills
  - Promoting global partnerships to bring international projects to Karnataka
- Currently, Karnataka hosts over 300 AVGC companies, contributing nearly 20 percent of India's AVGC output. Minister Kharge expressed confidence that Bengaluru is well-positioned to become the global hub for digital content creation, supported by investments in artificial intelligence, extended reality, and other advanced technologies. The government's target is to generate 30,000 new jobs in the AVGC sector by 2028, while strengthening international collaborations to attract global studios and projects to Karnataka. With its progressive policies, robust ecosystem, and growing talent pool, Karnataka aims to cement its leadership in digital innovation and content creation on the global stage.

## Ex-MLA Among Six Haryana Congress Leaders Expelled For Anti-Party Activities

TPN Correspondent | Haryana  
The Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) has expelled six leaders, including former MLA Rambir Singh, for engaging in anti-party activities during the ongoing campaign for the 2025 municipal elections. The party issued a statement confirming their expulsion for six years, effective immediately.

The expelled leaders include Rambir Singh, Vijay Kaushik, Rahul Chaudhary, Pooja Rani, and Rupesh Malik. The HPCC order stated that reports from multiple sources highlighted their involvement in activities detrimental to party interests, prompting their removal from the party's primary membership.



# Karnataka HC Issues Notice to State Govt

**Next hearing scheduled for March 27**

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru  
The Karnataka High Court has issued a notice to the state government in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by former BJP MLA P Rajeev, challenging the appointments made to the guarantee scheme implementing authorities, where individuals were granted cabinet rank and minister of state status. A division bench led by Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice M I Arun also ordered notices to H M Revanna, former minister and president of the state-level guarantee schemes implementing authority, along with vice-presidents S R Patil Byadagi, Pushpa Amarnath, Mehraj Khan, and Suraj Hegde. The matter has been posted for further hearing on March 27, 2025.

The petition contends that the conferring of cabinet/minister of state status to these appointees violates Article 164 (1A) of the Constitution,

which limits the total number of ministers to 15% of the legislative assembly's strength. The Congress government, after winning the 2023 assembly elections on the promise of five guarantee schemes, established these authorities at state, district, taluk, and BBMP levels. Senior advocate Aruna Shyam, representing the petitioner, argued that the president of the state-level authority was granted cabinet rank, while five vice-presidents were given minister of state status, despite not holding constitutional ministerial positions. These appointees receive salaries, perks, and privileges equivalent to cabinet and state ministers, without any specific qualifications or legal framework governing such appointments.

The petition further claims that government orders issued in January and July 2024 approved these appointments without any financial analysis, alleging that these positions were created solely to benefit



Congress party functionaries and consolidate the party's vote bank. The petitioner warned that these expenditures could push the state ex-

chequer towards financial instability. The petition also highlighted that the BBMP-level authority chairman receives a monthly honorarium of

₹40,000, while members receive ₹1,200 per meeting, adding that appointments across all levels exclusively favour Congress workers.



## Karnataka Health Department Bans Plastic Use in Idli Preparation

- Plastic sheets banned in idli preparation across Karnataka
- FDA finds 51 contaminated samples out of 251 tested
- Health Minister urges use of safe alternatives like banana leaves

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Health Department has imposed a strict ban on the use of plastic sheets in idli preparation, citing serious public health concerns. This decision comes after a statewide investigation by the Food Safety and Drug Administration (FDA) revealed alarming contamination levels in idlis cooked using plastic sheets. The FDA, in its latest inspection, tested 251 idli samples collected from hotels, eateries, and other food establishments across the state. Results showed that 51 samples were found unsafe for consumption due to contamination caused by plastic leaching into the food during steaming. Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, addressing the media on Thursday, termed the practice a "serious public health hazard" and announced the complete ban on using plastic in idli steaming across Karnataka.

"When plastic sheets are heated during idli preparation, they release toxic chemicals that leach into the food, posing significant health risks to consumers," the minister said. "I urge all hotels, food stalls, and restaurants to adopt safer alternatives such as stainless steel plates, muslin cloth, or banana leaves. Public health cannot be compromised for convenience."

In addition to the ban, the health department is also levying fines on food establishments linked to the contaminated samples. The minister warned that repeated violations could lead to stricter penalties, including closure notices. Experts have long warned that low-grade plastic sheets used in food preparation may contain carcinogenic substances, which can cause long-term health damage when consumed regularly. The ban comes as part of Karnataka's broader push towards safer food handling practices, especially in popular street food and traditional cuisine establishments. Authorities have also launched an awareness campaign, educating food business operators about safe food preparation techniques and the health hazards of plastic contamination.

The Health Department, along with the FDA, will continue to monitor compliance across the state to ensure the complete elimination of plastic in idli preparation.

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## Ex-MLA Among Six Haryana Congress Leaders Expelled For Anti-Party Activities

This action follows a similar disciplinary move last week, where seven other Congress leaders were expelled for anti-party conduct ahead of the crucial civic polls scheduled for next month. Those previously expelled include Tarlochan Singh and Ashok Khurana from Karnal, Pradeep Chaudhary and Madhu Chaudhary from Yamunanagar, Ram Niwas Rara from Hisar, and Gurugram leaders Harvinder and Ram Kishan Sain. The Congress leadership in Haryana has been closely monitoring party members amid increasing reports of internal dissension as leaders denied tickets have been seen either supporting rival candidates or contesting as independents.

Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also taken similar action. On Monday, the BJP expelled 58 local leaders for anti-party activities, particularly for contesting the Gurugram and Manesar civic body elections as independents. According to BJP district president Kamal Yadav, the expelled leaders included 44 from Gurugram, 13 from Manesar, and one from Patnaudi. The BJP noted that these leaders were using their past association with the party and claiming close ties with senior BJP leaders during their campaigns, misleading voters and violating party discipline. Both Congress and BJP are tightening internal discipline to ensure a unified campaign in the run-up to the local body elections.

# DK Shivakumar Responds to Criticism Over Attending Isha Foundation's Mahashivaratri Event

Shivakumar calls it a personal decision

AICC Secretary PV Mohan criticizes his participation

DKS denies any links to BJP or political shift

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru  
Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Congress President DK Shivakumar has responded strongly to criticism from within the Congress party over his participation in Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation event on Mahashivaratri. Speaking to the media on Thursday, DK Shivakumar stated, "This is my personal matter. I attended the event because I was personally invited by Sadhguru. It has nothing to do with Congress or BJP. I will not discuss my personal choices in the media." Shivakumar dismissed the criti-



cisms circulating on social media, saying, "I cannot respond to every tweet. If someone has an issue, they should speak to me directly." The controversy arose after AICC Secretary PV Mohan publicly expressed displeasure over DK Shivakumar's presence at the event. Mohan took to X (formerly Twitter), stating that Shivakumar's partici-

ipation went against the party's ideology. PV Mohan specifically pointed out that DK Shivakumar shared the stage with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai, questioning how the state Congress chief could thank leaders who consistently criticize Rahul Gandhi. In response, Shivakumar

clarified that his participation was purely personal and had no connection to politics or party ideology. He reiterated, "Rahul Gandhi is my leader. My presence at the Isha Foundation event has no political angle." Political speculation had intensified following the event, with some suggesting that Shivakumar's appearance alongside BJP leaders could signal his discontent with the Congress leadership—particularly after he was passed over for the Chief Minister's post. There were also whispers of him contemplating a switch to the BJP. Putting the rumors to rest, Shivakumar firmly stated, "There is no such issue. I remain loyal to my party." Notably, Shivakumar also referenced his participation in the Mahakumbh Mela, where he took a holy dip after consulting with AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, underlining that his spiritual activities remain separate from politics.



## Karnataka HC Directs State Govt to Respond to PIL Against Nandi Hills Ropeway Project

PIL challenges environmental impact of ropeway project  
Two acres of land transferred for upper terminal point  
Matter posted for further hearing on April 8

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday directed the state government to file a response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the proposed Nandi Hills ropeway project.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice NV Anjaria and Justice MI Arun heard the matter and scheduled it for further consideration on April 8, 2025. The PIL was filed by Universal Human Rights Services Foundation, a Bengaluru-based organization, questioning the legality and environmental implications of the ropeway project.

According to the petitioner, the state government amended provisions of the Karnataka Government Forest Preservation Act to allocate two acres of land at survey number 3 of Nandi Hills for developing the upper terminal point of the ropeway project.

The petitioner's advocate argued that Nandi Hills is classified as protected land under the Karnataka Forest Conservation Act and falls under the jurisdiction of the Horticulture De-

partment. Despite this, the Director of Horticulture was permitted to transfer two acres of land to the Tourism Department for a 30-year lease to facilitate the project. The proposed ropeway, according to the petition, is intended to enhance tourist connectivity, offering aerial views and reducing travel time to the popular hill station. However, the petitioner raised concerns that the project would irreversibly damage the delicate ecosystem of Nandi Hills, which hosts unique biodiversity, flora, and fauna that requires protection. The petition stressed that unregulated tourism infrastructure, especially in ecologically sensitive areas, poses severe risks to native species and natural habitats. The petitioner argued that the environmental consequences of the ropeway would outweigh any economic benefits generated through tourism. The Karnataka High Court took note of the arguments and directed the state government to submit a detailed response, clarifying its stance on the environmental safeguards planned for the project. The case will next be heard on April 8, 2025, when the court will further review the state government's reply and other related submissions.

## Saraswati Nagar to be tallest metro station on Blue Line

Planned commissioning by June 2026  
Roof truss installation begins; first station to reach this stage



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru's much-awaited Namma Metro Blue Line, a vital transport link connecting the city's IT corridor and airport, has reached an important construction milestone at Saraswati Nagar Metro Station. The Saraswati Nagar Metro Station, located along the Outer Ring Road (ORR), is set to become the tallest station on the entire Blue Line corridor, which spans 56 km. The Blue Line is being developed under Metro Project Phases 2A and 2B, covering two major stretches: Silk Board to KR Puram and KR Puram to Kempegowda International Airport. Currently, 30 metro stations are under construction along this corridor, but Saraswati Nagar has stood out as the first station to begin installation of roof truss materials. This update was first shared on X (formerly Twitter) by user @sunilho, highlighting the rapid progress at this station. The Saraswati Nagar Metro Station is being

developed by Sankaranarayana Constructions (SNC), one of the key contractors involved in the Blue Line project. BM-RCL (Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited) has set a target to commission the entire Blue Line, including all stations, by June 2026. The station will play a critical role in improving connectivity for local residents and commuters, particularly employees of nearby Lowry Memorial Educational Institutions and workers from major automotive companies such as Hyundai, MG Motors, Tata Motors, Renault, and Honda Motors, all of which have facilities close to the station. Once operational, the Blue Line will serve as a vital north-south link, easing travel between Silk Board, KR Puram, Mahadevapura, Whitefield, HSR Layout, and Bengaluru International Airport. The Saraswati Nagar Station is expected to become a key transportation hub, enhancing mobility and easing congestion along the Outer Ring Road.

## CESC Achieves 'A' Grade in Power Ministry Rating for 2023-24

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

The Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC) has earned an 'A' grade in the annual Integrated Rating and Ranking of Power Distribution Utilities conducted by the Power Finance Corporation of India for the financial year 2023-24, significantly improving from its 'B' grade last year. This upgrade places CESC at the 16th rank in the country, making it the highest-rated distribution company (DISCOM) in Karnataka. CESC Chairperson Ramesh Bandisiddegowda announced this at a press meet in Mysuru on Thursday, attributing the achievement to improved technical and financial performance along with strong teamwork by CESC's 7,000 employees. The chairperson specially ac-

knowledged the contributions of Managing Director G Sheela, who is set to retire on Friday, and Director (Technical) K M Munigopal Raju, for their leadership in driving this transformation. Over the past year, CESC undertook several special initiatives aimed at improving operational efficiency and reducing power losses.

Key achievements include:

- Reduction in power distribution loss to 9.38% in 2023-24, compared to 10.3% in the previous year.
- Comprehensive maintenance of 272 high-disruption 11 KV feeders, leading to a 50% reduction in power supply disruptions.
- Maintenance and overhaul of 4,642 distribution transformers, which reduced transformer fail-



ures and electricity hazards.

and address areas of inefficiency.

Rectification of 23,061 hazardous locations to improve safety and minimize accidents.

The chairperson noted that UG cabling (underground cabling) work in Mysuru has reached 40% completion, which will further enhance the reliability and safety of the city's power supply network. With these efforts, CESC has not only improved service delivery and safety but also strengthened its financial health, making it one of the best performing DISCOMs in India. CESC's leadership expressed confidence that continued focus on infrastructure upgrades and operational efficiency will further enhance its ranking in the coming years.



## Bengaluru Man Alleges Rapido Driver Tried to Stab Him Over AC Dispute

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A Bengaluru resident has alleged that a Rapido driver attempted to stab him following an argument over turning on the air conditioning during a ride. The passenger, who detailed the incident on Reddit, also claimed that the driver has been harassing him continuously through threatening phone calls and a targeted OTP bombing attack, leaving him fearful for his safety.

According to the passenger, the incident began when he requested the driver to turn on the AC, which the driver refused without any valid reason. The situation escalated when the driver forced the passenger to exit the cab and asked him to cancel the ride. The passenger refused, insisting the driver should cancel it instead. This disagreement reportedly triggered the driver's aggression, with the passenger alleging that the driver pulled out a mini-knife attached to his keychain and approached him in a threatening manner. Spotting a traffic police officer nearby, the passenger attempted to cross the road to seek help. The presence of the

police officer, along with the intervention of a passing auto driver, helped the passenger escape the scene safely. The passenger later discovered that the driver continued to harass him by repeatedly calling and sending abusive messages, leveraging the fact that the driver had access to his phone number through the Rapido platform. The harassment escalated into OTP bombing, with the passenger receiving continuous verification codes from various platforms. Although Rapido initially dismissed the complaint, they suspended the driver after the passenger presented call logs and other evidence. The company also claimed to have deleted the passenger's number from the driver's device, but the harassment persisted, raising concerns that the driver might have shared the number with others. The passenger has since approached the police, who have contacted the driver and are assisting him in filing an FIR. This incident highlights ongoing concerns regarding passenger safety, data privacy, and driver accountability on app-based ride platforms.

## Man Kills Wife, Hangs Self While Six-Year-Old Child Was at Home in Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a tragic incident in western Bengaluru, a 40-year-old autorickshaw driver allegedly murdered his 32-year-old wife before taking his own life while their six-year-old child was at home, police said on Wednesday.

The deceased were identified as Suresh V and his wife Mamata G, who worked at a garment factory. The couple lived in a rented house in Kalinagara, having recently moved there after previously residing in Bhadravathi, Shivamogga, with Suresh's parents. The incident occurred between 7 am and 11:25 am, according to police investigations. Their 13-year-old child was not at home during the incident.

The sequence of events came to light when the six-year-old boy called his maternal grandmother, Rukmini, at 11:25 am, informing her that Mamata was unresponsive and asking her to come over immediately. Rukmini, who lives nearby, reached the house to find the child standing at the window. Using her spare key, she unlocked the door and discovered Mamata lying unconscious on the diwan, with blood from her nose and scratch marks on her face. In an adjacent room, which was locked



from the inside, Suresh was found hanging from a ceiling fan. Initial findings suggest Suresh strangled Mamata, possibly using a bedsheet or pillow, before ending his own life. Rukmini told police that Suresh was currently unemployed, unable to pay rent, and frequently fought with Mamata. Despite advice from family elders, Suresh's behaviour reportedly did not improve. On February 24, Suresh's father had counselled him, but he left home that night, only to return on February 26, when the tragedy unfolded. The Byadarahalli police have registered a case under Section 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Investigations are ongoing to establish further details surrounding the domestic dispute that led to the murder-suicide.

## Three of Bengaluru's Top Five Road Crash Blackspots in Northern Division: Report

- 91% of 2023 fatalities involved pedestrians, motorcyclists, and cyclists
- North Bengaluru accounts for over one-third of all fatalities
- 2023 saw the highest road fatalities since 2007

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A comprehensive analysis of road safety in Bengaluru has revealed that three of the top five blackspots for road crashes are located in the city's northern part, under the jurisdiction of Bengaluru Traffic Police's (BTP) North Division. This division alone accounted for over one-third of all road fatalities recorded in 2023. This data was highlighted in the BTP 2023 Road Safety Report, which was unveiled during a symposium titled Strengthening Road Safety in Karnataka, held at the NIMHANS Convention Centre on Thursday. The symposium was jointly organized by Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit (JH-IIRU), NIMHANS, and Vital Strategies, as part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS). The report, now available on the Bengaluru Traffic Police website, offers several concerning insights. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, and cyclists were the most vulnerable, accounting for 91% of the 921 road fatalities in Bengaluru in 2023. The year 2023 also saw 894 fatal crashes — the highest fatality count since



2007. Bengaluru Traffic Police identified 43 blackspots and 24 high-risk corridors where a majority of these accidents occurred. Despite the data being from last year, several safety recommendations from the report remain highly relevant. Authorities have been urged to focus on improving road engineering and infrastructure, particularly to enhance the safety of pedestrians and two-wheeler riders. Strengthening enforcement of speed limits, helmet compliance, seatbelt usage, and stricter action against drunk driving were also stressed. Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) M N Anucheth said BTP is closely coordinating with BBMP and NHAI to enhance corridor-level safety, especially for vulnerable road users such as motorcyclists.

**Key Findings from the Report:**

- Over 90% of fatalities were in the working-age group (20-60 years)
- 28% of victims were aged between 20-29 years

31% of vehicles exceeded speed limits

- In areas outside Bengaluru city, only 11% of motorcyclists wore helmets correctly

- 73% of surveyed drivers admitted they felt comfortable exceeding speed limits, and 58% felt safe doing so

- Only 21% of drivers knew the city's designated speed limits

Top Five Blackspots in Bengaluru (2023):

- Veerasandra Bus Stop – 14 fatalities
- Byatarayanapura Junction – 11 fatalities
- Summanahalli Junction – 11 fatalities
- Sadahalli Gate – 10 fatalities
- Yelahanka Air Force Station Bus Stop – 8 fatalities

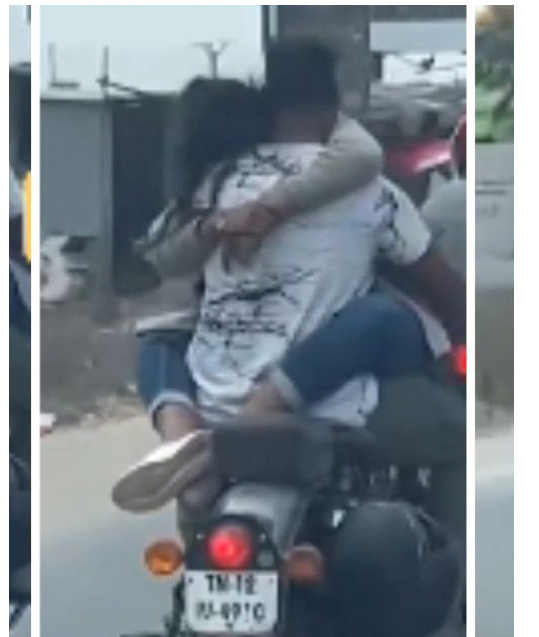
The findings have raised concerns about speeding, helmet compliance, and infrastructure gaps, especially in North Bengaluru's rapidly growing zones. Traffic authorities have pledged to intensify monitoring and awareness drives to reduce fatalities and improve overall road safety.

## Bengaluru Woman Perched On Bike's Fuel Tank Sparks Outrage

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A video capturing a young couple engaging in an unsafe and attention-grabbing stunt on Bengaluru's Sarjapur Main Road has gone viral, triggering widespread outrage over road safety violations. The clip shows a helmetless man riding a bike with a Tamil Nadu registration plate (TN12W4910), while a woman sits dangerously perched on the fuel tank, facing the rider and hugging him. Instead of sitting in a proper, safe position, the woman's posture posed a risk to both herself and other road users. The footage, which quickly spread across social media platforms, has drawn sharp criticism from citizens and road safety advocates. Many have tagged the city's traffic police, urging them to identify the couple and take strict action for

violating traffic rules and endangering lives on a busy road. Several social media users condemned the act, with some calling it "shameless" and others sarcastically commenting on the man's choice to replace his rearview mirror with a "human substitute." At the same time, a few voices urged caution before rushing to judgment, suggesting there could be personal reasons for the couple's behaviour. Despite ongoing awareness campaigns and warnings from traffic authorities, incidents of reckless stunts and public displays of affection on moving vehicles continue to surface, raising serious concerns about public safety and responsible road behaviour. Authorities are expected to trace the vehicle's owner and initiate appropriate legal action.



## KSRTC Driver's Quick Thinking Averts Major Mishap After Steering Rod Detaches

TPN Correspondent | Charmadi Ghat

A potential tragedy was narrowly averted at Charmadi Ghat on Thursday, thanks to the alertness and driving skills of a KSRTC bus driver. The incident occurred when a KSRTC bus traveling from Dharmasthala to Shivamogga suffered a critical mechanical failure — the steering rod detached mid-journey. The bus was carrying 63 passengers, all of whom were returning after participating in Shivaratri celebrations. The sudden failure created panic inside the bus, especially as the vehicle was navigating the narrow and treacherous Charmadi Ghat road. According to police sources who spoke to the passengers, the driver's quick thinking and composure prevented disaster. Despite the loss of steering control, the driver skillfully managed to halt the vehicle and safely maneuver it to the side of the road, avoiding a potentially fatal plunge into the gorge. Following the incident, KSRTC arranged for another bus to transport the passengers safely to Shivamogga. This near-miss serves as a stark reminder of the importance of vehicle maintenance and the critical role played by experienced drivers, especially on challenging ghat sections.



## Man Arrested for Making Vulgar Signs at Woman Driver Near Gopalan Mall



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Chamarajpet police in Bengaluru have arrested a 43-year-old man, identified as Harsha HB from Vijayanagar, for allegedly making vulgar signs at a woman driver near Gopalan Mall on Mysore-Bangalore Road. The incident took place on Wednesday around 4 pm. The victim, Akshatha Ravikumar, a national media panelist from the Indian Youth Congress, brought the incident to light by posting a video on X (formerly Twitter). In the video, Harsha is seen flipping her off before driving past her vehicle. Akshatha's post highlighted the harassment faced by women drivers in Bengaluru. "Women drivers in Bangalore face a lot of issues. After abusing me, he broke traffic rules, made an illegal U-turn, and ignored a red signal. This happened at 4 pm near Gopalan Mall on 26/02/2025. Should we just listen to this and neglect it?" she wrote. According to police sources, preliminary investigations revealed

that Akshatha was driving while on her phone and overtook Harsha's car. This led to a brief verbal exchange, following which Harsha allegedly made the vulgar hand gesture. Harsha was traveling with his family at the time of the incident. Based on Akshatha's social media post and video evidence, the Chamarajpet police filed an FIR under Section 79 (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The police arrested Harsha, but he was released on station bail shortly after. A senior police officer stated that the incident appeared to stem from a misunderstanding between both parties, but legal action was taken as the FIR was formally registered. The police reiterated the importance of reporting such incidents and assured that harassment complaints from women will be treated seriously, encouraging citizens to use available helplines and legal channels to ensure their safety on the roads.

# Shivakumar Could Split Congress Party in Karnataka, Says Leader of Opposition

Leader of Opposition R. Ashoka hints at possible split in Congress led by D.K. Shivakumar

BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra predicts rapid political developments in Karnataka

Ashoka declares November 16 as "auspicious date" for leadership change in Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a significant political development, Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Legislative Assembly R. Ashoka stated that Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar could potentially lead a split in the Congress party, similar to Eknath Shinde's revolt in Maharashtra, and align with the BJP to form a new government in the state. Speaking at a press conference in Bengaluru Urban District on Thursday, Ashoka said that internal conflicts within the Congress are escalating, with D.K. Shivakumar increasingly frustrated by the obstruction caused by some Congress leaders. Referring to them as "black cats," Ashoka said these leaders are creating hurdles in Shivakumar's ambition to become the Chief Minister. In a separate statement, State BJP President B.Y. Vijayendra predicted significant political developments in Karnataka in the coming days, citing infighting within Congress as a clear indication. Vijayendra said the internal struggles



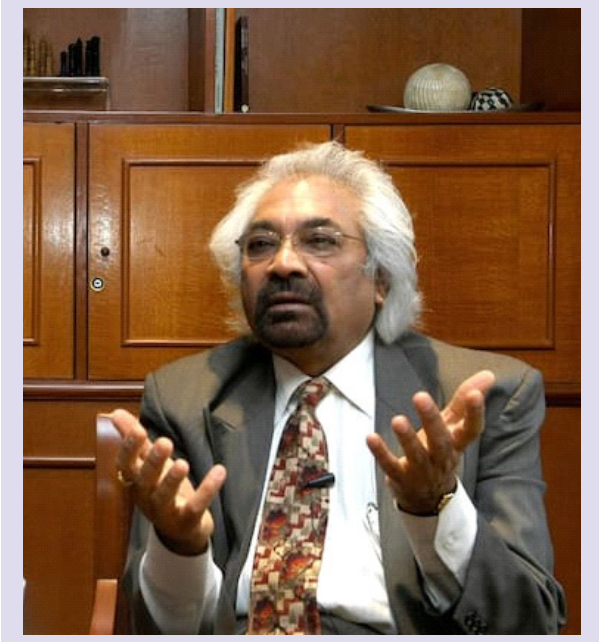
point to major realignments in the state's political landscape. Ashoka also claimed that he had already predicted the date for a leadership change in Karnataka. According to him, November 16, 2025, is the auspicious date when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will step down, making way for D.K. Shivakumar to ascend to the top post.

Further fueling speculation, Ashoka revealed that Shivakumar recently visited the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj, where he reportedly had a private meeting with Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi. Following this, Shivakumar also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the Isha Foundation in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Ashoka said it is now up to the Congress leadership to decide whether to initiate disciplinary action against Shivakumar for engaging with BJP leaders.

Despite these explosive claims, Ashoka maintained that the BJP has no direct involvement in the ongoing internal conflicts within the Congress party, but warned that the state could soon witness a dramatic political shift.



## Centre Exposes Sam Pitroda's False Claim About 'IIT Ranchi' Lecture Disruption

TPN Correspondent | Ranchi

The Central Government has fact-checked and refuted a controversial claim made by veteran Congress leader Sam Pitroda, who alleged that his lecture at 'IIT Ranchi' was disrupted by hackers displaying adult content. The Ministry of Education, in a strongly worded clarification on Wednesday, confirmed that there is no IIT in Ranchi, exposing Pitroda's statement as false and misleading. The Education Ministry clarified that Ranchi is home to an Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) — not an IIT — and further confirmed that no such lecture involving Pitroda took place at IIIT Ranchi, either in-person or virtually. The Ministry categorically dismissed the hacking claim as baseless and accused Pitroda of spreading reckless misinformation aimed at tarnishing the image of reputed institutions.

The Ministry stressed, "Institutions like IITs and IIITs stand for merit, hard work, and excellence. They should not be subjected to uninformed and irresponsible statements." It further warned that any attempt to defame premier institutions will invite legal consequences.

**Pitroda's Controversial Remarks**

The controversy began after Pitroda's remarks surfaced in a podcast shared on his official X (formerly Twitter) account on February 22. During a discussion on the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi in modern times, Pitroda claimed:

"Recently, I was speaking at Ranchi IIT to several hundred students, and someone hacked in and started showing pornography. Is that democracy? Is that fair? Institutional independence is at the core of democracy."

**BJP Demands Apology and Action**

Reacting sharply, BJP spokesperson CR Kesavan condemned Pitroda's remarks, calling them fabricated, deplorable, and part of a deliberate attempt to defame reputed institutions like IIT. "This is not just a slip of the tongue — Pitroda has repeatedly made such irresponsible comments. He should apologise to the IIT community and the youth. Congress must clarify its stand and, if it disagrees with Pitroda, remove him from his post immediately," Kesavan said.

The BJP also criticised the Congress party, accusing it of trying to distance itself from Pitroda's controversial statements without taking any real action.

The Ministry's strong rebuttal and BJP's demand for disciplinary action have further escalated the political confrontation between the BJP and Congress ahead of upcoming elections.

## KARNATAKA LABOUR MINISTRY CLEARS INFOSYS OF LABOUR LAW VIOLATIONS

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

No violations found in Infosys layoffs process. The Karnataka Labour Ministry's interim report has found no evidence of labour law violations in Infosys' recent layoffs at the Mysuru campus, according to official sources. The findings follow an on-site inspection conducted after complaints by the Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES).

Infosys clarified hiring process and fresher terminations. Labour officials visited the Mysuru campus to review hiring documents, internal assessment records, and termination processes. Infosys explained that only freshers who failed internal training assessments were let go, and all conditions were clearly communicated in advance through employment contracts.

NITES raised concerns over forced terminations. NITES had alleged that Infosys abruptly terminated over 700 freshers after delaying their joining for two years, then escorted them off campus using security personnel and bouncers without prior notice or compensation. The union also claimed that freshers were forced to sign confidentiality agreements, preventing them from speaking publicly about their termination. Infosys cited internal assessment failures. Infosys, in its defence, maintained that all terminations were performance-based and aligned with agreed contractual terms. The company emphasized that clearing internal assessments was a mandatory part of



its onboarding process, and only those who failed were asked to leave.

Labour Ministry finds Infosys in compliance. Following its inspection, the Labour Ministry found that Infosys had acted within legal parameters, with no violations identified during the inquiry. However, the final report, which may incorporate additional employee testimonies, will be submitted by March 5, 2025.

NITES demands stricter regulations for fresher terminations. Despite the Ministry's interim findings, NITES has urged stricter oversight of IT industry hiring and onboarding policies to prevent abrupt mass terminations in the future.

Government to monitor IT sector practices. The Labour Ministry assured that it would continue monitoring employment practices in the IT sector to ensure fair treatment of employees and compliance with labour laws.

## Recounting Of Legislative Council Election Votes To Be Held On Feb 28th

TPN Correspondent | Chikkamagaluru

The recounting of votes cast in the election for members of the Legislative Council from local bodies will be conducted on February 28, following orders from the Supreme Court. The original election took place on December 10, 2021, with counting held on December 14, 2021. Among the total 2,410 votes cast, 39 were declared void. Out of the remaining 2,371 valid votes, BJP candidate M K Pranesh secured 1,188 votes, while Congress candidate Gayathri Shantegowda received 1,182 votes. Based on this count, the Returning Officer declared M K Pranesh the winner with a narrow margin of six votes. However, Congress candidate Gayathri Shantegowda contested the result, alleging that 12 nominated members from Sringeri, Koppa, Narasimharajapura, and Mudigere town panchayats had also voted, despite having no voting rights in the election. She argued that these votes should have been excluded from the counting process and approached the court for redressal. The Supreme Court directed the authorities to conduct a fresh recount, excluding the votes of the 12 nominated members, and to submit the outcome in a sealed envelope to the court. Following these directions, the district adminis-



tration has made the necessary arrangements for the recounting process. Ujjwal Kumar, an IAS officer, has been appointed as the Observer by the Election Commission. The district administration has clarified that the recounting results will not be publicly declared but will be directly submitted to both the Supreme Court and the High Court in sealed envelopes. The recounting will take place at IDSG College, with prohibitory orders imposed within a 200-meter radius of the venue from 6 am to 12 noon. The process will begin at 8 am, and counting will be conducted at three tables under the supervision of two Assistant Commissioners, assisted by two Tahsildars. Candidates have been informed, and each candidate will be allowed to appoint an election agent and a counting agent. Identity cards have been issued to all agents, and the entire process will be recorded using three video cameras, the Deputy Commissioner Meena Nagaraj confirmed.

## Last Meeting Of Mangaluru City Corporation's Current Term Ends On A Bittersweet Note

TPN Correspondent | Mangaluru

The final general meeting of the current five-year term of Mangaluru City Corporation (MCC) ended on a bittersweet note on Thursday at the Mangala Auditorium, with political clashes overshadowing the first half of the proceedings. Opposition leader Anil Kumar launched a scathing attack on the BJP-ruled council, declaring the five-year term a complete failure. BJP member Shakila Kava strongly objected, accusing the opposition of politicizing the occasion. Anil Kumar also alleged that the underground drainage (UGD) works undertaken with Rs 300 crore had not yielded desired results. He criticized the much-publi-

cized Jalasiri 24x7 water supply project, implemented at a cost of Rs 797 crore, for only being operational in a single MCC ward. He also blamed SUEZ, the company awarded the contract, for failing to deliver the project as promised. The exchange led to loud arguments between the ruling and opposition members, ultimately forcing the Mayor to adjourn the meeting temporarily. Once the session resumed, tensions remained high as opposition members insisted on completing their remarks, while ruling party members demanded that the Mayor speak first. BJP councillors accused the opposition of deliberately creating confusion to stall the meeting, and in turn, questioned the Congress party's

achievements during its previous term in MCC. Opposition councillor Pravinchandra Alva joined the criticism, alleging that no houses had been allocated to the poor under BJP rule and calling the Smart City projects a failure. He also demanded clarity on the status of the Netravati riverfront project, which was announced but never progressed. Following the lunch break, the Mayor expressed gratitude to the public, council members, and officials for their cooperation during his four-month tenure as Mayor and the BJP's five-year governance. Members from both sides eventually set aside differences to thank each other and the citizens of Mangaluru for their support throughout the term.



# Farmers in Karnataka condemn Centre's decision to extend term of Mahadayi tribunal

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

Farmers' associations have strongly criticized the Union Government's decision to extend the term of the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) by another six months, calling it unnecessary and an unjustifiable delay. Vijay Kulkarni, leader of the Kalasa Bandori agitation committee, voiced frustration over the ongoing delay, emphasizing that the tribunal was established 15 years ago, and the people of northern Karnataka have been waiting for a resolution for far too long. He urged the central government to push for a swift final decision from the tribunal and its immediate implementation. Sidagouda Modagi, leader of Krishik Samaj, highlighted the concerns of farmers in Belagavi, particularly regarding the Karnataka government's decision to supply Ghataprabha river water to the Dharwad industrial area from the Hidkal dam. He expressed hope that the Mahadayi issue would soon be resolved, allowing Hubballi-Dharwad and neighboring regions to become self-sufficient in water without depending on Belagavi. Prakash Naik of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha expressed the frustration of northern Karnataka farmers who have waited too long for their share of Mahadayi water. He stressed the need for the state government to expedite work on the Kalasa and Bandori Nala projects, which would



help resolve the water shortage once the Centre approves the plans. Naik urged the BJP, which is in power at the Centre, Goa, and Maharashtra, to work collaboratively with the Karnataka government to resolve the dispute. In response to the prolonged issue, the central committee of Kannada organizations has appealed to the Karnataka government to appoint a senior minister specifically tasked with handling inter-state disputes related to land and rivers. Ashok Chandaragi, convenor of the committee, suggested the reappointment of H. K. Patil, who served as the minister

responsible for such issues during the first Siddaramaiah government, and who had coordinated efforts to address border and river disputes. The Mahadayi Tribunal, which was set up in 2010 to resolve the inter-state water dispute between Goa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, has seen its term extended multiple times. The recent extension, announced on February 25, is due to objections raised by all three states regarding earlier tribunal awards. This marks the fifth time the tribunal's term has been extended to submit an additional report.

## Widespread Rainfall Expected in Tamil Nadu from February 27 to March 3

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Chennai has forecast fairly widespread rainfall over coastal Tamil Nadu starting from Thursday, February 27, 2025. The rainfall is expected to move toward south Tamil Nadu by March 1, with heavy rainfall predicted in one or two locations across 10 districts on Friday. The prevailing moist northeasterly winds are expected to influence the wet spell until March 3. On Thursday, rainfall was recorded in a few places in south Tamil Nadu, with Cheranmahadevi in Tirunelveli district receiving the heaviest rainfall of 3 cm in the last 24 hours, as of 8.30 a.m. Despite the rain in the south, dry weather prevailed in the northern parts of the state. The weather in northern Tamil Nadu is expected to change from March 1, with scattered rainfall anticipated over the region, including Puducherry and Karaikal. The expected rainfall will lead to a decrease in day temperatures across Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Karaikal from February



28 to March 3. On February 28, there are chances of isolated heavy rainfall in 10 districts, including Thoothukudi, Pudukottai, Ramanathapuram, and Madurai. From March 1, the focus will shift to south Tamil Nadu, where six districts—Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tenkasi, Kanniyakumari, Ramanathapuram, and Virudhunagar—are expected to receive isolated rainfall on Saturday. In Chennai, light rainfall is expected in some areas on Thursday, with the intensity increasing slightly on Friday. The maximum temperature is expected to remain around 33°C on February 28. The rainfall is forecast to gradually decrease from March 2, and dry weather is expected to return across Tamil Nadu from March 4, ending the wet spell.



## NWKRTC Resumes Bus services between Karnataka and Maharashtra resume slowly

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

The North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) resumed bus services on several routes to Maharashtra on Wednesday. Operations on approximately 50 routes, including those from Belagavi and Chikkodi depots, restarted, with full service expected to resume by Thursday, according to officials. The suspension of services followed a series of attacks on buses traveling between Maharashtra and Karnataka. Shiv Sena (UBT) activists in Maharashtra defaced buses in Kolhapur and Solapur, while MSRTC buses were targeted in Ilkal and Ramdurg last week. The tensions were triggered by an incident involving an NWKRTC conductor, allegedly attacked over a language dispute. In response, buses from both states were initially restricted to border points, where passengers had to transfer to other buses on foot for the continuation of their journeys. A crucial step toward resuming services came after a coordination meeting on Tuesday between senior officers from the border districts of both states. Belagavi Deputy Com-

missioner Mohammad Roshan and Superintendent of Police Bheemashankar S. Guled met with their counterparts from Kolhapur, Solapur, and Sangli districts in Maharashtra to discuss safety measures for buses and staff. They also addressed bus scheduling and agreed on a set of guidelines to facilitate smooth bus operations across the border. Prior to the meeting, NWKRTC Managing Director Priyanga M. met Chetan Singh Rathore, IGP (Northern Range), to urge stronger action against those responsible for the 63 reported incidents of assault on NWKRTC staff. In her letter, Priyanga emphasized that minor scuffles had escalated into violent conflicts in many cases and that proper investigations were necessary, particularly where offenders had been let off after local police filed 'B' reports. Meanwhile, NWKRTC conductor Mahadev Hukkeri, who had been injured in the assault, has now recovered and been discharged from the hospital. He has been advised to take rest at home. NWKRTC officials estimated a financial loss of around ₹40 lakh due to the four-day suspension of services.

## Karnataka Bans Use of Plastic Sheets in Idli Preparation Over Health Concerns

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka's health department has officially banned the use of plastic sheets in the preparation of idlis in hotels, eateries, and food establishments across the state. This decision comes after the state's Food Safety and Drug Administration (FDA) found that 51 out of 251 idli samples tested were contaminated due to the use of plastic sheets. The FDA's investigation revealed that plastic sheets, commonly used as a substitute for cloth in idli preparation, resulted in contamination, posing serious health risks. State Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao emphasized the gravity of the situation, calling plastic use



in food preparation a "serious public health hazard." He announced that the practice of using plastic sheets to make idlis has been strictly banned. Minister Rao explained that

toxic chemicals from plastic can leach into food when used in cooking idlis, leading to increased health risks for consumers. He urged all hotels and food establishments to cease this practice immediately and adopt safer al-

ternatives, such as stainless steel plates or banana leaves. The move comes as part of the state's broader efforts to ensure food safety and protect public health. Minister Rao took to social media to stress the importance of adhering to the new guidelines, stating, "Public health cannot be compromised." This ban is expected to have significant implications for food establishments across Karnataka, especially those that have relied on plastic sheets as a cost-effective option in idli preparation. The health department's action underscores the growing concern about the use of plastics in food preparation and its potential impact on consumers' well-being.

## Steps initiated in Belagavi to contain bird flu following outbreak in Latur

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

In response to the recent outbreak of H5N1 Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) in neighbouring Maharashtra's Udayagiri region, the Belagavi district administration has launched extensive measures to prevent the spread of the disease. The administration is screening samples from individual and company farms, as well as setting up check posts at the inter-state border with Maharashtra and Goa. Belagavi, home to 26.40 lakh broilers as per the 20th livestock census, has proactively positioned seven check posts on the Maharashtra and Goa borders. These check posts are strategically located at Kottalagi, Kagwada, Koganoli, Sankeshwar, Hindalaga, Examba, and Kanakumbi. These locations are under the supervision of officials from the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Departments, with round-the-clock operations in three shifts. The aim is to inspect chicken, eggs, chicken meat, and chicken by-products coming from both Maharashtra and Goa. The district has also focused on monitoring migratory and local birds around riverside villages and water bodies. If any birds are found dead under unusual circumstances, their bodies are sent to the southern regional disease diagnostic laboratory in Bengaluru for testing. To prevent the spread of the disease, authorities are regularly collecting swab samples across the district, with 363



serum, cloacal, and tracheal samples, along with 138 environmental samples, already submitted for analysis. A comprehensive response plan has been put into action, which includes appointing a Nodal Officer and a Technical Assistant for the district's avian influenza control program. Additionally, 15 Veterinary Officers have been assigned as Nodal Officers, and a Rapid Action Team (RAT) has been established in each taluk for field operations. These teams will consist of a qualified veterinary officer, support staff, and assistants. Workshops have been organized to educate poultry farmers and entrepreneurs about prevention measures, and the district is ready with supplies such as disinfectants, PPE kits, fogging ma-

chines, and other equipment necessary to control and dispose of infected poultry. District authorities, including Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Roshan, have assured the public that all precautionary steps are in place. There have been no reports of avian influenza in the district so far, but measures are in place to prevent the disease's transmission from birds to humans. People have been advised to safely cook eggs and chicken at temperatures above 70°C, and to contact veterinarians if abnormal bird deaths are observed. The district continues to coordinate with various departments, including Animal Husbandry, Health and Family Welfare, and Forest Departments, to ensure the effective containment of H5N1 and protect public health.



# Kumbh Mela: A Rebirth of Hindu Identity and Independence

A new beginning after ending 1200 years of foreign rule and 60 years congress rule.

The Kumbh Mela is seen as a spiritual and cultural assertion of Hindu identity.

Over 60 crore Hindus participated, reaffirming their commitment to Sanatana Dharma.

The gathering signifies the end of centuries of foreign rule and ideological oppression.

Calls for unity to protect and promote Hindu heritage have gained momentum.

Many view it as a revival after decades of political and historical neglect.



Dr. Buragadda Srinadh

The Kumbh Mela, one of the world's largest religious congregations, has evolved beyond a spiritual gathering to symbolize a larger cultural resurgence for Hindus. With over 60 crore devotees taking a dip in the sacred rivers, the event is being hailed as a reaffirmation of Hindu heritage and identity. For many, this year's Kumbh represents a new beginning—an assertion of self-respect and a break from centuries of oppression under foreign rule and decades of political neglect. For over 1,200 years, Bharat faced in-

vasions from external forces, most notably the Mughals, whose rule led to the large-scale destruction of Hindu temples and cultural sites. Millions of Hindus perished while resisting religious conversions and the imposition of foreign ideologies. This was followed by British colonial rule, which systematically exploited the subcontinent's resources, leaving behind an impoverished and culturally fragmented society. Post-independence, the Congress government's six-decade rule is seen by many as a continuation of

this neglect. Critics argue that successive administrations fabricated historical narratives, glorified invaders, and diminished Hindu contributions to the nation. Streets and institutions in Delhi and other parts of India were named after Mughal rulers, while indigenous Hindu heritage was overlooked. This perceived marginalization of Hindus reached its peak under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, further alienating large sections of society. Against this backdrop, the Kumbh Mela has emerged as a pow-

erful symbol of Hindu resurgence. It is not just a religious gathering but a call to unity, urging Hindus to stand together in defense of their Sanatana Dharma. The event serves as a reminder of the resilience and survival of Hindu traditions despite historical adversities. This year's Kumbh has also given rise to discussions about reclaiming Hindu history and ensuring future generations are aware of their rich cultural past. Many Hindu leaders and scholars have emphasized the need for an accurate representation of history, free

from political distortions. There is also a growing sentiment that Hindus must take an active role in protecting their temples, traditions, and cultural heritage. As millions of devotees converge at the Kumbh Mela, the event signifies more than a religious observance—it is a rallying cry for the preservation and celebration of Hindu identity. The gathering has rekindled the spirit of unity among Hindus, reinforcing their commitment to ensuring that their traditions and values remain strong for generations to come.

## The Rise of the Far Right in Germany: A New Political Landscape

The 2025 German federal election has resulted in a major shift in Europe's political dynamics. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) emerged as the strongest party with 28.5% of the vote, while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) made significant gains, securing 20.8%, nearly doubling its previous vote share. This outcome highlights deepening regional, generational, and ideological divides within Germany: while West Germany largely supported the CDU, the East strongly backed the AfD. This stark division poses significant questions about Germany's future direction, particularly in terms of security, economic policy, and its role in the European Union. This election comes at a pivotal moment for Germany, as it faces crucial geopolitical challenges. The ongoing Ukraine war, economic strain, and security concerns are reshaping Germany's foreign policy and its relations with the United States and NATO. As the war strains Germany's economy, debates over the future of NATO and European defense autonomy have intensified. CDU leader Friedrich Merz, who is expected to become the next chancellor, will play a pivotal role in shaping Germany's stance on Ukraine, European security, and transatlantic relations. These issues are set to dominate the upcoming coalition negotiations.

### A Grand Coalition and the Challenges Ahead

The election results reflect a generational realignment in



German politics. While the CDU retained significant support among older voters (particularly those above 60), it struggled to connect with younger voters, who flocked to the AfD. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) also saw a decline, with younger left-wing voters shifting to Die Linke and the newly formed Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW). Meanwhile, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) failed to meet the electoral threshold, signaling a shift away from economic centrism. With mainstream parties firmly rejecting cooperation with the AfD, a CDU-SPD "grand coalition" is the most likely outcome. Merz has set an Easter deadline to finalize the coalition agreement, emphasizing economic stability, European integration, and security concerns. The new Bundestag will begin its term on March 25, and Merz aims to prioritize economic reforms, such as corporate tax reductions and incentives for skilled labor migration to address Germany's labor shortages. This coalition will face three major challenges: economic recovery, defense, and the ongoing Ukraine crisis. The German economy is grappling with inflation, energy dependency,

and global supply chain disruptions, and the CDU's pro-business stance suggests a push for corporate tax reforms and deregulation. Additionally, Merz has pledged to work towards greater European defense autonomy, signaling a shift in Germany's foreign policy to reduce reliance on the U.S. while maintaining support for Ukraine.

### Geopolitical Maneuvering and AfD's Rise

AfD's surge in eastern Germany reflects widespread dissatisfaction with economic stagnation, migration policies, and political elites. The party's rise highlights a growing disconnect between the electorate and mainstream political parties. As the largest opposition party, AfD is likely to push for more stringent immigration controls and challenge EU directives. This shift poses a dilemma for the CDU and SPD. Ignoring the economic frustrations and cultural tensions driving AfD's popularity could further alienate voters, while engaging with AfD's rhetoric risks legitimizing its far-right positions. The coalition government will need to address these issues without fueling populist extremism.

## Can India-EU trade ties withstand global geopolitical fragmentation?



Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, is leading a high-profile visit to India accompanied by the College of Commissioners, marking an unprecedented diplomatic initiative. The delegation includes key European figures such as Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas, five executive vice-presidents, and 20 commissioners, each representing the EU's member states. During the visit, von der Leyen and her team are set to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other officials to discuss enhancing EU-India relations in trade, technology, energy transition, and more. The visit takes place amidst a critical phase in global geopolitics, where both India and the EU are grappling with the complexities of a fragmented world order. The India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) will con-

vene as part of this engagement. Historically, the EU has played a pivotal role in India's trade and investment landscape, with bilateral trade in goods and services reaching nearly \$200 billion in 2021, maintaining a balanced trade flow for years. Furthermore, India has attracted around \$120 billion in EU investments, marking the EU as a major partner in India's modernization journey. India's recent willingness to engage in trade deals, after years of caution, has led to agreements with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and ongoing negotiations with the UK. Despite challenges posed by EU's global trade agreements and India's concerns about certain aspects of EU regulations, both sides are determined to continue talks on trade and investment. The geopolitical landscape,

marked by the ongoing Ukraine conflict and growing tensions between the US and Russia, has presented new opportunities for India and the EU to strengthen ties. While India's stance on the Ukraine crisis has differed from the EU's, both parties have found common ground in areas like the Indo-Pacific region, where cooperation through initiatives like the TTC and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) are gaining momentum. Energy transition, a major challenge for Europe, offers another area for collaboration. Although India remains cautious about the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), both regions face the urgent need for climate action and can work together on initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and technology transfers to the Global South.



## Maha Kumbh was like a nation breathing with a new consciousness: PM Modi

- Calls Maha Kumbh a symbol of unity
- Urges India to move forward with confidence
- Links event to nation's transformation and vision of 'Viksit Bharat'

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday compared the conclusion of the Maha Kumbh Mela to the newly awakened consciousness of India, symbolizing a nation that has shaken off the chains of a "slavery mindset" and is now breathing freely. In a blog post published a day after the mega religious event concluded, Modi referred to the gathering as a "mahayagna" of unity and emphasized the importance of moving forward with the same sense of self-confidence and unity.

"The Maha Kumbh has concluded. The 'mahayagna' of unity has concluded," the Prime Minister wrote.

He further reflected on the immense significance of the gathering, noting how it had served as a powerful symbol of spiritual and cultural unity. The event, which attracted millions of devotees, was a demonstration of India's diverse yet unified spirit.

Modi stressed that the nation now needs to move forward with the same collective energy to achieve the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India). He expressed his belief that India's future lies in this awakened consciousness, where every citizen takes part in the collective journey toward progress and prosperity. According to the Prime Minister, the Maha Kumbh was not just a religious event but a metaphor for the

country's transformation, from a history of subjugation to an era of empowerment and growth.

The Prime Minister's message resonates with his vision for a self-reliant, prosperous India, where unity, self-confidence, and collective effort are at the heart of the nation's development. As the country continues its journey toward becoming a developed nation, Modi called for every individual to contribute toward building a stronger and more united India. The Prime Minister concluded his post by emphasizing the importance of keeping the spirit of unity and empowerment alive, as the nation works towards achieving its goals.

## Prashant Kishor Says Actor Vijay Is "New Hope" For Tamil Nadu

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Jan Suraaj Party Chief Prashant Kishor has strongly endorsed Tamila Vetti Kazhagam (TVK) and its leader, Vijay, as a promising force for change in Tamil Nadu politics ahead of the 2026 Assembly Elections. Speaking at TVK's one-year celebration on Wednesday, Kishor, who serves as an advisor to Vijay, described the TVK Chief as a "new hope" for millions seeking a change in the state's political landscape.

Kishor emphasized that Vijay does not require assistance with political strategy. He stated, "I announced four years ago that I wouldn't work with any party or leader, but Vijay is not just a political leader for me. He is the new hope for Tamil Nadu. TVK is a movement of millions who want to see a new political order in the state, and Vijay represents that change."

Additionally, Kishor took aim at the ruling DMK, accusing its governance model of fostering corruption, dynasty politics, and communalism. His remarks were a clear critique of the current political establishment in Tamil Nadu.



Meanwhile, TVK Chief Vijay weighed in on the controversy surrounding the Centre's three-language policy. He criticized the state and central governments, likening their dispute to a petty fight among Kindergarten students. "Funds for education have been stopped by the state government. This is like an LKG-UKG fight. Their responsibility is to give, and the state's responsibility is to get its rights," Vijay remarked, adding that the ongoing political drama between the BJP and DMK was a distraction from critical issues.

Vijay also outlined his vision for TVK,

emphasizing that the party was focused on empowering the poor and marginalized. "Our party is for the simple people, not for landlords. Those in power today are becoming the new landlords, and our first job is to remove them from politics. We aim to focus on people's welfare and national well-being," he said, stressing the importance of strengthening the party's organizational structure.

The support from Prashant Kishor and Vijay's growing political platform signals a shift in Tamil Nadu's political dynamics as the 2026 elections approach.

## UP, Bihar were never 'Hindi heartlands: CM Stalin lists languages 'swallowed by Hindi'

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin sharply criticized the push for a monolithic Hindi identity, claiming it has led to the erosion of ancient mother tongues in India. In a post shared on social media, Mr. Stalin highlighted how many regional languages, which once coexisted with Hindi, are now "gasping for survival." Mr. Stalin pointed out languages such as Bhojpuri, Maithili, Awadhi,



Braj, Bundeli, Garhwali, Kumaoni, Magahi, Marwari, Malvi, Chhattisgarhi, Santhali, and many others

that were once widely spoken but are now endangered. He called upon the people of other states to understand the consequences of this push and questioned if they were aware of the languages lost due to Hindi's dominance.

The Chief Minister further contended that the real languages of states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were being relegated to history, claiming these regions were never "just Hindi heartlands."



## EU Chief Ursula Arrives in India for Two-Day Visit: Strengthening EU-India Ties

TPN Correspondent | Kolkata

European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen arrived in India on Thursday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, defence, and clean energy. Accompanied by the European Union (EU) College of Commissioners, which consists of senior ministers from the 27 EU member states, von der Leyen's visit comes at a time of global concerns regarding US President Donald Trump's economic policies.

During her visit, von der Leyen will engage in talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on various sectors, with a particular focus on the India-EU free trade agreement. The visit is also expected to lay the groundwork for a new strategic partnership roadmap, which will be formally unveiled during the India-EU Summit scheduled to take place later this year in New Delhi.

Upon arriving in New Delhi, von der Leyen took to social media to express her commitment to the visit, stating, "Touchdown in Delhi with my team of Commissioners." She further emphasized, "In an era of conflicts and intense competition, you need trusted friends. For Europe, India is such a friend and a strategic ally."

The primary objective of von der Leyen's visit is to expand economic cooperation between India and the EU, especially in trade and investment, as well as to address issues such as tariffs and defence collaboration. However, both sides are not expected to reach a final agreement during this visit, with EU officials noting that the long-running negotiations, which began in 2007, will continue for some time.

One of the key areas of discussion will be India's tariffs on cars, wine, and agricultural products, with the EU pressing for reductions. The two sides will also explore opportunities to expand defence equipment exports from the EU to India.

Amid concerns over the return of Donald Trump to the White House, European nations, including the EU, have expressed unease over his policies of reciprocal tariffs. The 27-member EU bloc is keen on boosting trade with India, with both parties optimistic that the proposed free trade pact will enhance economic engagement.

On Thursday, von der Leyen met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and on Friday, she will hold a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Modi, followed by a joint press statement.

## Bihar Cabinet expansion: Nitish allocates portfolios to 7 newly-inducted BJP MLAs

TPN Correspondent | Bihar

Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government announced the updated portfolios for its Cabinet ministers following a major reshuffle. The changes came just a day after the state expanded its council of ministers, including seven newly inducted BJP MLAs. This strategic move is seen as an effort to strengthen the government's position ahead of the upcoming state assembly elections.



The seven new ministers sworn in are Sanjay Sarangi, Sunil Kumar, Jibesh Mishra, Krishna Kumar Mantoo, Motilal Prasad, Vijay Kumar Mandal, and Raju Kumar Singh. All these new cabinet members hail from the BJP, signaling a shift in the political dynamics of Bihar, where the ruling Janata Dal (United) [JDU] party, led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, continues to maintain a significant presence in the state.

This reshuffle comes at a time when political alliances are being carefully recalibrated, with both regional and national political dynamics playing a crucial role in the run-up to the elections. The inclusion of BJP MLAs is seen as a way to ensure a broader support base, as the party seeks to maintain its influence in Bihar's political landscape.

The move reflects a strategy by CM Nitish Kumar and JDU to align more closely with the BJP in order to secure their position as the ruling party in the state. The expanded council of ministers is expected to strengthen the government's decision-making ability and address the challenges posed by political rivals ahead of the crucial assembly elections.

Political analysts believe that the inclusion of BJP representatives in the cabinet, despite Bihar's complex political coalition, could have a significant impact on the upcoming elections, potentially influencing the state's power dynamics.

# Pakistan in no position to lecture anyone: India at UN

TPN Correspondent | Geneva

India launched a sharp counterattack on Pakistan at the seventh meeting of the 58th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, dismissing its allegations regarding human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir. India's Permanent Mission to the UN, Kshitij Tyagi, described Pakistan as a "failed state" that survives on international aid and accused its leadership of spreading falsehoods dictated by the military. Responding to Pakistani law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar's accusations, Tyagi said, "It is regrettable to see Pakistan's leaders and delegates continuing to spread falsehoods handed down by its military terrorist complex. Pakistan is making a mockery of the OIC by abusing it as its mouthpiece. It is unfortunate that this Council's time continues to be wasted by a failed state which thrives on instability and survives on international handouts. Its rhetoric reeks of hypocrisy, its actions of inhumanity and its governance of incompetence." The Indian envoy criticized Pa-



kistan for misusing international forums to push anti-India rhetoric while failing to address its own internal crises. He reaffirmed that Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral parts of India, highlighting the substantial political, social, and economic progress achieved in these regions in recent years. "The Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh will always remain an integral and inalienable part of In-

dia. The unprecedented political, social, and economic progress in J&K in the past few years speaks for itself. These successes are a testament to the people's trust in the government's commitment to bring normalcy to a region scarred by decades of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism," he said. Tyagi also pointed to Pakistan's deteriorating human rights record, citing its persecution of minorities, suppression of po-

litical dissent, and harboring of UN-sanctioned terrorists. "As a country where human rights abuses, persecution of minorities, and systematic erosion of democratic values constitute state policies, Pakistan is in no position to lecture anyone," he asserted.

India's strong response at the UNHRC follows a similar statement made on February 19 by India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish. During an Open Debate at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Harish had reaffirmed, "The Deputy PM and Foreign Minister of Pakistan have referred to an integral and inalienable part of India, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in his remarks. I would like to reaffirm that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is, and will always be, an integral and inalienable part of India."

India continues to emphasize its commitment to democracy, development, and human rights, urging Pakistan to focus on governance and justice for its own people rather than engaging in baseless propaganda at global forums.



## PM Modi Was First World Leader to Call Israel After October 7 Attack: Israeli Envoy

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Israeli Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, has revealed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first world leader to reach out to Israel following the deadly Hamas terror attack on October 7, 2023. Expressing gratitude for Modi's unwavering support, Azar praised the Indian leader's commitment to strengthening India-Israel ties.

"We are actually looking with admiration at the achievements of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His friendship is very dear to us. We saw he was the first to call us following the 7th of October. We saw how he stood by us during the last year and a half," Azar said in an exclusive interview with IANS.

The October 7 attack resulted in the deaths of over 1,200 people in Israel, with another 250 taken hostage. Modi had condemned the attack immediately, calling it a terrorist act and expressing solidarity with Israel. Azar emphasized the deepening strategic cooperation between the two nations, noting that both countries face similar challenges and share a common outlook on global security. "We know that we think alike on many things. We look at things in a similar way. We have similar challenges. Therefore, I am confident that in the coming years, we will be able to do many more things together," he added. The Israeli envoy also discussed the situation in Gaza, ongoing ceasefire efforts, and the role of the US administration in addressing regional stability.

## At Trump's 1st Cabinet Meet, Musk Says

### He's Getting "Lot Of Death Threats"

TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

Billionaire Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), revealed during US President Donald Trump's first cabinet meeting of his second term that he has been receiving "a lot of death threats" due to his efforts in cutting federal government spending. Musk attended the meeting on Wednesday amid widespread criticism of the administration's aggressive cost-cutting measures. When Trump asked him to elaborate on DOGE's initiatives, Musk explained that the team is working to overhaul outdated government systems while significantly reducing expenditure. "It's an honour to have you. He's been a tremendously successful



guy. He's really working so hard. And he's got businesses to run. And in many ways, they say, 'How do you do this?' And, you know, he's sacrificing a lot and—getting a lot of praise, I'll tell you, but he's also getting hit. And we would expect that, and that's the way it works," Trump said, acknowledging Musk's efforts. Wearing a black "Make America Great Again" baseball cap, Musk described his role as "humble tech

support" due to the DOGE team's focus on fixing outdated government computer systems. He emphasized that many federal software infrastructures are obsolete and inefficient, leading to errors and miscommunication. "The overall goal with the DOGE team is to help address the enormous deficit. If we don't do this, America will go bankrupt," Musk told cabinet members, adding that the country cannot sustain

a \$2 trillion deficit. He reiterated his commitment to cost-cutting despite facing severe backlash. Musk acknowledged that DOGE's reforms may not always be perfect but assured that mistakes would be promptly corrected. He cited a brief cancellation of Ebola prevention under USAID as an example, which was quickly reinstated after being identified as an error. "We do need to move quickly if we're to achieve a trillion-dollar deficit reduction in financial year 2026. It requires saving \$4 billion per day, every day from now through the end of September. But we can do it, and we will do it," Musk affirmed. The meeting highlighted the Trump administration's determination to push through significant fiscal reforms despite growing resistance.

## Bangladeshi Students Who Led Protests

### Against Sheikh Hasina Launch Political Party

TPN Correspondent | Dhaka

Students who played a pivotal role in last year's uprising against former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have launched a new political party, intensifying the country's political landscape ahead of the upcoming elections. The new group, named Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad (Democratic Student Council), consists of key figures from the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) movement, which led the revolution that forced Hasina from power in August. However, the launch of the party has sparked divisions, with rival student factions accusing them of betraying the revolution. Political disagreements over representation led to physical clashes among members when the group's name was officially announced on Wednesday. Adding to the growing discord, other SAD leaders—some of whom were included in the interim government after Hasina fled to India—are expected to form a separate party on Friday. The Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad also includes students previously associated with the youth wing of Hasina's Awami League. However,



its leaders insist they have carefully vetted members to ensure no one involved in mass violence or repression during the revolution is part of the new party. "While accommodating students from the Awami League, we ensured that none of them were involved in mass murder or torture during the revolution," said Zahid Ahsan, a leader of the group.

"We are dedicated to protecting student rights and upholding the spirit of the movement that ended Hasina's autocratic grip." Hasina remains in self-imposed exile in India, defying an arrest warrant issued in Dhaka on charges including crimes against humanity. Meanwhile, tensions among student groups continue to rise, with more than 150 peo-

ple injured in violent clashes this month. Caretaker government head and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has indicated that general elections are likely to be held in late 2025 or early 2026. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Hasina's long-time rival, is widely expected to dominate the elections.



## Trump Unveils 'Gold Card' for Wealthy Investors

TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced a new immigration initiative, the "Gold Card" program, which would offer residency and a path to citizenship for individuals willing to pay \$5 million. The move is aimed at creating an alternative legal immigration pathway while generating significant revenue for the government. Trump stated that the program is set to launch in two weeks and expressed confidence that congressional approval would not be required. However, immigration experts have suggested that lawmakers would likely need to approve such a policy change.

The President indicated that discussions were still ongoing regarding the vetting criteria for applicants. When asked whether restrictions would be placed on individuals from rival nations such as China, Trump clarified that limitations might not be nationality-based but emphasized that there would still be eligibility rules. "We want to make sure we have people that love our country and are capable of loving the country," Trump said.

Sitting beside Trump, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick suggested that the new program could potentially replace the existing EB-5 visa, which currently grants permanent residency to foreign investors who create at least 10 American jobs through a qualifying business investment.

Under the Gold Card proposal, applicants would make direct payments to the US government rather than private businesses. Trump argued that this approach could help reduce national debt, claiming that selling 1 million gold cards could raise \$5 trillion. However, immigration experts have questioned the feasibility of this estimate, noting that the number of individuals who could afford such a program is relatively small.



# Flat Market Close

## Global Uncertainty and FII Outflows Weigh

### Yet Banks and Metals Provide Support



Domestic stock markets closed flat today. Mixed signals from international markets, negative sentiment in the market and FIIs leaving were the reasons for this. Investors were cautious as monthly derivatives were due to the end. They did not tend to buy. However, the cool-off of India Vics is a good development. Nifty has been moving in a range-bound manner since morning. Metal, bank and finance shares performed well. Nifty settled at 22,545, Sensex settled at 74,612.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 74,602 in the previous session, opened at 74,706 on Thursday. It touched an intraday low of 74,520. It reached an intraday high of 74,839. It finally closed at 74,612 with a gain of 10 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,568, touched a low of 22,508 and a high of 22,613. It closed at 22,545, down 2 points. The Nifty Bank rose 135 points to settle at 48,743.

In the Nifty50, 19 companies gained while 31 lost. The Bank Nifty rose 135 Pts to settle at 48,743. Finance, bank and metal shares rose. Auto, media, government bank, realty, consumer durables, oil and gas shares rose. Shriram Finance, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Hindalco, Sun Pharma were the top gainers. Ultratech Sem, Trent, Bajaj Auto, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra were the top losers.



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Market breadth on NSE today is in favour of sellers. Out of 2936 shares traded, only 570 gained. 2292 lost. Shares of 17 companies reached 52-week highs. Only 399 reached 52-week lows. While 41 shares touched the upper circuit, 201 touched the lower circuit.

Rupee settled at 87.19 against the dollar. Morgan Stanley maintained equal weight rating on Bharti Airtel with a target price of Rs.1650. Nomura has given a buy rating to Alkem Laboratories with a target price of Rs.5430.

Bloomberg reported that 40 lakh shares in CG Power changed hands. Dronacharya Aerial Agriever Multipurpose Advanced Drone received DGCA Authorized Certificate. GR Infra signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a ropeway project in Assam. India Vicks fell 4% to 13.17. Ultratech Cements entered the cable and wires sector with an investment of Rs 1800 crore, causing all the shares of that sector to fall. CBI registered a case against Godrej Estates Developers. 30 lakh shares changed hands in two block trades held in ITC. Electronics Mart started commercial operations in Telangana Charcoal Project. Jefferies has given a buy rating to Ultratech Cement with a target price of Rs 13,265. Mastec received orders worth \$ 85 million.

**Shriram Finance**  
Shriram Finance is a leading NBFC with a strong focus on commercial vehicle financing and consumer loans. The company has consistently grown its revenue through an expanding loan portfolio, supported by disciplined risk management and robust asset quality. With low NPAs and diversified exposure across retail and commercial lending, Shriram Finance remains well positioned to capture increasing credit demand in a growing economy.



**Chola Finance**  
Chola Finance, a prominent player

in the NBFC space, specializes in commercial vehicle financing and asset-backed loans. It has built a reputation for innovative financial solutions and strong customer service. The company has shown steady growth in its loan book and profitability, supported by cost efficiency and sound credit risk practices. However, it remains sensitive to macroeconomic conditions and regulatory changes that affect the broader credit market.



**Just Dial**  
Just Dial is a leading local search and information services provider in India. It offers a broad range of digital services, including business listings, consumer reviews, and advertising solutions, which generate diversified revenue streams. While the competitive digital landscape poses challenges, Just Dial continues to invest in technology and data analytics to improve its service offerings. Its established market presence and robust distribution network make it a key player in the digital information space, with potential for further growth as more businesses embrace online marketing.



**M&M Financial Services (M&M FIN)**  
M&M Financial Services, part of the Mahindra Group, offers a range of financial products including personal and vehicle loans, and insurance. The firm benefits from a strong brand presence and deep penetration in both urban and rural markets. Its focus on digital transformation and financial inclusion has driven consistent



growth in its customer base and revenues. With solid asset quality and expanding loan disbursements, M&M Financial Services is poised for continued growth, although competition in the NBFC space remains a challenge.

**Bajaj Finserv (BAJFINSERV)**  
Bajaj Finserv is a diversified financial services conglomerate operating in consumer finance, insurance, and wealth management. The company has shown impressive growth in its loan disbursements and consistently strong profitability, driven by efficient risk management and a low level of NPAs. Its digital platform enhances customer acquisition and cross-selling, further bolstering its revenue streams. With a strong brand and diversified business model, Bajaj Finserv continues to lead in the NBFC sector, offering significant long-term growth potential.



## 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission

### Majority of States Demand 50% Share in Tax Revenue



A total of 21 states have submitted recommendations to the 16th Finance Commission, seeking an increase in their share of tax revenue from 41% to 50%, according to sources familiar with the matter. The commission, led by economist Arvind Panagariya, is currently reviewing the proposals while awaiting the Centre's stance on the revenue-sharing formula. The final report is expected to be submitted by October 31, 2025, with the new recommendations set to take effect from fiscal year 2026-27. The Finance Commission, constituted every five years, determines the tax distribution between the Centre and states. At present, states receive 41% of the total tax pool in 14 instalments annually, a framework that remains in place until 2026. In September 2024, five opposition-ruled states—Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Telangana—urged the commission to raise the state share to 50%, arguing that the Centre's reliance on surcharges and cesses limits state revenues. Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan had emphasized that a higher tax share was crucial to ensuring financial stability for states. During the tenure of the 15th Finance Commission, the Centre had proposed reducing states' tax shares, a stance that remains a contentious issue. The 16th Finance Commission's final recommendations will play a critical role in shaping fiscal federalism ahead of the next budget cycle.

## Coal India to Levy ₹300 Per Tonne Extra for Northern Coalfields' Output From May 1

Coal India Ltd (CIL) announced that starting May 1, 2025, it will impose an additional charge of ₹300 per tonne on coal produced from Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL), a wholly owned subsidiary. This "Singrauli Punarasthapan Charge" will be levied uniformly across all NCL mines, adding to the existing notified coal prices. The company estimates that this move will generate ₹3,877.50 crore in additional revenue. For the third quarter ending December 2024, CIL reported a consolidated profit of



₹8,506 crore, down from ₹10,253 crore in the same period the previous year. Revenue from operations also declined slight-

ly to ₹35,779.74 crore, compared to ₹36,154 crore in Q3 FY24. Despite the revenue dip, the company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) stood at ₹12,317 crore, marking a 5% decline year-on-year but exceeding market expectations of ₹11,407.8 crore. The EBITDA margin contracted from 35.9% to 34.4%. Following the announcement, Coal India shares closed 0.73% higher at ₹363.85 on the BSE, while the benchmark Sensex recorded a marginal 0.01% gain.

## Bajaj Auto Enters Electric Auto Market With GoGo Brand

Bajaj Auto Ltd has launched Bajaj GoGo, a new brand dedicated to electric three-wheelers, marking its foray into the growing electric mobility segment. The company has introduced three variants under this brand—P5009, P5012, and P7012—designed for both passenger and cargo applications. The naming strategy follows a structured format: 'P' stands for passenger, the first two digits represent the vehicle size, and the last two digits indicate the battery capacity—9 kWh and 12 kWh. Speaking at the launch, Samardeep Subandh, President of Bajaj Auto's Intra-City Business Unit, stated, "The all-electric Bajaj GoGo range will set new benchmarks in this segment. With a certified range of up to 251 km, segment-first features, and Bajaj's trusted reliability and service, GoGo offers a



comprehensive solution for maximizing earnings while minimizing downtime and maintenance. The next time you need a ride, hail a Bajaj GoGo!" Bajaj GoGo comes with several first-in-segment features, including a two-speed automated transmission for better efficiency and hill-climbing capability. Other advanced features include Auto Hazard and Anti-Roll Detection, LED lighting, and Hill Hold Assist. The P5009 is priced at ₹3,26,797 (ex-showroom), while the P7012 is available for ₹3,83,004. Bookings for Bajaj GoGo electric autos are now open at authorized dealerships across India.

## Vodafone Idea Begins 5G Trials in Mumbai, Offers Unlimited Data

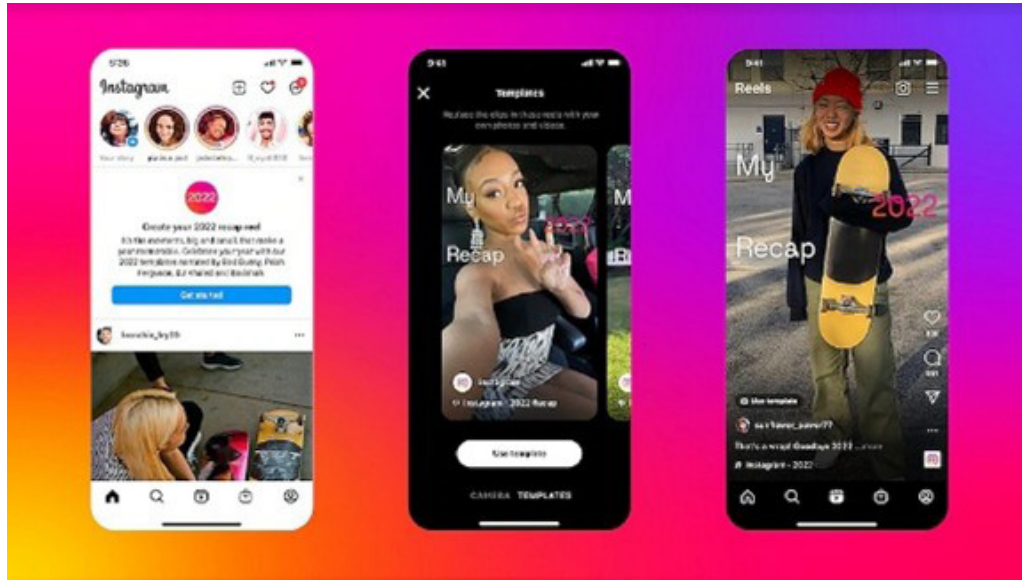
Vodafone Idea (Vi) has reportedly started trial runs of its 5G network in Mumbai, ahead of its commercial rollout. Several users have shared screenshots of 5G activation messages, in-app notifications, and 5G network icons appearing on their smartphones. According to reports, the company has enabled 5G connectivity for a limited number of users in the city. Some users have claimed download speeds exceeding 250Mbps, while others reported speeds of around 200Mbps with 20Mbps upload speeds. However, the Voice over New Radio (VoNR) feature, which enables voice calls over 5G networks, is not yet available. Users have also received messages from Vi confirming the activation of 5G services, along with an introductory unlimited data offer for users on recharge packs of ₹299 or above. The 5G network is currently live only in Mumbai, with Navi Mumbai, Thane, and Kalyan expected to get coverage soon. Vi has also announced plans to roll out 5G services in Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Patna starting April 2025.

With this move, Vodafone Idea is finally catching up with rivals Airtel and Jio, both of whom launched their 5G services in 2022-23. The company's Q3 2024-25 report had earlier confirmed that a commercial launch of 5G was in the pipeline.

## Instagram Plans Standalone App for Reels to Compete in Short-Form Video Space

Instagram is reportedly considering the launch of a standalone app dedicated to its short-form video content, Reels. This new app, internally referred to as "Project Ray," would aim to enter the competitive short-form video market currently dominated by TikTok, the popular video platform owned by ByteDance. The app is expected to feature Reels alongside three-minute videos, offering a vertically scrolling experience similar to that of TikTok.

According to a report from \*The Information\*, Instagram's head, Adam Mosseri, informed staff about the potential app that would enhance user recommendations, particularly for new and existing users in the United States. While Instagram has not officially confirmed the development, the move comes at a time when TikTok faces mounting regulatory scrutiny in the U.S. The platform was recently at risk of a ban, although the decision was later reversed with a temporary extension, allowing TikTok to operate in the U.S. until April 5, 2025. Talks are also reportedly underway between TikTok's parent company and the new U.S. administration, potentially involving a partnership with an American



company to maintain the app's availability in the country.

This proposed Reels app would mark Instagram's second new app launch of 2025, following the debut of the Edits app last month. The Edits app offers mobile video editing tools designed to give creators more precision and creativity than the current editing features available on Instagram. Available exclusively on iOS for now, Edits includes

high-quality video capture, draft management, and customizable camera settings for resolution, frame rate, and dynamic range.

If the Reels app comes to fruition, it will solidify Instagram's ongoing efforts to compete more effectively in the fast-growing short-form video market, tapping into the growing demand for bite-sized content that has made TikTok a global sensation.

## Barber Returns Rs 20,000 Given During Covid, Man's Post Goes Viral



A heartwarming story has gone viral after a man shared how his barber returned Rs 20,000 he had given to him during the difficult days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rohit Aryan, an entrepreneur, took to social media on Tuesday to recount the touching gesture that took place years after he had helped his barber in 2021.

According to Aryan, the barber had lost a family member during the pandem-

ic and was in dire need of money. In a selfless act of kindness, Aryan gave him Rs 20,000 without expecting anything in return. Aryan expressed that he had never asked for the money back and simply wanted to help his barber in a time of need.

Years later, to Aryan's surprise, the barber returned the entire amount. In his post on X (formerly Twitter), Aryan wrote, "I gave my salon wale bhaiya Rs

20k during the Covid time. For obvious reasons. Someone died in his family back in 2021. He needed help. It was a bad phase for many."

He went on to say, "I somehow knew that I would not get this amount back and I never asked for this, but today he gave the amount back to me. And said a big thank you again." Aryan tried to insist that the money was his gift, but the barber insisted, "Bhaiya apko lena hi padega (you must take it)." Aryan acknowledged the barber's sincerity, saying, "Some people know how to keep their word."

The story touched many hearts online, with users praising the kindness and trust displayed by both individuals. One user commented, "Both of you have made the world a slightly better place with your acts of kindness and trust." Others shared similar sentiments, saying that it was rare to come across such honest people these days.

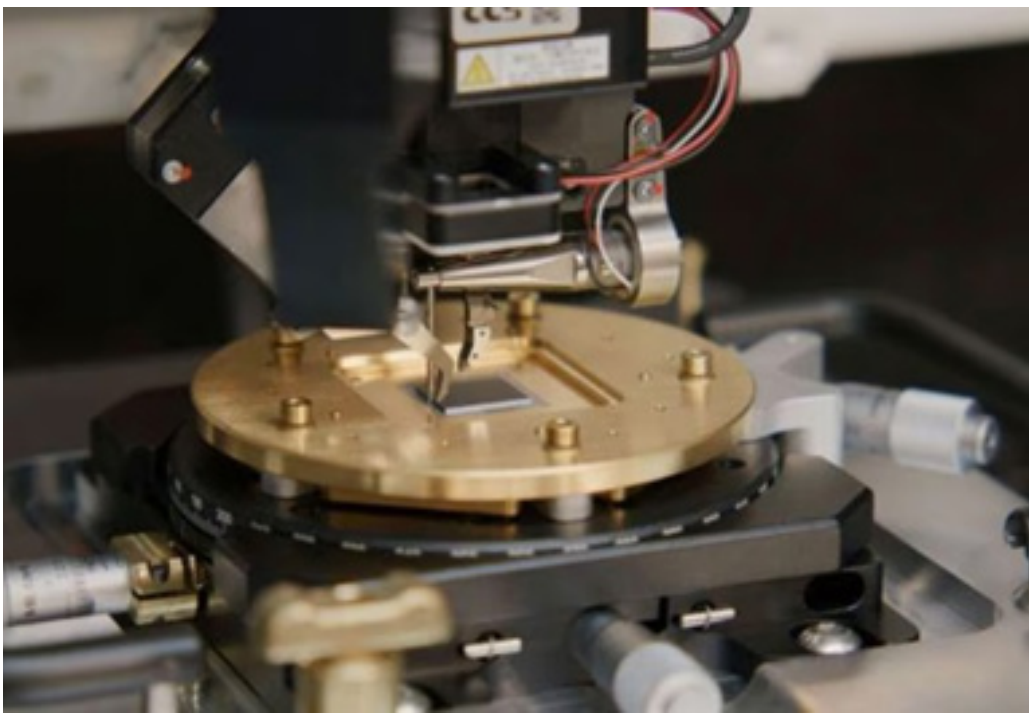
This heartwarming exchange of kindness reminds us of the positive impact that small acts of generosity can have on others, even when they are not expected in return.

## Amazon Unveils First-Ever In-House Quantum Computing Chip, Ocelot

On February 27, Amazon introduced its first-ever in-house quantum computing chip, named Ocelot. The tech giant revealed that the Ocelot chip has been designed to help enhance the efficiency of quantum computing hardware systems. This development marks a significant step for Amazon as it enters the quantum computing space with a custom-built solution.

Ocelot is a nine-qubit chip, which has been internally developed and fabricated by Amazon. The company claims that one of the standout features of Ocelot is its potential to drastically reduce the costs associated with quantum error correction—by as much as 90 percent compared to current methods. This improvement could pave the way for more practical and scalable quantum computing solutions in the future.

Quantum computing has long been viewed as a promising but complex technology, with error correction being one of its major challenges. Traditional quantum systems face a significant hurdle in maintaining the integrity of quantum states due to noise and errors. By reducing the costs of error correction, Ocelot could make quantum computing more feasible for a range of applications, potentially accelerating progress in fields such as cryptography, artificial



intelligence, and complex simulations. Amazon's introduction of Ocelot also demonstrates its commitment to advancing quantum technologies, joining a growing list of tech giants investing heavily in quantum computing research. While the field is still in its early stages, the unveiling of this chip highlights Amazon's ambition to be at the forefront of quantum hardware development.

With Ocelot, Amazon has made a crucial leap in its quantum computing journey, showing promise for more efficient hardware systems that could push the boundaries of what's possible in quantum research and practical applications. As the company continues to refine its quantum technology, Ocelot could become a key player in shaping the future of computing.

## Indians Prioritize Work Over Self-Care in 2024, Reveals Time Use Survey



Indians spent more time working and less on self-care in 2024, according to the latest Time Use Survey released by the government. The survey, which tracks how people allocate their time across various activities, found that the participation of both men and women in employment-related tasks rose significantly. For men, the participation increased to 75% in 2024, up from 70.9% in 2019. For women, it rose to 25%, compared to 21.8% in 2019.

The survey also revealed a decline in the time Indians spend on self-care and maintenance. Over the past five years, the average time dedicated to these activities dropped by 2%. The survey, first conducted in 2019, assesses both paid and unpaid work, including caregiving, household chores, volunteer work, learning, and leisure. Key findings from the 2024 survey, which covered 4.54 lakh individuals across 1.39 lakh households, include:

- 41% of Indians aged six and above participated in employment or related activities, a rise of nearly 3 percentage points since 2019. On average, people spent 440 minutes a day on

- work-related tasks.
- Time spent on unpaid domestic services decreased by 2%, with women spending an average of 289 minutes per day on these activities, while men spent 88 minutes.

- When it came to caregiving, men spent an average of 75 minutes daily, while women spent nearly double that—137 minutes.

- A high percentage of children, 89.3%, aged 6-14 years participated in learning activities, spending an average of 413 minutes a day on education.

- People spent an average of 171 minutes a day on cultural, leisure, and media-related activities, with males spending slightly more (177 minutes) than females (164 minutes).
- Socialising, community participation, and religious activities saw a slight decline in time spent, with individuals spending five minutes less compared to 2019, averaging 130 minutes per day.

These findings highlight the evolving work-life balance in India, with increasing work participation and decreasing time for personal and family care.

## Biryani ATM: India's First Automated Biryani Outlet Launched In Chennai

Biryani is a beloved dish across India, and now, Chennai has taken the experience of ordering this iconic meal to a whole new level. 'The BVK Biryani' outlet, located in Kolattur, has introduced a vending machine that offers customers the convenience of ordering fresh biryanis without the hassle of waiting in line or interacting with a cashier.

This unique concept by Bai Veetu Kalyanam (BVK) Biryani allows customers to place their orders through a 32-inch touchscreen display. With a variety of Biryani options available, customers can easily browse the menu, select their favorite dish, and make payment via card or UPI. Once the order is placed, a countdown timer begins, showing the preparation time. The freshly packed Biryani is then delivered at a counter, allowing customers to quickly grab their order and continue on their way.

The idea behind this vending machine is to offer a fast, contactless, and efficient biryani experience, making it easier for those crav-

ing this popular dish to enjoy it without the wait or the need for interaction. With no cash counter or person to explain the order to, the process is seamless and quick. It's perfect for customers on the go who want high-quality, wedding-style Biryani, prepared with fresh farm-to-fork meat in just a few hours.

The innovation has caught attention online, with many appreciating the convenience and the modern touch added to the traditional Biryani experience. BVK Biryani's vending machine provides not only a solution for those craving a quick and tasty meal but also a glimpse into how technology is shaping the future of food service.



## Poymantee Baisya Clinches Silver in Mixed Doubles at WTT Feeder Cappadocia 2025

Indian table tennis star Poymantee Baisya, alongside partner Akash Pal, won a silver medal in the mixed doubles category at the WTT Feeder Cappadocia 2025 held in Turkiye from February 17 to 21. The duo had an impressive run, starting with a 3-1 win over Poland's Katarzyna Wegryzn and Mateusz Zalewski. They maintained their momentum with another 3-1 victory over Hong Kong's Li Hon Ming and Wong Hoi Tung in the quarter-finals. In the semi-finals, they defeated Korea Republic's Cho Seungmin and Yoo Siwoo 3-1. However, they fell short in the final, losing 1-3 to China's Xue Fei and Han Feier.

Baisya, 22, expressed her gratitude for the support of her coaches, family, and Adani Sportsline. She credited the Garv Hai initiative, which she has been part of since 2024, for playing a key role in her growth as an athlete. Adani Sportsline's Sanjay Adesara congratulated Baisya, emphasizing their continued support in her journey.



## Meghalaya CM Felicitates Medal Winners of 37th National Games 2025

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Wednesday honored the state's five medal winners from the 37th National Games 2025 held in Uttarakhand. The athletes were celebrated for their impressive achievements: gold medalist Vikash Rana, silver medalists Elizabeth Vincent and Indra Sharma, and bronze medalists Pynshngain Kurbah, Kiran Devi, and B. Anandhi. The Chief Minister also acknowledged coach Ian Vincent for his vital role in guiding the team to success. CM Sangma emphasized the government's commitment to sports development, highlighting investments in infrastructure since 2018 to enhance facilities and training opportunities for athletes. He also pointed to Meghalaya's selection as the host of the 39th National Games in 2027, which would further strengthen the state's sports ecosystem. Additionally, the CM launched the Meghalaya Sports Action Plan 2025-32 and the Chief Minister's Football Mission, aimed at bolstering sports development. Cash awards were presented to athletes and sportspersons who have garnered national and international recognition for the state.

## Pakistan's Champions Trophy Campaign Ends with No Wins as Rain Cancels Bangladesh Match



Pakistan's Champions Trophy campaign concluded without a victory after their final match against Bangladesh was called off due to heavy rain at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Both teams were already out of contention following defeats to New Zealand and India. The persistent downpour left the field soaked, with the match officials deciding to abandon the game after nearly two hours of waiting, leaving both sides with one point each. Pakistan faced criticism for their lackluster performance, with captain Mohammad Rizwan expressing disappointment over the team's failure to meet expectations. Injuries to key players like Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub, along with pressure against India, were cited as contributing factors. Assistant coach Azhar Mahmood emphasized the need to adapt and take responsibility, hoping the team would learn from their mistakes ahead of their upcoming tour to New Zealand. Bangladesh, also winless, echoed similar sentiments and looked forward to improving their bowling attack.



## Sciver-Brunt and Matthews Shine as MI Crush UPW by 8 Wickets

Nat Sciver-Brunt and Hayley Matthews led Mumbai Indians to an emphatic 8-wicket win over UP Warriorz in the Women's Premier League in Bengaluru on Wednesday. After opting to bowl first, MI restricted UPW to 142/9, with Sciver-Brunt claiming 3/18. The England all-rounder continued her dominance with the bat, scoring an unbeaten 75 off 44 balls, while Matthews supported with 59 off 50. Their 133-run partnership guided MI to a comfortable victory in just 17 overs. Earlier, UPW's innings began with an aggressive 79-run stand between Grace Harris (46) and Vrinda Dinesh (33). However, they suffered a dramatic collapse, losing four wickets for 12 runs. Sciver-Brunt, Sanskriti Gupta (2/11), and Shabnim Ismail (2/33) starred with the ball, as UPW lost their way. With this victory, MI secured their third consecutive win, moving to the top of the standings, while UPW languished in fourth place.

# ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Points Table

### GROUP A

No	Teams	P	W	L	T	NR	PTS	NRR
1	NZ	2	2	0	0	0	4	+0.863
2	IND	2	2	0	0	0	4	+0.647
3	BAN	3	0	2	0	1	1	-0.443
4	PAK	3	0	2	0	1	1	-1.087

### GROUP B

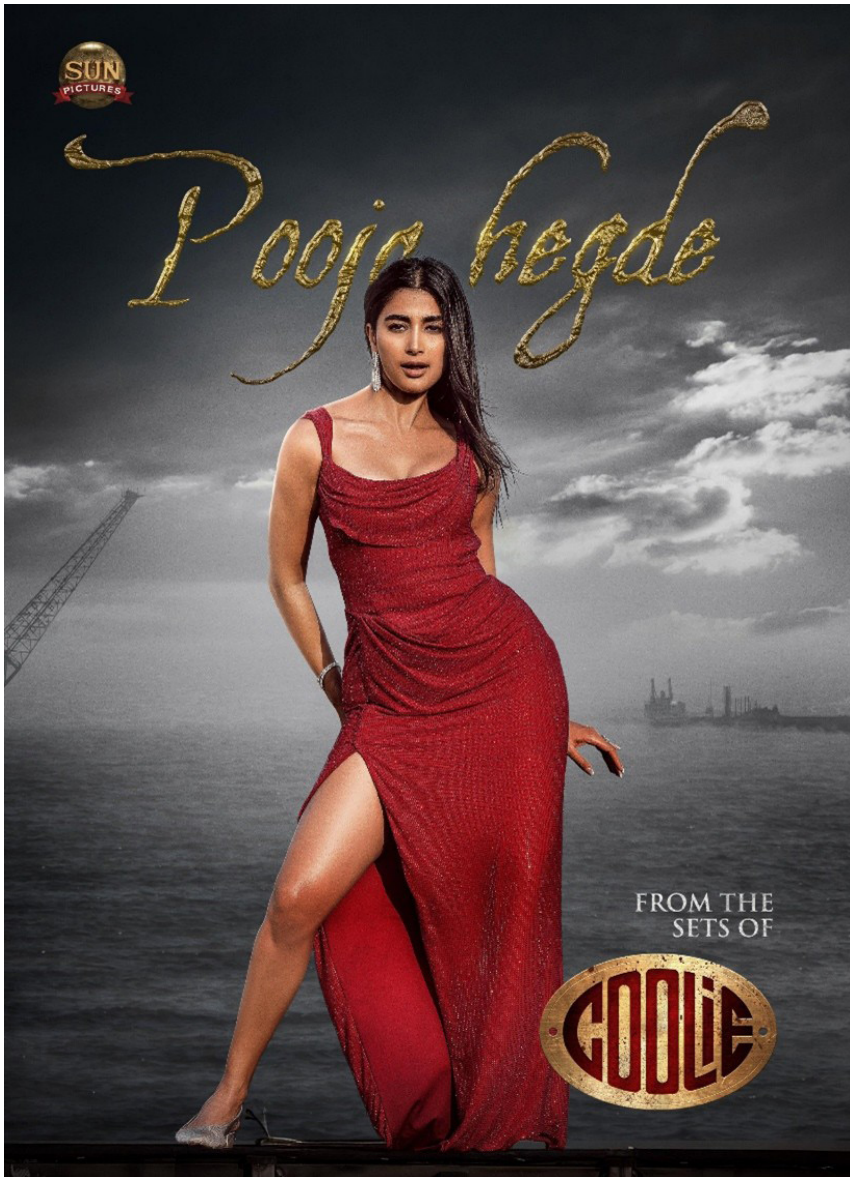
No	Teams	P	W	L	T	NR	PTS	NRR
1	SA	2	1	0	0	1	3	+2.140
2	AUS	2	1	0	0	1	3	+0.475
3	AFG	2	1	1	0	0	2	-0.990
4	ENG	2	0	2	0	0	0	-0.305

**P : Played**  
**W : Win**  
**L : Loss**  
**T : Tie**  
**NR : No Results**  
**NRR : Net Run Rate**  
**PTS : Points**

**Win : 2 points**  
**Tie, No Result or abandoned : 1 point**  
**Loss : 0 point**



## Pooja Hegde's First Look from Rajinikanth's 'Koolie' Released



Pooja Hegde is making waves in Kollywood with a series of exciting offers. After earning a strong foothold in Tollywood, the Kannada actress is now capturing attention in Tamil cinema. The makers of the highly anticipated film Koolie, starring the legendary Rajinikanth and directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, have released Pooja Hegde's first look. In the film, she will be performing an item song, and her presence has already generated significant buzz.

Sun Pictures is producing the film, which also stars big names like Nagarjuna, Upenendra, Sathyaraj, and Shruti Haasan in key roles. Along with her appearance in Koolie, Pooja is also set to star alongside Tamil superstar Vijay in the film Nayagan. Her growing prominence in Kollywood is a testament to her expanding presence across various Indian film industries.

## Shekar Kammula's 'Kubera' Release Date Announced with an Intriguing Poster



Director Shekar Kammula's pan-India film Kubera, featuring Nagarjuna, Dhanush, and Rashmika Mandanna in pivotal roles, is all set for a grand release. The makers recently revealed the film's release date, confirming that Kubera will hit the screens on June 20. The announcement was made through an exciting poster that piqued the audience's curiosity. The film, which is being produced under the banner of Sri Venkateswara Cinemas LLP by Sunil Narang and Ram Mohan Rao, promises to offer a unique social drama. Dhanush is expected to showcase a fresh look in the film, which is backed by Rockstar Devi Sri Prasad's music. The first-look posters of the lead stars, along with Rashmika's character glimpses and teaser, have already raised expectations.

## 'Mad Square' Teaser Released with High Expectations



The teaser for Mad Square, the sequel to the 2023 hit Mad, has been released, generating massive excitement

among audiences. Starring Naren Nithin, Ram Nithin and Sangeeth Shoban in lead roles, the film promises an-

other dose of comedy and entertainment. Directed by Kalyan Shankar, Mad Square follows the success of Mad, which became a superhit, fueling high expectations for this sequel. The newly released teaser showcases the trio's impeccable comic timing and has already impressed fans. The film, set for release on March 29, is expected to bring more laughter and fun to the screen. Music for the film is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo. Mad Square is produced by Sitara Entertainment, Fortune Four Cinemas, and Sreeker Studios.

## Geetha Arts to Release 'Chhava' in Telugu on March 7

Geetha Arts has announced the Telugu release date of the blockbuster film Chhava, which is based on the life of the great Maratha warrior, Sambhaji Maharaj. Directed by Lakshman Utkar and starring Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna, the film has been a massive hit since its release on February 14. It has already grossed over Rs. 500 crores at the box office in just 12 days.

Due to overwhelming demand from Telugu audiences, Geetha Arts has decided to release the film in Telugu on March 7. The historical epic, which has gained widespread popularity, will now roar in Telugu theaters, showcasing the valor of Sambhaji Maharaj. The makers have released a special poster along with the announcement of the release date.



## 'Mazaka' Movie Review: A Routine Entertainment with Missed Potential

Sundeep Kishan's latest film Mazaka, directed by Thrinadha Rao Nakkina, attempts to provide a family entertainer but falls short of expectations. The film features Sundeep Kishan, Rao Ramesh, Ritu Varma, and Anshu in key roles, with a storyline revolving around the father-son duo, Krishna (Sundeep Kishan) and Venkat Ramana (Rao Ramesh). After the loss of his wife, Venkat Ramana takes on the responsibility of raising Krishna, and the film follows their emotional and comedic journey as they both fall in love. While the film has a decent premise, it struggles with routine comedy sequences and lacks emotional depth. The repetitive scenes fail to gen-



erate the expected fun and excitement, and though there are some emotional moments, they are not enough to save the film. Rao Ramesh's performance stands out, delivering a few emotional dialogues that resonate with the audience. However,

the film's overall pace and storytelling feel dragged. Despite its promising concept, Mazaka fails to deliver a satisfactory entertainment experience. The film's lack of fresh scenes and compelling emotional beats leads to a disappointing view-

ing experience. With a rating of 2.00 out of 5, Mazaka is a missed opportunity in the family drama genre. Rating: 2.00/5  
Release Date: February 26, 2025  
Director: Thrinadha Rao Nakkina

## 'Shiva Shiva Shankara' Song from 'Kannappa' Goes Viral on Social Media



The song Shiva Shiva Shankara from the upcoming film Kannappa, starring Manchu Vishnu in the lead role, has

become a chartbuster and is trending on social media. Released as part of this grand project directed by Mukesh Kumar

Singh, the song has garnered massive attention, particularly during this Maha Shivaratri. With over 80 million views and more than 200,000 reels on Instagram, the song has struck a chord with audiences of all ages. From children to adults, people are showcasing their devotion through reels, making Shiva Shiva Shankara a social media sensation.

Manchu Vishnu, the producer and lead actor, expressed his joy over the song's success, stating that he never anticipated such a response but is grateful for the overwhelming support. The movie, which also features Prabhas as Rudra and Akshay Kumar as Lord Shiva, will be released worldwide on April 25. Along with Vishnu, the film stars Mohan Babu, Mohanlal, and Kajal Aggarwal in key roles. The film's grand release is highly anticipated.