

## Weather Forecast

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

## Sudha Murty Backs Three-Language Policy, Sparks Political Debate

**Sudha Murty supports NEP's three-language policy**

**Congress, DMK oppose compulsory third language**

**BJP defends language policy, denies divisive agenda**



**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty voiced her strong support for the three-language policy under the National Education Policy (NEP), stating that learning multiple languages is beneficial. She shared her personal experience, saying, "I know 7-8 languages and have always believed that children can easily learn multiple languages." However, the Congress and DMK have opposed making a third language compulsory. Congress MP Karti Chidambaram argued that Tamil Nadu follows a two-language formula—Tamil and English, which serves both cultural and commercial needs. He called the imposition of a third language "completely unacceptable" and demanded flexibility in the policy's implementation. Congress MP Jebi Mather also criticized the BJP, stating, "The language issue is a sensitive matter, and the BJP is unnecessarily creating division. The opposition stands for unity, which is why we walked out of Parliament yesterday." Meanwhile, the Union Education Minister refuted allegations that the government was trying to divide society through language policies. He asserted that the Modi-led government would never use language as a tool for division. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman targeted the DMK government, accusing it of creating a "political mess" in Tamil Nadu and denying students the right to learn additional languages. She emphasized that the three-language policy should be seen as an opportunity rather than a restriction. The debate over language policies continues to fuel political tensions, with regional parties opposing imposition, while the BJP maintains that multilingual education benefits students.

## Karnataka Dy CM Shivakumar Alleges BJP 'Game Plan' in Gold Smuggling Case

**Dy CM dismisses allegations against Congress ministers**

**Claims BJP may have links to the smuggling case**

**Government orders inquiry into security lapses at Bengaluru Airport**



**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has dismissed allegations linking Congress ministers to the gold smuggling case involving actress Ranya Rao, calling them unfounded speculations. He instead suggested a possible BJP connection, accusing the opposition of trying to divert attention. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Shivakumar refuted claims that any Congress minister was involved. "It's just unnecessary speculation. If anyone has proof, let them bring it forward. No minister will support

such a crime," he stated. He further questioned the basis of the accusations, noting that politicians attend public functions where they take photos with many people. The BJP has demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah disclose the names of any ministers allegedly involved. A social media post by the BJP featured a photo of Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara with Ranya Rao and her family, reportedly taken at her wedding. In response, Shivakumar dismissed it as a political ploy, adding, "There may be a BJP link, but no Congress link." Ranya Rao, 34, was arrested

on March 3 at Bengaluru Airport after returning from Dubai with gold bars worth ₹12.56 crore. A subsequent raid on her residence led to the seizure of gold worth ₹2.06 crore and ₹2.67 crore in cash. She is the stepdaughter of K Ramachandra Rao, a senior police officer currently heading the Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation. The Karnataka government has ordered a CID probe into alleged security lapses at the airport and has appointed Additional Chief Secretary Gaurav Gupta to investigate Ramachandra Rao's role in the case. Meanwhile, the CBI has registered an FIR as part of the ongoing probe.



## Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah Supports DMK's Protest Against LS Delimitation

**CM Siddaramaiah backs DMK-led opposition to delimitation**

**Accuses Centre of attempting to weaken democracy and federalism**

**Tamil Nadu CM Stalin discusses protest strategy with Karnataka CM**

**TPN Correspondent | Karnataka**

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has extended support to the DMK-led opposition against the proposed delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies, calling it an attack on democracy and federalism. On Wednesday, Siddaramaiah met a delegation of DMK leaders at his residence, Cauvery, where Tamil Nadu Forest Minister K Ponnumudi and Rajya Sabha MP Mohammed Abdullah Ismail briefed him on the ongoing protests. They accused the Union government of taking an anti-southern stance, which they claimed would reduce representation for South Indi-

an states in Parliament. During the discussion, Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin also spoke with Siddaramaiah over the phone, seeking a united stand against delimitation. The Karnataka CM's office confirmed his support, stating that he stands in solidarity with the southern states' resistance against the move. The issue of delimitation has sparked widespread protests, with leaders from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana opposing any changes that could alter the balance of representation in Parliament, potentially favoring northern states. With growing political momentum, further protests and joint opposition actions are expected in the coming weeks.

**Ranya Rao claims she was denied sleep in DRI custody**

**Accuses officials of verbal torture, protocol violations**

**Court hears bail plea as investigation intensifies**

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

Kannada actor Ranya Rao, arrested for smuggling 14 kg of gold into India, has alleged mistreatment in custody while seeking bail in a special court for economic offences. She claimed she was denied sleep from March 3 to the morning of March 4, despite being a woman.

Her lawyer, Kiran Javali, argued that the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) violated multiple legal procedures during her arrest. He also stated that her confession was not voluntary and should be ruled inadmissible. Additionally, he pointed out that the arrest declaration by the DRI was missing and that

## Actor Ranya Rao Seeks Bail in Gold Smuggling Case, Alleges Custodial Mistreatment



Section 102 of the Customs Act—which mandates presenting the accused before a magistrate if requested—was violated. Ms. Rao had earlier claimed she was verbally tortured and threatened, and recent images of her with swollen eyes and bruises raised further concerns. However, the DRI arrest memo

mentioned pre-existing injury marks under her eyes. The 33-year-old actress, who has traveled to Dubai 27 times in the past year, was arrested on March 3 at Bengaluru Airport while attempting to smuggle gold worth ₹14.56 crore. Further searches at her residence uncovered ₹2 crore worth of gold and ₹2.67 crore in cash. Her stepfather, senior Karnataka police officer Ramachandra Rao, has denied any involvement, stating he had no contact with her since her recent marriage. However, the Karnataka government has ordered a separate inquiry into him. Authorities suspect Ms. Rao was part of an organized smuggling network, earning commissions of ₹5 lakh per kg of gold transported. The court is expected to rule on her bail plea soon.

## Home Minister, CM Discuss Ranya Rao Case Amid Allegations of Ministerial Involvement

**CM Siddaramaiah, Home Minister Parameshwara hold closed-door meeting**

**Probe ordered into DGP Ramachandra Rao's alleged protocol misuse**

**BJP alleges Congress ministers' links to gold smuggling case**

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

As political tensions rise over the gold smuggling case involving actress Ranya Rao, Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G Parameshwara met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday at Vidhana Soudha to discuss the ongoing investigation. The one-on-one meeting lasted 20 minutes, focusing on the role of DGP Ramachandra Rao, Ranya's stepfather.



The state government has ordered an inquiry, with Additional Chief Secretary Gaurav Gupta leading the probe into how Ranya allegedly misused



## NABARD Fund Allocation to Karnataka Reduced by 58% - Minister Rajanna

- Subsidized agricultural loans from NABARD decreased
- Karnataka sought ₹9,219 crore but received much less
- CM's intervention secured an additional ₹896 crore

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**  
Minister for Cooperation K N Rajanna informed the Legislative Council on Tuesday that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has reduced Karnataka's agricultural loan allocation by 58%. Responding to a query by Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda, Rajanna presented data showing a consistent decline in NABARD assistance over the past five years. The funding dropped from ₹5,600 crore in 2023-24 to just ₹3,570.98 crore, while the state had sought ₹9,219 crore for the current financial



year. Despite the cuts, Rajanna noted that after a letter from the Chief Minister and pressure from Karnataka's Members of Parliament, an additional ₹896 crore was se-

cured. He expressed hope that further funds may be received. The minister also pointed out that all states have seen reduced NABARD allocations, but Karnataka remains the only state to have secured additional funds after intervention. **The state's past NABARD allocations were:**

- ₹5,500 crore (2020-21)
- ₹5,483.90 crore (2021-22)
- ₹5,550 crore (2022-23)
- ₹5,600 crore (2023-24)

During COVID-19, Karnataka received ₹1,700 crore (2020-21) and ₹1,415 crore (2021-22) in special assistance. The sharp decline in NABARD funding has raised concerns about the impact on agriculture and rural development in Karnataka.

## BBMP to Present ₹18,000 Crore Budget on March 20 or 21

- BBMP budget expected to be ₹18,000 crore
- Presentation scheduled for March 20 or 21
- Special funds for Brand Bengaluru and tunnel road project



**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**  
Following the state budget presentation by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on March 7, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is set to unveil its 2025-26 budget on March 20 or 21. The civic body, which has received ₹4,000 crore in additional grants from the state, is expected to present a budget close to ₹18,000 crore. Since March 30 and 31 are government holidays, the BBMP budget must be approved by March 29. This marks the fifth consecutive year that officials will present the budget, which will include a significant allocation

for the Brand Bengaluru initiative. The budget will also outline the implementation strategy for the ₹19,000 crore tunnel road project, with the north-south corridor tendering process postponed by four months. A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) has been proposed for executing major infrastructure projects, as mentioned in the state budget. The BBMP budget will determine which projects will be managed under the SPV and establish their execution framework. BBMP Finance Special Commissioner Harish Kumar stated that the budget preparations are in the final stage, with discussions scheduled with city ministers and MLAs this week. Public suggestions have already been gathered, and the budget will focus on realistic and detailed project implementation plans for the next year.

## Over 18,000 Vacancies in Karnataka State Police Department

- 16.69% staff shortage in Karnataka police
- State's police-public ratio below national average
- Recruitment of 4,115 personnel sanctioned



**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

At a time when the Hampi gangrape and murder case has raised concerns over law and order in Karnataka, statistics reveal that 18,581 posts in the police department remain vacant. According to data presented by Home Minister Dr. G Parameshwara in the Assembly on Tuesday, the sanctioned strength of the Karnataka Police Department is 1,11,330, but the actual number of personnel stands at 92,749, leading to a 16.69% shortage. The police-public ratio in Karnataka is 165.04 officers per 1 lakh population, significantly lower than the national average of 196.88, as per the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

**Vacancies include:**

- 6,591 police constable posts
- 819 head constable posts
- 2,107 Armed Police Constable (City/District Armed Reserve) posts
- 3,830 Reserve Police Constable (KSRP) posts

To address this, the state government has sanctioned the recruitment of 4,115 personnel, including 600 sub-inspectors, though the official notification for the recruitment is yet to be issued. A senior police officer noted that the staff shortage increases work pressure on existing personnel and hinders effective law enforcement, highlighting the urgent need to fill vacancies to improve public safety.

## Karnataka State Film Awards 2020: Sanchari Vijay Honored Posthumously

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

The Karnataka government has announced the State Film Awards for 2020, recognizing outstanding contributions to Kannada cinema. Prithvi Konnanur's "Pinki Elli?", which highlights harsh urban realities, won the Best Film Award. Actor Sanchari Vijay was honored posthumously with the Jury Award. His film Mikka Bannada Hakki also won Best Kannada Film at BIFFes last week. Actor Prajwal Devaraj received the Subbaiah Naidu Award (Best Actor) for his role in "Gentleman", while Akshatha Pandavapura was named Best Actress for "Pinki Elli?". Speaking on the award, Akshatha expressed gratitude, stating that she always sought roles with strong social messages. The Best Debut Film of a Director was awarded to "Neeli Hakki", directed by Ganesh Hegde, which explores a child's connection with nature.



Other major awards include:

- Best Film on Social Issues:** Gilyuu Panjaradollilla & Ee Mannu
- Best Popular Entertainment Film:** Four Walls
- Best Children's Film:** Padaka
- Best Karnataka Regional Language Film:** Jeetige (Tulu)
- Best Supporting Actor:** Ramesh Pandit (Taledanda)
- Best Supporting Actress:** Manjulamma (Dantapurana)
- Best Story:** Shashikant Gatti (Ranchi)
- Best Screenplay:** Raghavendra Kumar

(Chandni Bar)  
**Best Music Director:** Gagan Baderia (Malgudi Days)  
**Best Child Actors:** Ahil Ansari (Dantapurana) & Baby Hitaishi Poojar (Paaru)  
The jury, led by filmmaker B.S. Lingadevaru, included cinema experts, actors, and critics. The awards recognized excellence in various technical and creative categories, celebrating the best of Kannada cinema in 2020.

## Karnataka HC Refuses to Quash Assault Case Against In-Laws



- Court cites evidence of physical assault
- Dowry Prohibition Act charges dropped, but IPC offences retained
- Case to proceed based on allegations of cruelty

**TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru**

The Karnataka High Court has refused to quash criminal proceedings against a mother-in-law and father-in-law accused of assaulting their daughter-in-law. The court observed that evidence, including witness statements, indicated that the complainant was physically assaulted, including having her hair pulled. The petitioners, residents of Hosapete, had sought relief after the Senior Civil Judge and JMFC, Kudligi, took cognizance of the case. The complainant, who married their son in July 2021, alleged she was harassed for 24 tolas of gold and ₹50 lakh as dowry. She gave

birth in April 2022 but claimed the torture continued, leading her to leave in January 2023. The police dropped the Dowry Prohibition Act charges in the chargesheet but retained IPC offences, including Section 498A (cruelty by husband or relatives). The petitioners argued that in the absence of a dowry demand, they should be discharged. However, the court ruled that cruelty under IPC 498A can be established independently of dowry allegations. Justice M Nagaprasanna highlighted that the charge sheet includes statements of a neighbor who heard the complainant's screams, reinforcing the cruelty allegations. He also noted that while Section 498A is often misused, genuine cases should not be dismissed lightly. With the HC's decision, the in-laws will now have to face trial as per the legal process.

## Biker Killed in Hit-and-Run on NH-66 in Karnataka

**TPN Correspondent | Udupi**

A hit-and-run accident on National Highway 66 near Moolur claimed the life of Pratheesh Prasad (29), while his companion, Nihal Wilson (29), sustained critical injuries. The incident occurred on Wednesday Early Morning when the duo was traveling from Kaup to Padubidri on a two-wheeler. An unknown vehicle rammed into them and sped away without stopping. Passersby alerted the police, who rushed both victims to a nearby hospital. However, Pratheesh succumbed to his injuries before receiving treatment, while Nihal is being treated for multiple fractures. Authorities have registered a case and are analyzing



ing CCTV footage from nearby locations to identify the offending vehicle. The investigation is ongoing.

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## Home Minister, CM Discuss Ranya Rao Case Amid Allegations of Ministerial Involvement

protocol privileges as the stepdaughter of a top police officer. "We issued the order for the probe on Monday," Parameshwara confirmed after his meeting with the CM. Later, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar also met Siddaramaiah and issued a statement denying any cabinet involvement in the case. However, Leader of Opposition R Ashoka criticized this, questioning how Shivakumar could clear ministers before the DRI and CBI even began their investigation. The BJP and other opposition parties claim to have evidence of financial transactions between Ranya Rao and two Congress ministers. According to sources, she allegedly revealed these details during her interrogation by the Directorate



of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). With growing political pressure, the investigation into both the smuggling network and potential political links is expected to intensify in the coming days.





## Farmers Oppose Land Acquisition for Greater Bengaluru Project

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Greater Bengaluru project, initiated by the Karnataka government, is facing strong opposition from property owners and farmers in Ramanagara district. A large gathering of farmers took place at Maduramma temple in Hosur village, where they voiced their protest against the land acquisition for the township project under the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority (GBDA). The government has invoked Sections 4-A and 4-B of the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961, to withdraw villages from the local planning areas of the Suburban Ring Road Planning Authority and Kanakapura Planning Authority. A government notification on November 18, 2023, officially included these villages under the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority's revised planning area.

However, farmers argue

that 9,600 acres near Bidadi Hobli have been earmarked for acquisition without their consent. In response, they have decided to organize a march to the Ramanagara District Collector's office and intensify their agitation in a non-political and non-partisan manner. A struggle committee will be formed, with three representatives from each affected village. Villages such as Bhairamangala, Bannigiri, Mandalahalli, Kanchugaranahalli, Kempayannapalya, Hosur, Aralusandra, and Gollarapalya are among those opposing the project. Various organizations, including women's groups and local associations, have extended their support. Farmers question whether the government is selecting villages arbitrarily for land acquisition.

Despite the mounting protests, the government and Ramanagara district administration have yet to respond to the opposition.



## Three Balloon Sellers Arrested for House Theft in Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Subramanyanagar police have arrested three balloon sellers from Rajasthan for allegedly breaking into locked houses and stealing valuables. The accused—Rajesh (46), Karamveer (22), and Karan alias Suresh (27)—were caught with gold and valuables worth ₹5 lakh.

Police revealed that the trio scouted residential areas while selling balloons at traffic signals and specifically targeted houses locked with padlocks. The case was cracked after a Rajajinagar resident filed a complaint about a burglary. Investigators initially struggled to identify the suspects through CCTV footage, but a breakthrough came when they

noticed the suspects carrying a suspicious-looking side bag on another street.

"The bag's structure appeared unusual, so we tracked them using CCTV cameras and caught them near the Srirampura metro station on February 23. The stolen valuables were found in their possession," an investigator said.

Police also discovered that the suspects had committed similar thefts in the past and sold stolen jewellery to a jeweller in Maharashtra. The buyer has yet to be located. To avoid capture, the trio frequently changed locations, sleeping on roads and railway platforms.

Following a police request, a Bengaluru court has remanded all three suspects to judicial custody.

## BDA Seeks Bowring Club's Management for Housing Project Clubhouses

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has initiated discussions with the prestigious Bowring Club to manage the clubhouses at two of its major residential projects—Hunnigere and Kanminike. The move aims to ensure efficient operation and enhance the projects' appeal.

The Hunnigere residential complex, located in Dasanapura Hobli between Tumakuru Road and Magadi Road, is BDA's costliest venture with 322 villas, including 172 four-BHK and 150 three-BHK homes. Officials stated that the sale of additional houses in Hunnigere would

proceed only after Bowring Club confirms its role. Buyers could also gain exclusive membership to Bowring Club and its branches, adding to the project's prestige. At Kanminike, over 700 flats are being marketed by BDA. Authorities are hopeful that Bowring Club will manage the clubhouse here as well, benefiting residents with its expertise in club operations. Three months ago, BDA experimentally auctioned 25 houses in Hunnigere, testing the market for homes priced over ₹1 crore. With talks ongoing, officials are now awaiting a final response from Bowring Club before moving forward with further sales and promotions.

# Govt Initiates Greater Bengaluru-Bidadi Township Project

- Township planned to ease Bengaluru congestion
- 8,935 acres identified for development
- GBDA invites tenders for economic corridor

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has taken the first step towards developing the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Suburban project to reduce congestion in Bengaluru city. As part of this initiative, a township will be built in Bidadi, Ramanagara district, with a company preparing the preliminary report. The Greater Bengaluru Development Authority (GBDA) recently invited tenders for preparing the basic layout for the GBDA Economic Corridor, which is expected to cover 2,742 acres within the 8,935-acre project area.

The Bangalore Metropolitan Regional Development Au-

thority (BMRDA) is leading the effort to create technologically advanced, sustainable urban clusters. Land has been identified in 10 villages, including Allalasanra, Kanchugaranahalli, Gollarapalya, Bannigere, Bairamangala, Mandalahalli, Hosur, and Vaderahalli. The 37 km economic corridor will connect Nice Road, NH 204, NH 275, and STTR, featuring flyovers and grade separators.

This township is part of Bengaluru's 2031 expansion plan, with eight identified clusters for development.

The project was initially proposed in 2005, but previous attempts failed due to policy challenges. In a January 30 cabinet meeting, the government



approved a satellite township between Bidadi and Harohalli, alongside plans for Devanahalli, Nelamangala, Hoskote, Doddaballapura, Magadi, and Bidadi.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar emphasized that land values in Ramanagara would rise and urged landown-

ers to retain their properties. The Bidadi Smart City Planning Authority, established eight years ago, has now been renamed the Greater Bengaluru-Bidadi Smart City Project, with the BMRDA Commissioner appointed as GBDA head and the BMRDA Project Director serving as member secretary.

## IndiGo to Launch Direct Flights from Bangalore to Krabi, Thailand

TPN Correspondent | Bangalore

IndiGo Airlines has announced a direct flight service between Bangalore and Krabi, Thailand, starting March 30. This move comes in response to growing passenger demand and aims to strengthen Bangalore's international connectivity.

Currently, Mumbai is the only Indian city offering a direct flight to Krabi. With the introduction of the Bangalore-Krabi route, the city will become the second in India to have direct air connectivity to the popular Thai destination. IndiGo had recently launched the Mumbai-Krabi service,



which received a strong response, leading to this expansion.

Krabi is a major tourist attraction, known for its beautiful coastline and islands,

drawing millions of visitors each year. IndiGo highlighted that the new flight would make travel more convenient for tourists and further expand its international network.

The Bangalore-Krabi flight (6E 1083) will depart from Bangalore at 3:30 PM and land in Krabi at 8:45 AM. The return flight (6E 1084) will leave Krabi at 11:35 AM and arrive in Bangalore at 1:40 PM. This marks IndiGo's 12th international service and the 81st flight operating from Bangalore.

Vinay Malhotra, IndiGo's Head of Global Sales, expressed excitement about the new service, emphasizing Bangalore's growing role as an aviation hub. With 200 daily flights, including 65 domestic and over 10 international services, Kempegowda International Airport continues to enhance its global connectivity.

## Three Resto Bars Booked for Hosting Illegal Live Bands in Bengaluru

CCB raids three bars for unauthorized live music

Cases registered under multiple legal provisions

Police take action against violations of public conduct laws

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) conducted raids on three bars and restaurants in Bengaluru for illegally hosting live bands, leading to legal action against the establishments.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda confirmed that cases had been filed against the violators. The

charges include sections 79 and 296 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)—pertaining to acts insulting the modesty of women and obscene acts or songs. Additional charges were filed under the Karnataka Police Act and the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA).

Authorities have intensified their crackdown on nightlfe



violations in the city. The CCB's action comes as part of an ongoing effort to regulate public

entertainment and enforce compliance with legal norms in commercial establishments.

## Registration Mandatory for Homestays Amid Tourist Safety Concerns



TPN Correspondent | Vijayanagara

The World Heritage Site of Hampi and its surrounding areas in Vijayanagara dis-

trict have over 117 unregistered homestays, raising concerns about tourist safety, especially for foreign visitors.

As per the Karnataka Tour-

ism Act, all homestays must be registered and approved by the district tourism department. However, many owners have not followed this requirement. To address the issue, the district administration has provided an opportunity for them to legalize their operations.

Recent unpleasant incidents in Hampi have put pressure on local authorities, as they face blame for any tourist safety lapses. Vijayanagara Superintendent of Police (SP) Shrihari Babu BL confirmed that many homestays operate without permission, making regulation difficult.

Emphasizing the need for compliance, Deputy Director of Tourism Prabhulinga Talakere stated that under Section 8 of

the Karnataka Tourism Trade (Facilitation and Regulation) Act, 2015, all homestays in tourist destinations must register. Notices have already been issued to several owners.

According to officials, 61 homestays in Janata Plot, 23 in Kaddirampur, and 33 in New Hampi are operating without approval. The authorities assure that registration will not only help homestay owners attract more tourists but also enhance policing and safety measures.

The home department has also issued a circular to police commissioners and SPs across the state, directing them to ensure tourist safety, particularly in the wake of recent crimes in the region.





## Garbage Dumping on Karnataka Roads Increases, Experts Call for Decentralized Waste Management

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Despite having structured garbage management plans, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has failed in their implementation, leading to rampant roadside garbage dumping in and around Bengaluru city.

Citizens have expressed their frustration, especially after BBMP sought public feedback for the Swachh Sarvekshan ranking under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

Critics questioned how BBMP could ask for feedback when garbage management remains inefficient. This comes amid the state government's proposal to impose a garbage cess.

On Magadi Road, an illegal garbage dumping unit has encroached upon a temple land and a bus stop, despite multiple complaints. "It started as a small setup during the 2023 Assembly elections and has now become a permanent dumping site," said Vasanath Krishna, a local resident.

Similar issues plague Kanakapura Road and Bannerghatta Road, where lake beds and forest fringes have turned into dumping grounds. "Garbage vehicles from Bengaluru regularly unload here," said Bheemanna L, a local restaurateur.

Experts argue that waste processing should be decentralized, as transporting garbage 70-80 km away is inefficient. Civic expert Kathyayini Chamaraj pointed out that High Court orders in 2012 and 2017 had mandated decentralized waste management, but implementation has been slow. She suggested that Deputy CM D K Shivakumar should invest in biomethanisation or biocomposting bins instead of expensive tunnel roads.

BBMP Chief Engineer Lokesh M acknowledged the issue and urged residents to report contractors failing to clear waste. However, complaints continue to surface, highlighting the urgent need for accountability and effective waste management solutions.

## MLCs from North Karnataka Condemn Neglect of Horticultural University in Bagalkot

TPN Correspondent | Bagalkot

Legislators from North Karnataka strongly objected to the state government's decision to transfer affiliated colleges and research centers of the University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot, to the new Integrated University of Agriculture and Horticulture in Mandya.

Raising the issue in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, BJP MLCs Talwar Sabanna and P H Poojar expressed concern that this move would undermine the horticultural university in Bagalkot. House Chairman Basavaraj Horatti also criticized the government, questioning whether the elected representatives of North Karnataka were consulted before making this decision.

"Have you consulted the elected representatives from North Karnataka region?" Horatti demanded from Horticulture Minister S S Mallikarjun.

MLC Sabanna pointed out that the decision had created an impression among locals that the university was being closed down. He questioned whether the same approach

was taken while establishing Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences or any other universities.

MLC Poojar emphasized the importance of the university in supporting farmers and advancing horticultural research in the region.

In response, Minister Mallikarjun stated that the decision was made in the Cabinet due to pressure from Mandya representatives.

His statement drew sharp criticism from Horatti, who countered, "If there was demand from Mandya leaders, what about representatives of North Karnataka? Have you listened to them?"

With legislators from multiple parties demanding a reconsideration, Horatti decided to allot half an hour for a detailed discussion on the issue.

## BJP Awaits High Command's Decision on ST Somashekar's Pro-Congress Remarks

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP MLA ST Somashekar has stirred controversy within his party by making statements in favor of the Congress government, causing embarrassment for the BJP. In response, BJP state president BY Vijayendra stated that the party has reported the issue to the central high command and is awaiting their decision.

Speaking at a protest near the Kengal Hanumanthaya statue at Vidhana Soudha, Vijayendra alleged that the Congress government is misusing state tax revenue by forming guarantee implementation committees and appointing individuals with cabinet ranks and high salaries. He condemned the government's failure to increase the honorarium of Anganwadi workers, teachers, nurses, hot meal cooks, and ASHA workers, despite repeated demands.

He further criticized the Congress for appointing defeated MLA candidates' children as guarantee committee heads,

- BJP MLA ST Somashekar openly supports Congress government
- State BJP sends report to central leadership for action
- BY Vijayendra criticizes Congress over guarantee committees

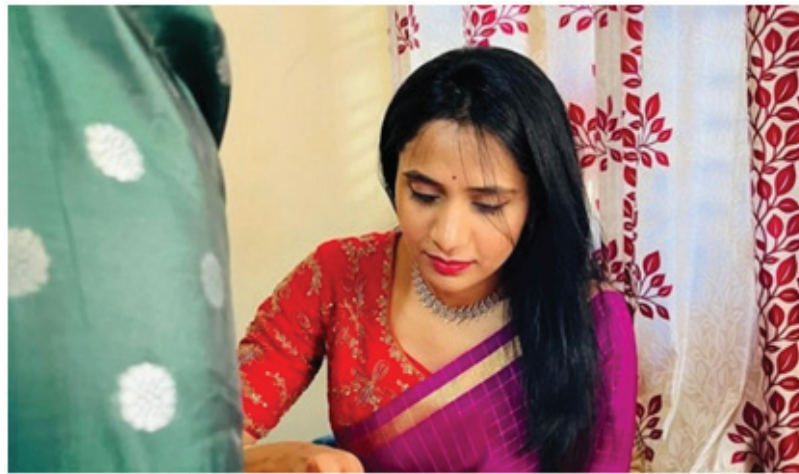


questioning why District Collectors and Tehsildars were not assigned these responsibilities. BJP-JDS leaders have raised this issue in the Assembly and plan to meet the Governor regarding the matter. Vijayendra also accused the Congress gov-

ernment of neglecting higher education, claiming that funding cuts have pushed nine universities towards closure. Additionally, he raised concerns about a senior IPS officer's daughter making frequent trips abroad and alleged gold

smuggling, hinting at a possible conspiracy. The protest saw participation from Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok, JDS Legislative Party Leader Suresh Babu, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Boje Gowda, and other BJP-JDS MLAs and MLCs.

## Kusuma Hanumantharayappa Opens Up About Pain and Allegations After D.K. Ravi's Death



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Karnataka Congress leader Kusuma Hanumantharayappa, wife of late IAS officer D.K. Ravi, has spoken openly about the pain and accusations she faced after her husband's tragic death. In an exclusive interview with Varta Bharati Vahini, she expressed deep regret over

her silence at the time, stating that society ignored her suffering while protecting an influential woman.

Reflecting on that difficult period, Kusuma said that her pain was used for others' selfish interests and that she was advised to remain silent because her husband had become an inspiration to many. "I saw

- Recalls struggles after D.K. Ravi's death
- Regrets not speaking out against allegations earlier
- Says influential figures overshadowed her pain

both insults and honors. People played politics over a death. I was told not to speak, as so many children looked up to him."

Despite facing hurtful allegations, she chose not to react, believing that time would reveal the truth. However, she now feels that she should have spoken out. "If I had told my side of the story then, I wouldn't be in this situation on Wednesday. I thought it was my duty to protect his legacy, but people misunderstood my silence."

Kusuma also emphasized that the CBI investigation had given a clear report, yet she continued to endure public

scrutiny and emotional distress. She revealed that she learned painful truths during the investigation—details that she believes no woman should have to endure.

"Even when people insulted me, I never felt the need to retaliate. But I now realize that my silence was mistaken for guilt. Society judged me without understanding my pain," she added.

Despite the suffering, Kusuma takes solace in the fact that young aspirants continue to be inspired by D.K. Ravi's legacy. "When students tell me they want to be like him, I feel that my pain has meaning."

## Opposition Protests Karnataka Govt's Spending on Guarantee Panel Heads

- BJP, JDS oppose use of taxpayer money for guarantee committees
- House adjourned after heated debate; BJP to stage protest
- Government to discuss the issue in the Cabinet meeting

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A major ruckus erupted in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Tuesday as the Opposition parties lashed out at the Congress government for allegedly using public funds to pay party workers heading the guarantee implementation committees. The protests led to the adjournment of proceedings for the entire day.

The debate began when JD(S) MLA M T Krishnappa questioned the government on the remuneration given to district and taluk-level committee presidents and mem-

bers. According to the government's response, district-level presidents receive ₹40,000 per month, taluk-level presidents ₹25,000, and committee members receive honorariums per meeting.

Krishnappa objected, stating that state exchequer funds cannot be used for such political appointments, and called for the disbanding of the committees. Supporting him, Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka accused Congress of blurring the lines between government and party affairs. "Let them beg for alms and give that money, why are they using taxpayers'



money?" he remarked.

In response, Deputy CM D K Shivakumar defended the move, saying, "Party workers brought Congress to power, and we have the right to give them positions." However, BJP MLAs argued that elected MLAs should oversee the implementation, not party appointees.

The heated arguments led Speaker U T Khader to adjourn

the House. Later, Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge drew comparisons with BJP's alleged appointments of RSS members in Maharashtra, further fueling tensions.

The BJP has announced protests in front of the Kengal Hanumanthaya statue at Vidhana Soudha on Wednesday and may approach the Governor over the issue.

## BJP MLC Keshav Prasad Urges Unified Development of Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP MLC Keshav Prasad S spoke in the Legislative Council on Wednesday regarding the Greater Bengaluru Bill, urging the government to fo-

cus on Bengaluru's overall development rather than dividing it.

He specifically addressed Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, stating that after his recent visit to Prayagraj for a

holy dip, he should bring forth the Greater Bengaluru Bill with an emphasis on holistic progress.

Highlighting Bengaluru's significance, Keshav Prasad remarked, "Bengaluru is known

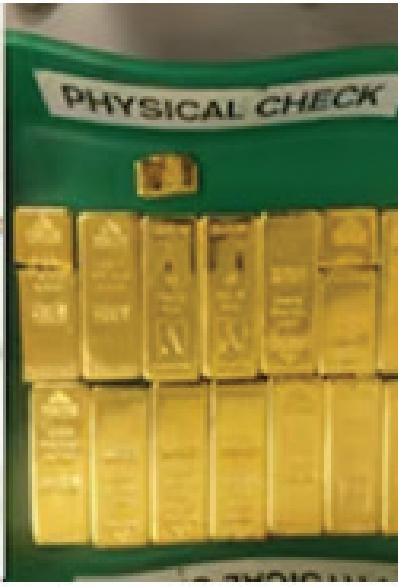
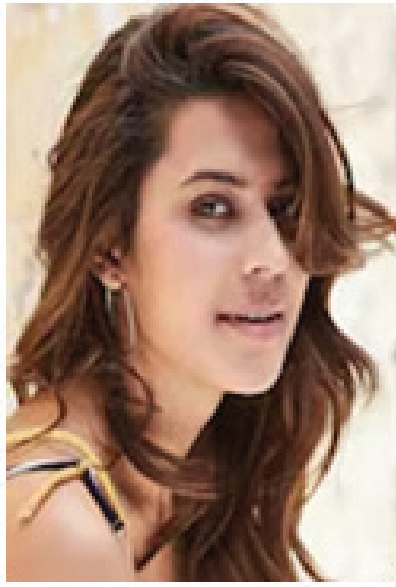
as Mini India in the South. With Chennai and Hyderabad also emerging as IT hubs, all eyes are on Bengaluru, which is already recognized as the Silicon Valley of India."

He stressed that any de-

cision affecting Bengaluru's structure should prioritize its global reputation and economic contributions, ensuring its continued leadership in technology and development.







## Ranya Rao's Bail Plea: Actor Alleges Verbal Torture and Denial of Sleep in Custody

- Lawyer argues protocol violations, calls her statement involuntary
- Cites bail granted in serious cases, urges release
- Karnataka govt orders probe into stepfather's alleged involvement

TPN Correspondent | Bangalore

Kannada actor Ranya Rao, arrested last week at Bengaluru airport for smuggling over 14 kilograms of gold into India, has made serious claims

about her treatment in custody. Speaking in a special court handling economic offences, Rao alleged that she was "denied her right to sleep" during the period between her arrest on March 3 and 7 a.m. on

March 4, when she was questioned three times.

Rao's lawyer, Kiran Javali, argued that despite being a woman, she was not allowed to rest, which violated her rights. This claim follows her previous allegations that she was "verbally tortured and threatened" while in custody. Photographs shared online showed Rao with bruised eyes and a swollen face, prompting her to express being "emotionally broken"

in court. However, the arrest memo mentioned that the injuries were pre-existing.

Rao's legal team also highlighted multiple protocol violations during her arrest, including the failure to inform her of her rights. The lawyer contended that her statement to authorities was "not voluntary" and should be considered inadmissible. Furthermore, they pointed out that the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

(DRI) did not adhere to the required procedure under Section 102 of the Customs Act, which mandates the immediate production of an arrested individual before a magistrate upon request.

Rao's lawyer compared her case to others, arguing that courts grant bail to women even in serious crimes like murder, and urged the court to grant her bail given the lesser punishment involved in her

case.

Ranya Rao, the stepdaughter of senior police officer Ramachandra Rao, was arrested after returning from Dubai with gold bars worth Rs 14.56 crore. Authorities believe she was part of a gold smuggling network, taking large commissions for her role in the operation. Investigations also uncovered gold and cash worth several crore from her residence. Rao's stepfather has denied any involvement in the crime, stating he was unaware of her actions. The Karnataka government has ordered a separate inquiry into him.

## Class 11 Student Attacked in Tamil Nadu: Family Claims Caste-Driven Assault

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

A disturbing incident unfolded in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district on Monday, when a class 11 student from a Scheduled Caste (SC) community was attacked on his way to take an exam, leaving three of his fingers severed. The victim's family has alleged that the attack was fueled by caste tensions, adding a troubling layer to an already horrific event. The teenager, who was en route to his exam center, was reportedly assaulted by a group of attackers, who used sharp weapons to carry out the gruesome act. According to family members, the assault was motivated by caste-based animosity, and they have expressed their anger and distress over the brutal attack. The victim is



said to be in critical condition, having suffered severe injuries to his hand, resulting in the loss of three fingers.

Following the incident, local police swiftly launched an investigation, leading to the detention of three minors in connection with the attack. Authorities have been working to

gather further details, and are considering the caste-related motives behind the assault as part of their inquiry. The assault has sparked outrage among local communities, especially those from Scheduled Caste backgrounds, who have voiced their concerns about caste-based violence and dis-

crimination.

The family of the victim has demanded justice, with many calling for the perpetrators to be held accountable for their actions. Community leaders have also raised concerns about caste tensions in the region and called for stronger measures to prevent such attacks in the future.

As investigations continue, the local police are under pressure to address the growing concerns around caste-based violence and ensure the safety of all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, as they pursue their education. The incident has drawn widespread attention, prompting calls for immediate action to curb caste-based discrimination and violence in the state.



## 224 species documented in Mysuru belt in 2025 annual bird census

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

During the annual winter bird census conducted in January 2025, a total of 224 bird species were documented across the Mysuru-Mandya-Chamarajanagar belt, showcasing the region's importance as a prime habitat for both resident and migratory bird species.

The one-day census, led by renowned birder and ornithologist A. Shivaprakash under Mysore Nature, involved 71 volunteers and 19 teams, who covered 110 water bodies across the three districts.

The bird count this year was slightly lower than in 2024, which recorded 226 species. Despite the decrease, the census reaffirmed the Mysuru region as a crucial site for wintering birds, particularly migratory species such as the Bar-headed Goose, which travels from Mongolia to roost in the area. The presence of several water bodies, some recognized as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by Birdlife International, plays a key role in attracting these migratory birds.

Notably, the Bar-headed Goose was the most abundant species, with 2,881 individuals

counted across the surveyed locations. The highest concentration of Bar-headed Geese was found at the Nugu backwaters, where 2,500 were spotted. Other prominent species included the Barn Swallow (1,694), Cattle Egret (1,752), Spot-billed Duck (803), and Eurasian Coot (732).

While the bird population showed a decline from the previous year—31,005 birds this year compared to 40,435 in 2024—Mysore Nature's census continues to provide valuable insights into the bird population and migratory patterns in the region.

The census also highlighted the importance of water bodies like Rayanakere, Kukkarahalli Lake, and the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, which supported significant bird populations.

A. Shivaprakash noted that the replenishment of lakes to their maximum levels for irrigation purposes could negatively affect wader birds, which prefer shallow, slushy conditions for foraging.

The long-running voluntary initiative, now in its 35th year, has helped establish a scientific bird database and provided valuable insights into the health of local water bodies and bird populations.

## Bengaluru Auto-Rickshaw Fares Set to Increase After Union Agreement

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a move that follows the recent fare hikes in bus and metro services, auto-rickshaw rides in Bengaluru are also set to become more expensive. Following an agreement by the drivers' unions, the minimum fare for auto-rickshaws will increase by Rs 10.

The revision will raise the base fare for the first 2 kilometers to Rs 40, while the fare for every additional 1.5 kilometers will be Rs 20. Prior to this change, the minimum fare was Rs 30, and the charge for each subsequent 1.5 kilometers was Rs 15. The fare hike comes as part of the unions' push for higher compensation due to rising fuel costs and other operational expenses.

This increase is expected to

impact daily commuters who rely on auto-rickshaws for short-distance travel across Bengaluru. While the fare for the first 2 kilometers will see an increment of Rs 10, passengers traveling longer distances will notice an increase in the fare for additional kilometers as well.

The auto-rickshaw unions have justified the price increase, citing inflation, rising fuel prices, and the need for drivers to meet their operational costs. However, the fare revision has sparked concerns among the city's residents, who are already facing the consequences of rising transportation costs due to the recent hikes in bus and metro fares.

With these changes, Bengaluru residents will have to reassess their transportation



options. While auto-rickshaws remain a popular mode of transport due to their convenience and availability, commuters may look for more cost-effective alternatives as fares continue to rise. The fare revision is expected to affect a large number of auto-rickshaw passengers across the city, es-

pecially those who use this mode of transportation for daily commuting.

As the city continues to deal with rising costs of living, further discussions about the affordability of public transportation and its impact on residents are expected in the coming weeks.

## Widespread Rainfall Brings Relief to Tamil Nadu's Soaring Temperatures

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

On March 12, 2025, widespread rainfall across Tamil Nadu, with some districts experiencing heavy showers, provided much-needed relief from the intense heat. The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Chennai has forecasted that the scattered rainfall will continue into the early hours of Thursday, March 13, 2025. After that, dry weather is expected to return to most parts of the state by Thursday morning. The RMC attributed the rain-



fall to a cyclonic circulation over the Comorin area, which is influencing wet conditions in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. While the rain will be scattered, heavy rainfall is expected to be concentrated in districts along the Western Ghats, including

Nilgiris and Coimbatore.

P. Senthamarai Kannan, Director of the Area Cyclone Warning Centre, mentioned that the dry weather would prevail across most of Tamil Nadu starting Thursday. However, there is a possibility of isolated rainfall at a few locations until March 16. A marginal increase in rainfall is expected on March 17 and March 18. From March 13 to 15, temperatures are likely to rise by 2-3°C due to the reduced rainfall.

On March 11, rainfall occurred over much of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, with nearly 30 weather stations re-

porting heavy to very heavy rainfall. Thiyagadurgam in Kallakurichi district received the highest rainfall, recording 16 cm during the past 24 hours (as of 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday). These summer showers helped bring down the day temperature significantly, offering a break from the rising mercury. In many areas, the maximum temperature dropped by 3-6°C, with temperatures ranging between 27°C to 33°C along the coastal belt.

Residents of Tamil Nadu enjoyed more pleasant weather on Wednesday, and Chennai also saw light to moderate rainfall in some areas. The capital's temperature is expected to remain between 33°C and 34°C through Thursday.

## Mild Earthquake Tremors Recorded in Madikeri Taluk, Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Madikeri

Villagers in Madenadu and 2nd Monnangeri of Madikeri taluk experienced mild earthquake tremors at 10:49 AM on Wednesday, triggering panic among residents.

The affected areas, already prone to landslides during monsoons, saw heightened concerns over the tremor's impact.

According to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Center (KSNDMC), the earthquake measured 1.6 in magnitude, with its epicenter

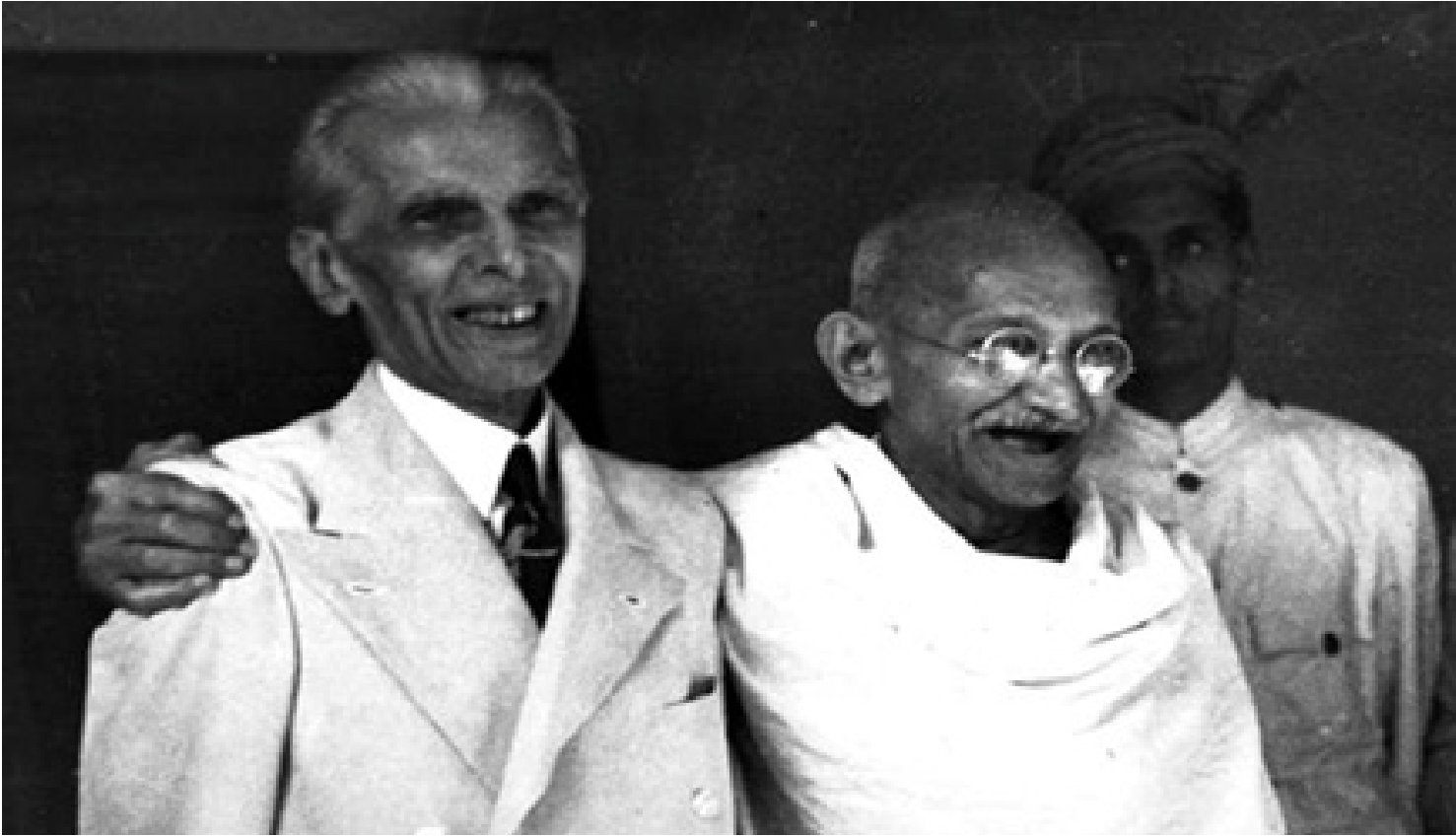
located 2.4 km northwest of Made Grama Panchayat. The tremors were felt within a 15-20 km radius but did not cause any significant damage.

KSNDMC officials reassured the public, stating, "This type of earthquake does not pose any harm to the local community, although slight shaking may be observed. The region falls under Seismic Zone 3, where the possibility of damage due to earthquakes is minimal."

Authorities have urged residents to remain calm while continuing to monitor seismic activity in the area.



# Why Pakistan Rejected Gandhi's Non-Violence?



The narrative surrounding India's struggle for independence often highlights Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, or ahimsa, as the decisive force that compelled the British to relinquish their hold on India. The Congress party has played a significant role in promoting this view, suggesting that Gandhi's teachings were the cornerstone of the freedom movement. However, this perspective can obscure the complex realities of the time, particularly the violent upheaval that accompanied the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Partition led to one of the largest mass migrations in history, resulting in the deaths of millions and the displacement of countless others—primarily Hindus and Sikhs fleeing

to India and Muslims moving to Pakistan. This tragic chapter underscores the limitations of non-violence in the face of deep-seated communal tensions and animosities. While Gandhi's teachings profoundly influenced India, they did not resonate in the same way across the border in Pakistan. Why did the people of Pakistan not embrace the principles of ahimsa and non-violence that Gandhi championed? While many Indians found solace and strength in Gandhi's message, the response from Pakistanis was markedly different. Attempts by Indian leaders to engage with Pakistan on the basis of peace and reconciliation often fell flat, as they failed to address the underlying hostilities



**Dr. Buragadda Srinadh**

and grievances exacerbated by partition. The historical context of Pa-

- The division of the country also divided Gandhiji's philosophy of Non-Violence, with Pakistan embracing violence while India upheld Non-Violence.
- Pakistan resorted to violence to instigate unrest in Kashmir and Punjab by supporting separatist movements, and now it is grappling with the consequences of its actions.
- The very survival of Pakistan is in jeopardy. It is crucial for Pakistan to relinquish its claim over occupied Kashmir and seek assistance from India to address its internal challenges.
- India, under the inspiring leadership of Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi, stands as a global advocate for peace, desires people from both sides to coexist harmoniously and thrive together with peace and prosperity

kistan's creation—rooted in a desire for a separate identity and autonomy—contributed to a mindset resistant to Gandhian ideals. Had the people of Pakistan genuinely adopted the principles of non-violence, the bloodshed of partition might have been prevented, saving countless lives. The stark reality is that the legacy of partition continues to shape India-Pakistan relations, with lingering animosities and conflicts persisting for decades. As we reflect on over seventy years of independence, it is increasingly important for the current generation to understand the complexities of the Pakistani mindset and the historical factors that have influenced it. The failure of Gandhi to instill the

concept of non-violence in Pakistan raises critical questions about the willingness of its people to embrace such ideals. It invites a deeper examination of the cultural, political, and social dynamics that have shaped Pakistan since its inception. Understanding these realities is essential for fostering meaningful dialogue and reconciliation between the two nations. As we move forward, achieving lasting peace will require more than just the promotion of non-violence—it will demand a genuine willingness among people of all faiths to accept it as a fundamental truth and way of life. In an increasingly fragile world, peaceful coexistence is not just desirable but essential for the welfare of all humanity.

## Does Congress Stand a Chance for Revival in Gujarat?

THE POINT DESK

Rahul Gandhi has set his sights on reviving Congress in Gujarat, boldly asserting that the party will defeat the BJP in the 2027 assembly elections. However, history and electoral trends suggest that reclaiming Gujarat after three decades out of power is an uphill task. While Gandhi acknowledges internal sabotage as a significant hurdle, his ambitious 'Mission Gujarat' will require more than just replacing a handful of leaders. Congress must undergo a deep structural transformation if it hopes to challenge the BJP's dominance in the state.

### The 2022 Setback

Gujarat has been BJP's stronghold for decades, and the 2022 assembly election only reinforced this. Congress suffered a massive blow, securing just 17 seats—a steep fall from its 2017 tally of 77. Its vote share plummeted to 27%, a drastic decline from 42% in 2017. Meanwhile, the BJP secured a record 156 seats with a 53% vote share, while AAP, despite being a newcomer, managed to bag 13% votes, largely at the expense of Congress. This downward trajectory is particularly concerning as Congress had, for years, maintained a steady vote share between 38% and 42%. However, internal defections, weak leadership, and failure to connect with Gujarat's evolving electorate have steadily eroded its support. The party now finds itself struggling not just against BJP's electoral machinery but also against an increasingly competitive opposition space.

### Fixing the Leadership Crisis

Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks about certain Congress leaders being in "collusion" with the BJP are not entirely unfounded. Over the years, many Congress MLAs have defected to the BJP, weakening the party from within. Even in the current assembly, Congress has already lost four MLAs to the BJP, reducing its tally to just 13. However, placing the blame solely on individual defectors is not enough. The Congress high command itself has repeatedly failed to retain key leaders. After the 2017 elections, young faces like Hardik Patel and Alpesh Thakor, who had once energized the party, left for the BJP due to dissatisfaction with Congress's senior leadership. Patel accused the party of lacking seriousness, while Thakor cited the absence of strong leadership and representation for OBCs. To regain lost ground, Congress must rebuild from within, promoting leaders who are genuinely committed to the party's ideology and grassroots work. Leadership in Gujarat cannot be dictated solely from Delhi—it requires strong state-level figures who can connect with local voters and challenge the BJP's dominance effectively.

### Winning Over Urban Voters



One of Congress's biggest weaknesses in Gujarat is its inability to make inroads into urban constituencies. While the party has traditionally held a decent presence in rural areas, BJP's grip on urban Gujarat has remained unshaken. In the 2017 elections, Congress led BJP 62-43 in rural seats but was heavily outnumbered in urban areas, trailing 15-57. Major cities like Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Gandhinagar remain BJP bastions, where Congress has struggled to appeal to the dominant middle class.

To change this, Congress must rebrand itself as a party that speaks to urban aspirations. BJP's narrative of being a pro-business, development-driven party has resonated strongly with Gujarat's middle class, while Congress is often perceived as leaning too much towards populism. A targeted approach addressing urban infrastructure, employment, and economic opportunities could help shift this perception.

### AAP's Decline—An Opportunity?

The emergence of AAP in Gujarat further complicated Congress's position in 2022, as a significant chunk of Congress's traditional vote base drifted towards the new entrant. However, AAP's recent setbacks, particularly in Delhi, and the tarnishing of Arvind Kejriwal's 'clean' image, could create an opening for Congress to reclaim lost ground. But this will only be possible if Congress presents itself as a viable alternative, rather than being a party that merely benefits from BJP-AAP conflicts. Reviving Congress in Gujarat is not a short-term project—it requires consistent effort, organizational restructuring, and a shift in strategy. Removing inactive or compromised leaders is just the first step. The party must build a strong leadership team at the state level, re-engage with its lost voter base, and craft a compelling narrative that resonates with Gujarat's electorate. Without a strategic, long-term vision, Congress risks remaining a distant challenger in a state where BJP's dominance seems unshakable.

## Could Canada Ever Join the European Union?

### A Bold Idea with Many Hurdles

The idea of Canada joining the European Union (EU) has recently gained traction, with a notable 44% of Canadians supporting such a move, according to a recent Abacus Data survey. This speculation has been fueled by strained US-Canada relations, particularly under President Donald Trump, and the EU's refusal to outright dismiss the possibility of Canadian membership. However, while the idea is intriguing, several significant obstacles stand in the way, ranging from geography to historical precedent and EU membership criteria.

### The Appeal of EU Membership for Canada

Canada and the EU already share strong economic and cultural ties. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) has solidified Canada's position as a key trading partner of the EU, making it the second-largest destination for Canadian exports after the United States. Additionally, Canada shares linguistic ties with Europe, with both English and French being official languages of the EU. Beyond economics, shared democratic values and a commitment to human rights make Canada a natural ideological ally to the EU. European Commission spokeswoman Paula Pinho acknowledged this alignment, noting that Canada and the EU are "like-minded partners which share many, many, many values and also strong historical connections." Given these factors, some Canadians may see EU membership as an opportunity to further align with a stable and influential economic bloc, especially as tensions with the US create uncertainty about the future of North American trade relations.

### Criteria and Geographic Challenges

Despite the benefits of closer ties, the fundamental challenge remains: Canada is not in Europe. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union states that any "European state" that respects democratic values can apply for membership. However, the treaty does not define what constitutes a "European state," leaving room for interpretation. Historical precedents suggest that geography matters. In 1987, Morocco's application to join the EU was rejected explicitly on the grounds that it was not a European country. In contrast, countries such as Ukraine, Moldova,



and Georgia—though outside the EU's current borders—have had their applications accepted for consideration due to their geographic and cultural proximity to Europe. Canada's closest territorial connection to Europe is Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory. While this link is notable, it is unlikely to be enough to override the EU's general preference for maintaining a geographically coherent membership.

### Economic and Strategic Considerations

Given Canada's existing free trade agreement with the EU, formal membership may not be necessary to deepen economic ties. The CETA agreement already allows Canada to enjoy significant trade benefits without assuming the responsibilities and constraints of EU membership. Furthermore, EU membership would require Canada to adopt EU regulations, policies, and potentially even the euro. These changes could be politically unpalatable and economically disruptive, especially given Canada's strong financial system and independent trade policies.

### The Geopolitical Context

Speculation about Canada's potential EU membership is also driven by broader geopolitical shifts. Trump's remarks about Canada potentially becoming the "51st state" highlight the pressures Canada faces in maintaining its sovereignty and economic independence. At the same time, the EU's willingness to discuss membership criteria with non-traditional candidates like Canada reflects a changing global landscape where alliances are increasingly fluid. However, interest in discussions does not equate to a realistic path toward membership.





## Jio Signs Deal With Elon Musk's SpaceX To Offer Starlink Services In India

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Reliance Group's digital services arm, Jio Platforms Limited, has entered into an agreement with SpaceX to offer Starlink's broadband internet services to customers in India, the company announced on Wednesday. However, the agreement is contingent upon SpaceX receiving authorization from the Indian government to sell Starlink in the country.

This development comes just a day after Jio's competitor, Bharti Airtel, signed a similar deal with SpaceX to bring Starlink services to India.

Mathew Oommen, Group CEO of Reliance Jio, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, calling it a transformative step toward enhancing broadband connectivity in India. He stated, "By integrating Starlink into Jio's broadband ecosystem, we are expanding our reach and improving the reliability and accessibility of high-speed broadband, empowering communities and businesses across the country."

The agreement will allow Jio and SpaceX to explore ways to extend Jio's offerings and enhance Starlink's services to consumers and businesses. Jio will distribute Starlink's solutions through its retail outlets and online platforms, further expanding the reach of high-speed internet across the nation.

By leveraging Jio's position as the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic and SpaceX's leadership in low Earth orbit satellite constellations, the partnership aims to provide reliable broadband services, particularly in India's most remote and rural regions. Jio will also offer Starlink equipment at its retail stores and will set up a system to assist with customer service, installation, and activation. The collaboration aims to ensure reliable internet access for enterprises, small businesses, and communities across India.

Additionally, the partnership between Jio and SpaceX is expected to complement Jio's existing internet services, such as JioAirFiber and JioFiber, by providing high-speed internet in areas that are difficult to reach.

SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell praised Jio's commitment to improving India's connectivity, expressing eagerness to work together once the necessary government authorization is obtained.

# PM Modi, Mauritius PM Inaugurate Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute

- Institute to foster leadership, research, public service
- Modi receives Mauritius' Highest National Award
- He honors India-Mauritius cultural ties
- Pledges stronger strategic partnership

TPN Correspondent | Port Louis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alongside Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam, inaugurated the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Public Service and Innovation on Wednesday. The institute aims to become a hub for learning, research, and innovation, fostering new leadership and ideas for the future.

In a post on X, PM Modi expressed that the institute would focus on advancing public service, research, and innovation, and help in nurturing leadership for the coming generations. He added, "It will serve as a hub for learning, research, and public service, foster-



ing new ideas and leadership for the future. It also strengthens our shared commitment to progress and development."

Earlier in the day, PM Modi was conferred the Highest National Award of Mauritius during a ceremony held on the National Day. Despite heavy rainfall, thousands of people gathered to witness the event. Modi expressed his heartfelt gratitude for receiving the prestigious honor, calling it not only a personal recognition but also an acknowledgment of the 1.4 billion Indians he represents. "This is not just my honor, it is the honor of 1.4 billion Indians. It is a tribute to the centuries-old cultural and historical bonds of kinship between India and Mauritius," said PM Modi.

He emphasized the strong ties between India and Mauritius, stating that the award symbolized the shared commitment to regional peace, progress, security, and sustainable development. He dedicated the award to the Indian ancestors who migrated to Mauritius and contributed to the nation's rich diversity. "Through their hard work, they wrote a golden chapter in the development of Mauritius and contributed to its vibrant diversity," he remarked.

PM Modi also reiterated his commitment to strengthening the India-Mauritius Strategic Partnership, aiming to elevate bilateral relations to new heights in the future.

## Tamil actor-politician Vijay slams Nirmala Sitharaman over Periyar remarks

TPN Correspondent | NEW DELHI

Tamil actor-politician Vijay has come to the defense of social reformer Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, criticizing the BJP for using the Dravidian leader's legacy to deflect criticism of the Union government. Vijay highlighted Periyar's contributions to social reform, emphasizing his opposition to child marriage, support for widow remarriage, and fight against caste-based discrimination.

He also underscored Periyar's early advocacy for reservation, saying, "People still praise him today because he spoke about reservation for social justice a hundred years ago," pointing out the relevance of his ideas in modern India. Vijay questioned whether the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, was truly upset about Periyar's controversial remarks on Tamil, asking, "Should the Union Finance Minister stop imposing the trilingual policy

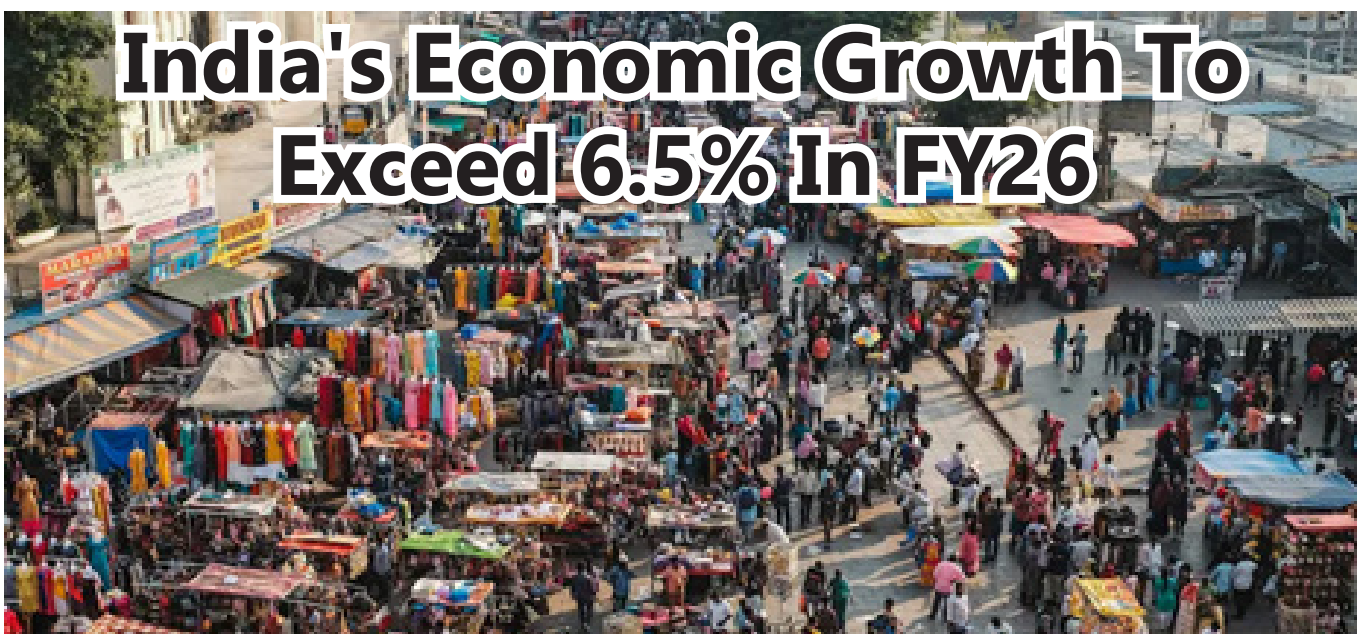


views?"

Vijay's remarks come in response to Sitharaman's speech in the Lok Sabha, where she criticized the DMK for idolizing Periyar, despite his alleged disparaging remarks about the Tamil language. Sitharaman did not mention Peri-

yar by name but referred to him as someone who called Tamil a "barbaric" language. She accused the DMK of hypocrisy for venerating a person who allegedly spoke ill of Tamil while claiming to defend the language.

The controversy has also reignited the debate over the National Education Policy (NEP). Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accused the DMK of misleading students in Tamil Nadu regarding the NEP, particularly its three-language formula. The DMK responded by reiterating its opposition to the formula and asserting that it would not accept the NEP in full. The party also stated that the Centre could not withhold education funds over Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement the policy. Vijay's defense of Periyar and his criticism of the BJP and the Centre highlight the ongoing tension between Tamil Nadu's political leadership and the Union government over cultural and educational policies.



## India's Economic Growth To Exceed 6.5% In FY26

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Moody's Ratings has forecasted India's economic growth to exceed 6.5% in the next fiscal year, up from 6.3% projected for the current year. This growth is attributed to higher government capital expenditure (capex), tax cuts, and interest rate reductions, which are expected to boost consumption.

The global credit rating agency has projected a stable outlook for India's banking sector, citing a favorable operating environment for banks in the coming fiscal year. However, it anticipates a moderate deterioration in asset quality following significant improvements in recent years. Moody's specifically highlighted stress in unsecured retail loans, microfinance loans, and small business loans as key areas of concern. Despite this, the profitability of banks is expected to remain adequate, with declines in net interest margins (NIMs) likely to be marginal due to modest rate cuts.

India's economic growth is expected to rebound after a temporary slowdown in mid-2024, with projections

for one of the fastest growth rates among large economies globally. The finance ministry's Economic Survey has projected GDP growth for the next fiscal year in the range of 6.3% to 6.8%. Official estimates suggest that GDP growth for the current fiscal year will be around 6.5%.

Moody's anticipates India's inflation rate to decline to 4.5% in fiscal 2025-26, down from 4.8% in the previous year. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised interest rates by 250 basis points between May 2022 and February 2023 to control inflation. However, it lowered the policy rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% in February 2025. Moody's expects any future rate cuts to be modest, as the RBI maintains a cautious stance amid global uncertainties, including US trade policies and exchange rate volatility.

The ratings agency also forecasts that system-wide loan growth will slow to 11-13% in fiscal 2025-26, compared to an average of 17% for the period from March 2022 to March 2024, as banks align loan growth with deposit expansion.

## "Prioritize childbirth": Udhayanidhi Stalin's Advice To Newlyweds

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Amid growing concerns over the potential loss of parliamentary seats due to delimitation, Tamil Nadu's political leaders have appealed to the public to have more children. Chief Minister MK Stalin's recent call for population growth was followed by his son, Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, who made a similar request at a mass wedding event in Chennai.

During the ceremony, Udhayanidhi Stalin urged the newlyweds to focus on having children immediately, though he humorously added, "but not too many." He linked the issue to Tamil Nadu's implementation of early birth control measures, which he argued may now result in the state losing up to eight seats in the upcoming delimitation process. In contrast, northern states, which failed to manage their population growth, would see an increase of around 100 seats.

The Deputy CM emphasized the need to preserve Tamil culture and identity, encouraging parents to give their children Tamil names. He further mentioned that Tamil Nadu's success in implementing family planning has contributed to the current dilemma of potentially losing representation in Parliament.

This issue has become particularly sensitive as the delimitation exercise looms ahead of the 2029 general elections. Con-



cerns about losing seats and political influence in comparison to northern states have sparked similar reactions across South India. In Andhra Pradesh, for instance, Kalisetti Appala Naidu, an MP from the Telugu Desam Party, announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 for women giving birth to a third child, with additional incentives for those delivering boys.

Union Minister Amit Shah recently addressed the issue, assuring southern states that their seat share would remain unaffected. He assured the public that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had ensured no reduction in southern states' representation. Shah accused MK Stalin and Udhayanidhi Stalin of trying to distract the public with such concerns, emphasizing that the government had already clarified its stance on the matter.



# Ukraine Agrees To Ceasefire Proposal, US Says "Ball Now In Russia's Court"

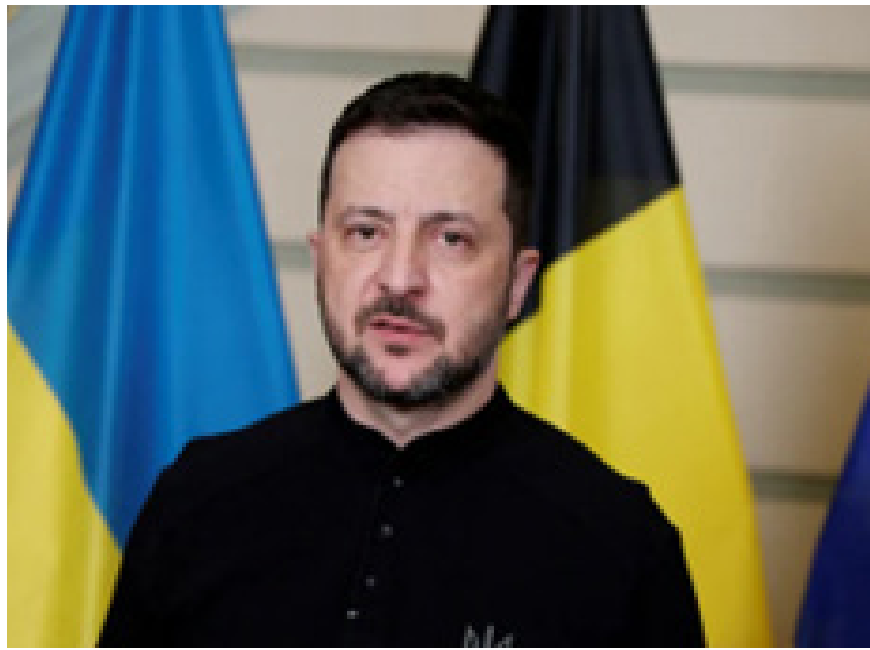
- Accepts 30-day ceasefire proposal, agrees to talks with Russia
- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirms Ukraine's commitment
- Trump resumes military aid, expresses optimism for swift resolution
- Ukraine urges Russia to clarify its stance on peace negotiations

TPN Correspondent | Ukraine

In a significant shift in the ongoing war, Ukraine has endorsed an American proposal for a 30-day ceasefire and agreed to immediate negotiations with Russia, following intensive talks in Jeddah on Tuesday. This breakthrough comes after three years of conflict, with tens of thousands of lives lost and extensive devastation in Ukraine.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed that Ukraine had agreed to enter into the ceasefire and begin direct negotiations with Russia. "Today we made an offer that the Ukrainians have accepted, which is to enter into a ceasefire and into immediate negotiations," Rubio stated after nearly nine hours of discussions. The United States now hopes Russia will reciprocate the peace offer, but if they refuse, the blame for the continued conflict will be squarely placed on Moscow.

In a shift of U.S. policy, President Donald Trump's administration,



which had previously cut military aid to Ukraine following a contentious meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on February 28, announced it would resume providing military assistance and intelligence sharing. Trump also expressed optimism about the ceasefire, stating, "I hope it will be over the next few days." Zelenskyy, in response, thanked Presi-

dent Trump for his "constructive" approach and noted that the U.S. had recognized Ukraine's proposals. He also emphasized that the key to peace now lies in Russia's response.

However, the path to lasting peace remains fraught with challenges. Despite the U.S. urging Moscow to agree to the ceasefire, Russia's

actions on the ground—such as increased attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure—suggest they may not yet be ready to end the war. Ukrainian officials are pressing Russia to make a clear commitment to peace, with top advisor Andriy Yermak stating, "Russia needs to say, very clearly, they want peace or not."

Trump's diplomatic overture has raised concerns among European allies, particularly France and Germany, who are wary of his departure from traditional NATO positions, including his rejection of Ukraine's NATO membership. In Poland, a strong supporter of Ukraine, Prime Minister Donald Tusk welcomed the U.S.-Ukraine ceasefire agreement but stressed that any deal must ensure Ukraine's long-term security.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding Russia's response, the Jeddah talks signal a significant shift in global diplomacy, with the focus now moving from "if" the war will end to "how" it will conclude.



## Greenland's Nationalist Party Gains Ground in Surprise Election Amid Trump's Interest

TPN Correspondent | Denmark

In a surprising turn of events, the centre-right opposition in Greenland has secured a significant victory in the territory's legislative elections, marking a surge in support for the nationalist Naleraq party, which advocates for rapid independence.

While the vote count was still ongoing, the Democratic Party, which is social-liberal and supports independence in the long term, led with a commanding share of the vote, according to Greenland's public broadcaster KNR. However, the nationalist Naleraq party, the most vocal pro-independence group, was set to achieve a "stunning" result.

The election attracted unprecedented international attention, primarily due to US President Donald Trump's previous interest in acquiring Greenland. Trump has long expressed his desire to control the vast Arctic island, citing its strategic significance.

Outgoing Prime Minister Mute Egede of the Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) party respected the election outcome, while the leader of the Siumut party, IA's coalition partner, conceded defeat. With no party securing a majority in Greenland's 31-seat parliament, coalition negotiations are expected in the coming days. The newly formed government will likely focus on drafting a timeline for independence, a goal that enjoys widespread support among Greenland's 57,000 residents.

Jens-Frederik Nielsen, the 33-year-old leader of the Democratic Party, expressed surprise at the election results and emphasized his party's commitment to unity and dialogue with all factions. "We didn't expect the election to have this outcome, we're very happy," he said.

Amid these discussions, Greenlanders' frustrations with Denmark's colonial legacy and the financial dependence on Danish subsidies have further fueled calls for independence. While the Naleraq party seeks a quick exit from Denmark, citing the mineral wealth that could fuel Greenland's economy, other parties prefer a more gradual approach, citing the island's dependence on fisheries and Danish financial support.

Trump's recent comments urging Greenlanders to join the US were met with resistance from the majority, further complicating the independence debate. Some fear that independence could lead to increased pressure from the US, making ties with Denmark appear more appealing.

# Pakistan Launches "Full Scale" Ops Against Train Hijackers, 155 Hostages Rescued

TPN Correspondent | Pakistan

Pakistan has initiated a large-scale military operation to rescue hostages from the Jaffar Express, which was hijacked by armed rebels in the volatile Balochistan region. So far, security forces have successfully rescued 155 passengers, including women and children, after engaging in a fierce gunfight with the rebels. The rescued passengers were taken to Mach, a nearby town, where a makeshift hospital has been set up to provide medical care.

The situation escalated overnight as the gunfight between Pakistani

forces and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) continued. While over 150 hostages have been freed, it remains unclear how many passengers are still held by the attackers. The BLA, a prominent separatist group, claimed to have killed 30 soldiers, though this has not been confirmed by official sources. The rebels split into smaller groups and attempted to escape, but the military has surrounded them in the area.

The hijacking occurred when the attackers intercepted the Jaffar



Express, which was traveling from Quetta to Peshawar. The rebels blew up the tracks, halting the train in a remote tunnel, and killed the locomotive driver. The BLA, which has long been seeking independence for Balochistan,

demanding the release of Baloch political prisoners and missing persons by the military within 48 hours. They threatened to destroy the train and execute hostages if their demands were not met.

One passenger, who managed to escape by walking for hours through the mountains, described how the rebels separated people from Pakistan's Punjab region and took them away. The attackers also reportedly killed two soldiers in front of the hostages.

# After DeepSeek, China Launches 'Manus', New AI Assistant

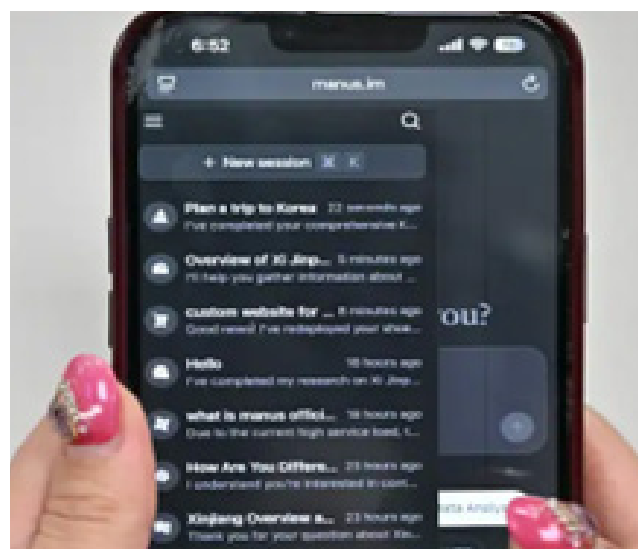
TPN Correspondent | Beijing

A new AI tool, Manus, is quickly gaining attention in China, sparking speculation that it could follow in the footsteps of DeepSeek, a chatbot that made waves globally earlier this year. Manus, an AI agent considered more advanced than a typical chatbot, can perform a wide range of tasks, including analyzing the stock market and creating personalized travel guides, according to its website.

Manus was launched last week by Chinese startup Butterfly Effect. In a viral introductory video, co-founder Yichao "Peak" Ji referred to Manus as "the next paradigm of human-machine collaboration," possibly even offering a glimpse of artificial general intelligence (AGI), which aims to mimic human-like thinking. Manus has generated significant interest despite being accessible by invitation only, with its official Discord server amassing over 170,000 members.

The tool's name, derived from the Latin phrase "Mens et Manus" meaning "mind and hand," reflects its combination of knowledge and practical application. Unlike chatbots like DeepSeek or ChatGPT, which respond to user prompts, Manus can autonomously execute tasks, such as booking tickets or sorting resumes.

Manus's exclusive beta access and focus on enterprise clients set it apart from other AI applications. However, some analysts warn that this closed ecosystem could hinder its widespread adoption. Despite this, Manus's ability to complete more complex tasks—such as creating custom websites—distinguishes it from competitors, although



it has faced challenges with response times.

One notable feature of Manus is its uncensored responses to sensitive political topics. Unlike DeepSeek, which follows government-approved narratives, Manus provides detailed, objective information on topics like the Tiananmen Square crackdown and human rights issues in Xinjiang. This openness may be attributed to Manus's design, which prioritizes task execution over content control.

Whether Manus can become a mainstream success like DeepSeek remains uncertain. Analysts suggest that Manus's potential depends on its ability to scale, handle technical challenges, and navigate ethical and regulatory concerns. Its future success in the enterprise automation space remains to be seen.

# "Entirely Unjustified": Australia's Anthony Criticizes US Tariffs on Steel and Aluminium

TPN Correspondent | Australia

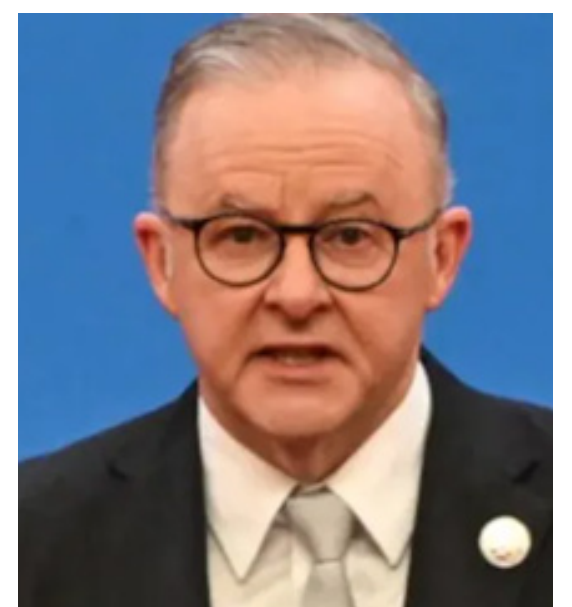
Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has condemned the United States' decision to impose 25 percent tariffs on steel and aluminium, calling the move "entirely unjustified" after the White House rejected Australia's request for an exemption.

"This is not a friendly act," Albanese told reporters on Wednesday, expressing his disappointment at the US decision. The Australian Prime Minister stated that the imposition of tariffs goes against the long-standing friendship between the two nations. "Quite clearly, it is not a positive step in our relationship," Albanese added.

The tariffs, which are part of US President Donald Trump's broader trade measures, will affect various countries, including close allies like Australia. Albanese expressed his frustration over the decision, highlighting that it is contrary to the spirit of the alliance. "Friends need to act in a way that reinforces, to our respective populations, the fact that we are friends," he said.

Despite the setback, Albanese made it clear that Australia would not retaliate. He stressed that tariffs and escalating trade tensions are ultimately detrimental to both economies, leading to slower growth and higher inflation. "Tariffs are a form of economic self-harm," he remarked.

Earlier this year, Albanese had hinted that Australia might secure an exemption fol-



lowing a phone call with President Trump in February, where the US leader agreed that an exemption was under consideration. However, White House officials confirmed overnight that this exemption was no longer on the table. "He considered it, and considered against it," said White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt.

While Australia is not a major global player in steel exports, it is a dominant supplier of iron ore, which is a critical component in steel production. Australian steel producer BlueScope, which employs around 4,000 people in the US, could also be impacted by the tariffs. Despite the tension, Albanese reiterated that Australia would not engage in retaliatory measures.



# Markets End Flat as Nifty Holds 22,300; IT Drags, Banks Support



**Voltas Ltd (VOLTAS)**  
Voltas saw a strong rise, gaining 2.77% to close at ₹1,445.05. The stock benefited from positive sentiment in the consumer durables sector, with expectations of rising demand for cooling products ahead of the summer season. The company's strong brand positioning and expansion plans further boosted investor confidence.



strengthened investor sentiment.

**Bharat Forge Ltd (BHARATFORG)**  
Bharat Forge advanced 2.43% to ₹1,090.20, driven by optimism in the auto and engineering segments. The company's global expansion strategy, strong order book, and improving defense sector contributions have supported its stock price. Increased exports and higher demand in domestic infrastructure projects have also contributed to its recent gains.

**KPR Mill Ltd (KPRMILL)**



KPR Mill inched up by 0.85% to ₹894.00, supported by steady demand in the textile sector. The company's focus on value-added products, sustainable textile production, and strong export orders have helped maintain investor interest. Recent capacity expansions and cost-effective operations have also been key drivers for its stock performance.



**Emami Ltd (EMAMILTD)**  
Emami Ltd surged 3.12% to ₹567.00, supported by strong investor interest in FMCG stocks amid expectations of improved earnings growth. The company's focus on premiumization, rural demand recovery, and new prod-



uct launches contributed to the positive momentum. Analysts believe that its cost-control measures and strategic acquisitions will drive future growth.  
**Aditya Birla Capital Ltd (ABCAPITAL)**  
Aditya Birla Capital gained 3.17% to close at ₹162.90, reflecting increased buying interest in the financial services sector. The company's diversified presence in lending, insurance, and asset management segments has made it a key player in the market. Positive earnings expectations and steady business growth have

Domestic stock markets ended flat on Wednesday, with benchmark indices fluctuating throughout the session. The indices, which opened with gains, gradually declined due to mixed signals from global markets. Despite IT stocks



tors, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Finance, and ITC, while Infosys, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Nestle, and TCS were the biggest losers.

Market breadth on the NSE remained negative, with 993 stocks advancing while 1,830 declined out of the 2,962 traded stocks. Additionally, 20 stocks hit 52-week highs, while 234 stocks touched 52-week lows. A total of 69 stocks hit the upper circuit, whereas 160 stocks hit the lower circuit.

On the macroeconomic front, industrial production surged to an eight-month high of 5% in January. The rupee remained stable, settling at 87.32 against the US dollar. RailTel Corporation announced its second interim dividend of ₹1 per share for FY25. TCS extended its partnership with Coop Denmark. Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley assigned an underweight rating to Bank of Baroda with a target price of ₹215. InterGlobe Aviation's board approved an investment in InterGlobe Aviation Financial Services. Reliance, Airtel, and Hindustan Unilever were selected as top picks by Motilal Oswal. Fitch assigned a BBB-rating to Adani Ports. Infosys saw 16 lakh shares change hands, and Power Finance Corporation's board approved raising ₹1,40,000 crore in FY26.

facing heavy selling pressure, the Nifty managed to recover from intraday losses, holding strong at 22,300 with support from banking and financial shares. Oil and auto stocks also contributed to market stability. Notably, indices are showing signs of consolidation. By the end of the session, the Nifty lost 27 points, while the Sensex declined by 72 points.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 74,102 in the previous session, opened at 74,270 on Wednesday. It hit an intraday low of 73,598 and a high of 74,392 before closing at 74,029, down 72 points. The NSE Nifty opened at 22,536, touched a low of 22,329 and a high of 22,577, losing 27 points to settle at 22,470. Meanwhile, the Nifty Bank gained 202 points, closing at 48,056.

Among the Nifty50 stocks, 19 gained while 31 declined. Private banking, healthcare, finance, auto, pharma, bank, oil, and energy stocks performed well, while IT, realty, media, PSU bank, consumption, and metal stocks faced selling pressure. Top gainers included IndusInd Bank, Tata Mo-

## India's Sugar Exports Slow as Domestic Prices Rise



Indian sugar mills have contracted to export 600,000 metric tons of sugar in the 2024/25 marketing year, which ends in September. However, industry officials say they are hesitant to sign new deals as local sugar prices rise. This slowdown in shipments from India, the world's second-largest sugar producer, is expected to support global sugar prices, which are currently at their lowest levels in three years.

After halting exports in 2023 to stabilize domestic prices, India allowed sugar exports of 1 million tons in January 2025 to clear surplus stocks. However, with domestic sugar prices on the rise, and expectations of further increases due to lower production and higher demand in the summer months, export activity has slowed in recent weeks.

According to a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm, exports picked up in January but have since decelerated as local prices have strengthened. Industry sources mentioned that the increasing domestic prices are making it less appealing for mills to engage in further exports, as the cost of selling abroad becomes less favorable. These sources, however, requested anonymity due to their inability to speak publicly.

India's sugar production for the 2024/25 marketing year is expected to fall to 25.8 million tons, compared to an annual consumption of 29 million tons. The summer season, which typically boosts demand for sugar due to increased consumption of cold drinks and ice creams, is expected to further elevate domestic demand.

Mills have already shipped around 250,000 tons of the 600,000 tons contracted for export since January. Despite the slowdown, industry experts believe that India will meet its target of 1 million tons in exports by September. Prakash Naiknavare, managing director of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories, confirmed that mills have ample time to complete exports, and they are likely to do so when they find better prices.

India remains a key player in the global sugar market, exporting to countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and the UAE. However, the current price dynamics could affect the competitiveness of Indian sugar in the global market.

# Retail inflation at 7-month low of 3.6%, thanks to slowing food prices

India's retail inflation has dropped to a seven-month low of 3.6% in February 2025, driven by easing food prices, including vegetables, pulses, and eggs. This marks a significant decline from the 4.26% inflation recorded in January 2025.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks retail prices, has slowed for the fourth consecutive month, dipping by 65 basis points from January to February. This brings inflation within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) target range of 4%, increasing expectations that the central bank may implement a 0.25% rate cut at its upcoming monetary policy meeting.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) highlighted that the February CPI reading is the lowest year-on-year inflation since July 2024, reflecting a slowdown in price increases. The Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI), which tracks food inflation, saw a significant slowdown, rising by only 3.75% in February, the slowest in nearly two years. This was a sharp contrast to the 5.9% increase in January 2025.

The easing of food inflation was largely driven by a decline in vegetable prices, which deflated by 1%, compared to double-digit in-



flation earlier in the fiscal year. Notably, tomato prices dropped, while the rate of inflation for potatoes slowed, although onion prices rose at a faster pace. Pulses, which had seen consistent price increases, saw a 1.35% deflation, marking the first negative growth in pulses inflation this fiscal year.

The easing food prices, coupled with a high base effect, contribut-

ed to the dip in overall inflation. Rural consumers saw inflation decrease to 3.8%, down from 4.6% in the previous month, while urban inflation slowed to 3.3% from 3.9%.

Inflation varied across states, with Kerala seeing the highest inflation at 7.3%, while Telangana had the lowest at just 1.3%. This regional difference was largely

attributed to varying food price trends across the country.

Economists now anticipate that the lower inflation could prompt the RBI to cut its repo rate by 25 basis points in its April meeting, with a possibility of further cuts in June, as the inflation outlook remains more benign than initially expected.

## India's Industrial Output Grows by 5% in January 2025

India's industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), saw a growth of 5.0% in January 2025, up from 3.5% in December 2024, according to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Wednesday.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) data highlighted that the manufacturing sector led the growth, expanding by 5.5% in January 2025 compared to 3.6% in the same month of the previous year. This performance reflects a strong recovery in the manufacturing industry, contributing significantly to the overall industrial growth.

On the other hand, mining production showed slower growth, increasing by just 4.4% in January 2025, compared to a 6% growth in January 2024. Power output also saw a modest increase of 2.4% in January, indicating slower expansion in energy production compared to previous years.

For the period from April to January, industrial output increased by 4.2%, which was lower compared to the 6% growth recorded during the same period the previous year. Despite the overall slowdown in some sectors, the performance in the manufacturing sector helped buoy the overall industrial output.

One of the bright spots in the data was the capital goods segment, which grew by 7.8% in January 2025, a substantial improvement compared to the 3.2% growth in January 2024. This surge in capital goods suggests increased investment in infrastructure and industrial capacity, which could bode well for future growth.

Overall, while the industrial output showed positive growth in January, certain sectors like mining and power production exhibited slower expansions. The data indicates a mixed but overall favorable industrial performance as India moves forward into 2025.



## iPad Air (2025) and 11th Gen iPad Go on Sale in India



Apple has officially launched the iPad Air (2025) and the 11th Generation iPad (2025) in India, with sales beginning today across Apple's website, Apple Stores, and various online and offline retailers. The latest iPads feature significant upgrades in performance, display, and storage. The iPad Air (2025) comes in 11-inch and 13-inch

variants, powered by the M3 chip with support for Apple Intelligence. The 11-inch Wi-Fi model starts at ₹59,900, while the Wi-Fi + Cellular variant costs ₹74,900. The 13-inch version is priced at ₹79,900 for the Wi-Fi model and ₹94,900 for the Wi-Fi + Cellular variant. It is available in Blue, Purple, Space Grey, and Starlight color options. Meanwhile, the 11th Generation iPad (2025) is powered by the A16 Bionic chip and now starts with 128GB of storage. The Wi-Fi model is priced at ₹34,900, while the Wi-Fi + Cellular variant costs ₹49,900. It is available in Blue, Pink, Silver, and Yellow. Both iPads come with Liquid Retina displays, advanced camera systems, and support for Wi-Fi 6E and Bluetooth 5.3. The iPad Air supports Apple Intelligence features and offers improved battery life, while the new iPad (2025) delivers a 30% performance boost over its predecessor. With these upgrades, Apple aims to enhance user experience across work, creativity, and entertainment.

## Basil Water: A Powerful Morning Detox for Better Health

- Basil water aids digestion and reduces bloating.
- It detoxifies the body and boosts kidney health.
- Rich in antioxidants, it strengthens immunity and heart health.



### THE POINT DESK

Basil water, a natural detox drink made by infusing basil leaves in water, has been recognized for its remarkable health benefits. Often referred to as Tulsi in India, basil is rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and essential minerals that contribute to overall well-being. Consuming basil water on an empty stomach each morning can provide multiple health advantages.

One of the key benefits of basil water is its positive impact on digestion. It stimulates the production of digestive enzymes, easing bloating and indigestion. The anti-inflammatory properties of basil also help in soothing the gastrointestinal tract, making it a natural remedy for acid reflux and gut-related issues.

Basil is known for its detoxifying effects, promoting kidney health by flushing out toxins and excess salts. Its diuretic properties aid in preventing kidney stones and urinary tract infections, ensuring a cleaner and more hydrated urinary system. Additionally, its immunity-boosting properties, rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, strengthen the body's defenses against infections by neutralizing free radicals and reducing inflammation. Mental well-being also benefits from basil water, as it contains adaptogenic properties that help regulate cortisol levels, reducing stress and anxiety. Drinking it regularly promotes relaxation, improves focus, and combats daily fatigue, making it an ideal natural remedy for managing mental stress.

For those managing blood sugar levels, basil helps regulate glucose by improving insulin sensitivity,

making it beneficial for heart health and energy balance. Additionally, its ability to reduce cholesterol levels, improve circulation, and prevent plaque buildup in arteries supports cardiovascular well-being, reducing the risk of heart disease. Basil's antibacterial properties contribute to clearer skin by flushing out toxins and reducing acne and blemishes. It also promotes respiratory health by clearing mucus from the lungs and easing breathing difficulties, especially for those with allergies or respiratory infections. Additionally, basil water is a great metabolism booster, aiding in weight management by reducing water retention and flushing out excess waste. Its detoxifying effects support fat metabolism, making it an effective addition to a healthy lifestyle.

Incorporating basil water into a daily morning routine can bring significant health benefits, enhancing digestion, immunity, metabolism, and overall wellness.

## Mahindra XUV700 Ebony Edition Teased Ahead of Launch



Mahindra has teased the upcoming XUV700 Ebony Edition, an all-black variant of its popular SUV, ahead of its official launch. This follows the recent debut of the Scorpio N Carbon Edition and will be launched alongside the black edition of the Thar Roxx. The XUV700 Ebony Edition will feature a completely blacked-out appearance with black paint, a black grille re-

placing the chrome version, and new 18-inch black alloy wheels. Similar to the exterior, the interior will also receive an all-black theme, replacing the existing ivory upholstery with black elements on the dashboard and AC vents.

Mechanically, the Ebony Edition will retain the same specifications as the top-spec variants of the XUV700. It will be offered with a 2.0-litre tur-

bo petrol engine producing 197 hp and 380 Nm torque, as well as a 2.2-litre diesel engine available in two states of tune—182 hp with 420 Nm torque and 152 hp with 370 Nm torque.

Mahindra is expected to announce the official launch date and pricing details soon, with anticipation building among SUV enthusiasts for the latest addition to the XUV700 lineup.

## Rottweiler Rips Cobra Apart in Viral Video, Sparks Heated Debate

A chilling video of a Rottweiler attacking and killing a cobra has gone viral on social media, igniting a heated debate among viewers. Shared on Instagram by user lone\_wolf\_warrior27, the clip captures a tense confrontation between the pet dog and the venomous snake in a garden. The video shows the Rottweiler growling and barking at the cobra while its owner records the incident. Moments later, the powerful dog lunges at the snake, tearing it apart. Even after the cobra is lifeless, the dog continues to growl, bark, and rip at the reptile. Captioned "Rottweiler vs Cobra," the post has amassed over 63 million views and 2.1 million likes. However, it has also sparked controversy. While some praised the dog's bravery, others criticized the



owner for not intervening. One user wrote, "Train your dog, he doesn't even follow your command." Another pointed out, "Cobras rarely attack unless provoked. This could have been prevented." Others expressed concern for the dog's safety, with one commenter stating, "This could have been fatal. The owner

should have acted sooner." Many users also condemned the decision to film the encounter instead of calling a rescue team to handle the snake. The video continues to stir strong reactions, with debates over responsible pet ownership and the ethics of allowing such encounters to unfold.

## These 5 countries have the lowest gold prices, UAE not on list

Dubai is often regarded as a prime destination for buying gold, but it surprisingly ranks sixth on the list of countries with the lowest gold prices. The recent arrest of Kannada actor Ranya Rao at Bengaluru airport for attempting to smuggle 14.2 kg of gold from Dubai has brought attention to global gold price differences.

As of February 2025, the top five countries with the lowest gold prices are:

- **United States:** 24K gold at ₹8,586 per gram, 22K gold at ₹7,874 per gram.
- **Australia:** 24K gold at ₹8,602 per gram, 22K gold at ₹7,889 per gram.
- **Singapore:** 24K gold at ₹8,667 per gram, 22K gold at ₹7,949 per gram.
- **Switzerland:** 24K gold at ₹8,682 per gram, 22K gold at ₹7,963 per gram.
- **Indonesia:** 24K gold at ₹8,704 per gram, 22K gold at ₹7,983 per gram.

Dubai follows at sixth place, with 24K gold priced at ₹8,718 per gram and 22K gold at ₹7,996 per gram. Prices fluctuate based on market trends.

Gold Import Regulations in India

Despite lower prices abroad, importing gold is subject to customs duty. In the Union Budget 2024-25, the import duty was reduced from 15% to 6%. The tariff value of gold, set by the CBIC, currently stands at \$927 per 10 grams, down from \$938.

Duty-Free Allowance Indian citizens returning from abroad can carry:

- Male passengers: Up to ₹50,000 worth of gold jewellery.
  - Female passengers: Up to ₹1 lakh worth of gold jewellery.
- Gold bars, coins, and other forms beyond jewellery are subject to customs duty. The maximum importable quantity per person is 1 kg, with mandatory declaration for amounts exceeding the duty-free limit.





## Gill Retains No. 1 Spot in ODI Rankings, Rohit Moves to Third

India's Shubman Gill has retained his No. 1 ranking among ODI batters following his performance in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Skipper Rohit Sharma moved up two places to third after his match-winning 76 in the final against New Zealand, while Virat Kohli remains in the top five at fifth after amassing 218 runs in the tournament. New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell climbed to sixth, while Rachin Ravindra and Glenn Phillips also made notable gains. Among bowlers, New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner surged six spots to second after taking nine wickets in the tournament, trailing only Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana. India's Kuldeep Yadav jumped to third, and Ravindra Jadeja moved into the top 10. Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai retained the top spot in the all-rounder rankings, but New Zealand's Santner, Michael Bracewell, and Ravindra made significant gains, with Ravindra finishing as the 'Player of the Tournament' after scoring two centuries and taking three wickets.



## Gambhir Set to Travel with India 'A' for England Tour First India Head Coach to Take Up This Role



In a break from tradition, Gautam Gambhir is set to become the first head coach of Team India to travel with the India 'A' squad for an overseas tour. The move comes ahead of India's senior team's tour of England in June, with Gambhir reportedly keen on analyzing the red-ball talent pool firsthand. Historically, India 'A' and U19 teams have been guided by National Cricket Academy (NCA) coaches, with former India head coach Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman previously overseeing such assignments. However, Gambhir, who recently led India to a Champions Trophy victory, has informed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) about his desire to accompany the 'A' team. A BCCI source confirmed that Gambhir sees this move as a crucial step in strengthening India's bench strength, especially in red-ball cricket. "Since returning from Australia, Gambhir has been in discussions with the board. He believes analyzing the reserve players closely is essential for future team-building," the source said. Gambhir is also pushing for more India 'A' tours, pointing out that recent 'A' series have been limited to shadow tours for marquee events. His proactive approach could lead to structural changes in India's domestic and developmental cricket programs.

## Harry Kane Leads Bayern Munich Into Champions League Quarterfinals

Bayern Munich marched into the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals after a 2-0 victory over Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday, sealing a dominant 5-0 aggregate win. Star striker Harry Kane played a pivotal role, scoring one goal and assisting another as Bayern comfortably dispatched last season's unbeaten German champions. Having already taken control of the tie with a 3-0 home win in the first leg, Bayern entered the second leg in a commanding position. Despite Leverkusen's efforts to mount a comeback, Bayern remained composed and struck early in

the second half. Kane found himself at the right place to tap in a Joshua Kimmich cross, breaking the deadlock and effectively ending Leverkusen's hopes of a turnaround.

With Leverkusen pushing forward in desperation, Bayern capitalized again in the 71st minute. Kane turned provider with a clever chip, setting up Alphonso Davies, who smashed home Bayern's second goal to put the game beyond reach.

The England captain, often scrutinized for his performances in crucial matches, delivered a commanding display, just as he had in the first leg when he scored

twice. With Bayern eyeing a dream final at their home ground in Munich, Kane remains instrumental in their pursuit of European glory.



## Every Time We Played Against CSK, I Wanted To...



Ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025, Rajasthan Royals (RR) captain Sanju Samson has shared his ad-

miration for Chennai Super Kings (CSK) legend MS Dhoni. Samson revealed that every time he played against CSK, he eagerly sought opportunities to interact with Dhoni and learn from him.

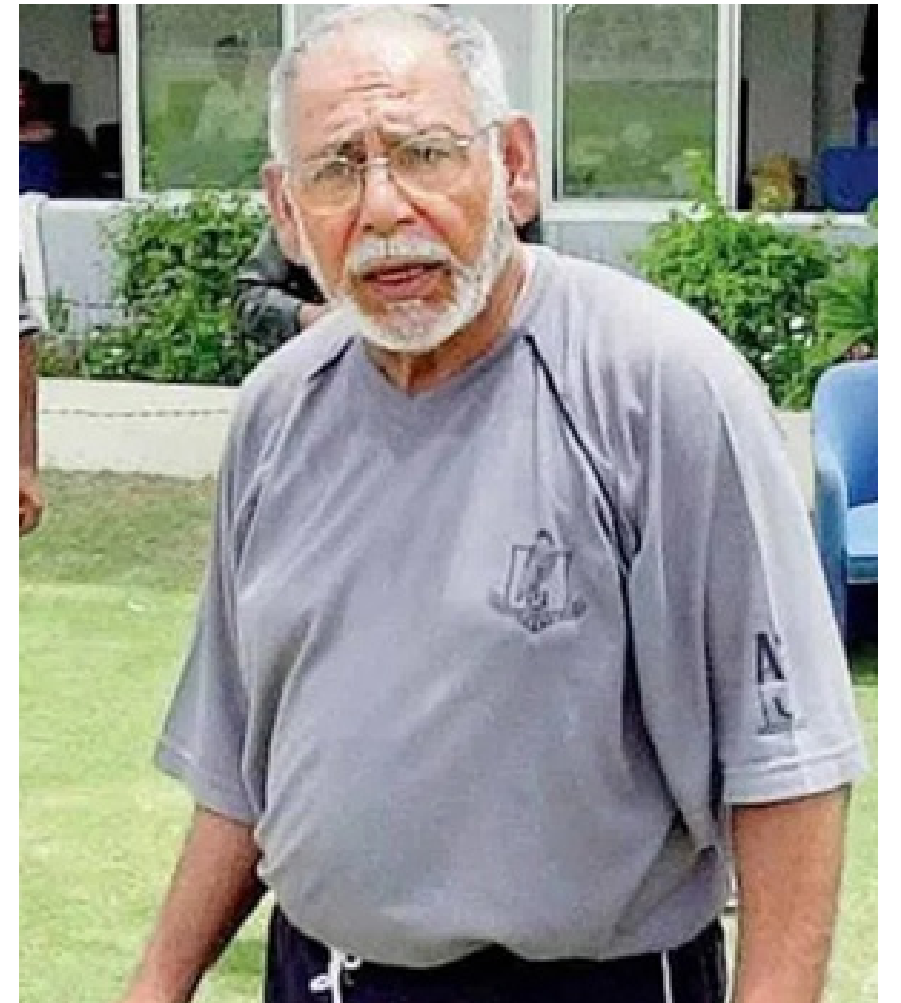
"Like every young Indian cricketer, I always wanted to be around MS Dhoni. Every time we played against CSK, I wanted to sit and talk to him, ask him how he does things. It was a dream for me," Samson said while speaking on JioHotstar's 'SuperStar' programme.

Samson recalled a memorable game against CSK in Sharjah, where he scored 70-80 runs and won the Man of the Match award. After that match, he had a conversation with Dhoni, which marked the beginning of their strong bond. "Even now, I meet him often. Just yesterday, I

met him again. It's truly a blessed feeling—to go from idolizing him to now sitting with him for shoots and events," he added.

Dhoni, who will play in IPL 2025, was retained by CSK as an uncapped player for ₹4 crore under a special retention rule. Since retiring from international cricket in 2020, he has continued to feature only in the IPL. In the 2024 season, he scored 161 runs at an astonishing strike rate of 220, often playing the role of a finisher. The 42-year-old remains one of IPL's most iconic players, ranking sixth on the all-time run-scorers list with 5,243 runs in 264 matches. As CSK gears up for the 2025 season under the leadership of Rituraj Gaikwad, fans eagerly await another chapter in Dhoni's legendary career.

## Legendary all-rounder Syed Abid Ali passes away at 83



Hyderabad's cricketing stalwart Syed Abid Ali, a former India all-rounder, passed away in the US on Wednesday at the age of 83. A key figure in India's historic Test victory at The Oval in 1971, Abid Ali had the rare honor of scoring the winning runs in that iconic match.

A determined medium-pacer and an aggressive lower-order batsman, Abid Ali claimed 47 wickets across 29 Tests. His Test career began with a dream spell of six for 55 against Australia in Brisbane (1967-68), earning praise from the legendary Frank Tyson. He followed it up with impressive knocks of 78 and 81 in the Sydney Test during the same series. Apart from his on-field exploits, Abid Ali was renowned for his ex-

ceptional fielding and sharp running between the wickets. However, he once faced an unusual situation in the early 90s when a mistaken report falsely declared him dead, an incident he took with humor.

After retiring, Abid Ali took up coaching assignments with Maldives, UAE, and the Andhra Ranji teams. His son Faqeer Ali is married to former India wicketkeeper Syed Kirmani's daughter. Despite his contributions, Abid Ali often found himself overlooked by the Hyderabad Cricket Association for reasons unknown.

Abid Ali credited his cricketing success to the late M L Jaisimha, whom he considered his mentor. His passing marks the end of an era for Hyderabad cricket.

## East Bengal Crash Out of AFC Challenge League After Loss to FK Arkadag



East Bengal's AFC Challenge League campaign came to an end after a 1-2 defeat against FK Arkadag in the second leg of the quarterfinals. The Indian side, reduced to 10 men in the first half, lost 1-3 on aggregate, failing to advance to the semifinals. The match started on a promising note for East Bengal as Messi Bouli put them ahead within the first

minute, leveling the aggregate score. However, their momentum suffered a blow in the 33rd minute when Lalchungnunga received his second yellow card, leaving them a man down for the remainder of the game.

FK Arkadag took advantage of their numerical superiority, with Altmymrat Annadurdyev scoring twice in the dying moments of the game—

first in the 89th minute and then in the eighth minute of stoppage time (90+8'). This sealed a 3-1 aggregate victory for the Turkmenistan side, who had already won the first leg 1-0 in Kolkata on March 5.

With this loss, East Bengal's run in the AFC Challenge League comes to an end, while FK Arkadag advances to the semifinals.





## Naga Chaitanya's Thandel Dominates Netflix Charts



Naga Chaitanya's latest blockbuster *Thandel* continues its remarkable run, now dominating the Netflix streaming charts. The film, which marked Chaitanya's first ₹100 crore grosser worldwide, has been a commercial success despite facing multiple challenges. After making waves at the box office, *Thandel* premiered on Netflix last Friday and quickly became a trending title. Audiences across different regions have resonated with its universal themes of love, courage, and resilience, pushing it to the top of the platform's

charts. Chaitanya's dedication to his role was evident, with meticulous attention to his looks, body language, and slang, earning him widespread praise. Sai Pallavi also delivered a stellar performance, and their on-screen chemistry has been a major highlight. Director Chandoo Mondeti struck the perfect balance between love, action, and drama, keeping viewers engaged throughout. Adding to the film's appeal, Devi Sri Prasad's soundtrack has gained renewed popularity on digital platforms, further amplifying its success.

## Pranitha Stuns at Paris Fashion Week in Bold Look



Actress Pranitha Subhash made a striking statement at Paris Fashion Week, turning heads with her bold and stylish appearance. The actress, who has been in the industry for over 15 years and is now a mother of two, exuded confidence as she walked the ramp. Dressed in a chic brown checked pow-

er suit paired with a black bralette, Pranitha elevated her look with vibrant orange lipstick and bold eyeliner. Her effortless charm and poised presence captivated fashion enthusiasts. Despite setbacks in Malayalam and Kannada cinema last year, fans believe 2024 will be her resurgence, with her latest appearance reinforcing her en-

## Dhanush vs Nayanthara Copyright Row Actor's Company Seeks Rs 1 Crore Compensation



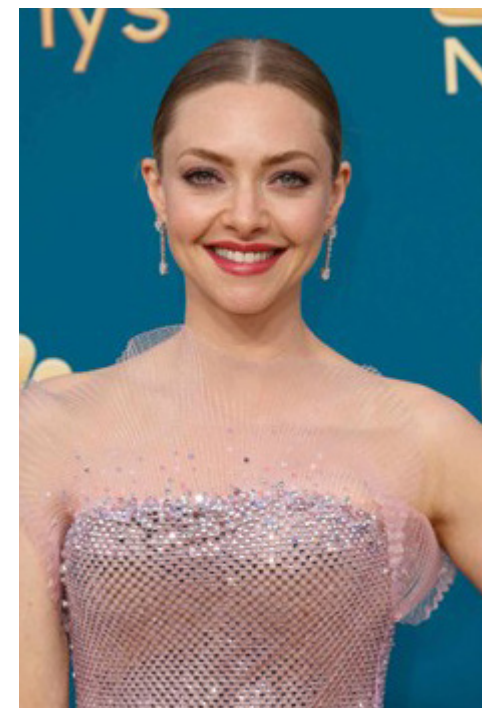
Dhanush's production house, Wunderbar Films Private Limited, has decided to proceed with its civil suit seeking ₹1 crore in damages and a permanent injunction against the use of behind-the-scenes (BTS) visuals from the Tamil film *Naanum Rowdy Dhaan* in Netflix's docu-drama *Nayanthara: Beyond the Fairytale* without his consent. The actor-producer accused Nayanthara's husband, filmmaker Vignesh Shivan, of "unprofessional behavior" during the shoot of the film, as stated in the affida-

vit submitted to the court. Wunderbar Films has named Nayanthara and the documentary's creators in its compensation claim. "The fourth respondent (Vignesh Shivan) unnecessarily began focusing his attention only on the third respondent (Nayanthara), ignoring the other cast and crew by taking multiple re-takes of scenes involving her to ensure she delivered her best performance, without prioritizing other actors," the affidavit read. The conflict between Dhanush and Nayanthara became public on November 16, 2024, when the *Jawan* actress posted an open letter on X, accusing Dhanush of "touching an all-time low" after he denied permission to use a three-second clip shot on personal devices, despite two years of repeated requests. Dhanush has refrained from making any public statements and has instead taken legal action. In November 2024, he filed a civil suit in the Madras High Court against Nayanthara, Vignesh Shivan, and their production house, Rowdy Pictures Private Limited. On January 28, the court ruled in favor of Dhanush by dismissing a petition from Netflix India that sought to reject his lawsuit. The main suit will be taken up for hearing on April 9.

## Amanda Seyfried confirms Mamma Mia 3

Hollywood actress Amanda Seyfried has confirmed that a third installment of the beloved *Mamma Mia!* franchise is in the works. While an official production timeline remains unannounced, Seyfried hinted that filming could take place in Greece as early as 2026. The first film, *Mamma Mia!* (2008), and its sequel, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* (2018), received immense love from audiences, making a third installment highly anticipated. In a recent chat with Entertainment Tonight, Seyfried confirmed that *Mamma Mia 3* is happening but jokingly remarked, "It's going to happen in Greece, hopefully before 2038." While she did not specify a release date or confirm whether production had begun, she assured fans that the project is moving forward.

Seyfried also hinted at a possible filming schedule, stating, "Summer of 2026, that's just my schedule." Speaking about the challenges of coordinating the cast's schedules, she recalled a past experience, saying, "Everybody has to put their lives on hold. I remember I was feeding my six-day-old baby, and they were like, 'Mamma Mia, it's happening! August. Gotta be in the UK!' And I was like (faux crying), 'I just had a baby, I can't do this!' But it's going to be like that again. It will take a lot of people's schedules aligning and the story being right." While further details are awaited, fans can revisit the first two *Mamma Mia!* films, which are currently available for streaming on various OTT platforms.



## Kiara And Sidharth's First Interaction Has A Lust Stories Connection?

Bollywood couple Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani, who recently announced their first pregnancy, initially met on the sets of Kiara's anthology film *Lust Stories*, not *Shershaah*, as widely believed. In an interview with Lilly Singh, Sidharth revealed that he first met Kiara while visiting the *Lust Stories* set to

meet filmmaker Karan Johar. "That's the film (*Lust Stories*), the reason I met her. I'm very grateful for that short film to be made because I met her... I was on set," he said. Sidharth further shared that he was already aware of Kiara's role in *Lust Stories* as Karan Johar had narrated the story to him beforehand. Praising Kiara's film choices, he highlighted her performances in *Lust Stories* and *Guilty*, commending her for taking on bold and socially relevant roles. He also spoke about Kiara's influence on his personal life, emphasizing her strong family values and work ethics. "She's very family-oriented, and her ethics and morals are in the right place, and that's something I respect and admire," he stated. On February 28, 2025, the couple announced their first pregnancy through a joint Instagram post, sharing a heartwarming picture of them holding a pair of baby socks, delighting their fans.



## 'Court: State Vs Nobody' Holds Celebrity Premiere Tonight

Nani's latest production, *Court: State Vs Nobody*, starring Priyadarshi and directed by Ram Jagadeesh, is set to have its celebrity and special press premiere tonight. Several distinguished guests, along with the film's entire team, will be attending the exclusive screening. In addition to the private premiere, the makers have also announced paid premiere screenings in Hyderabad and other cities across the Telugu states. The advance bookings for these early shows have been remarkable, indicating strong

audience interest. While holding premiere screenings before the official release is a calculated risk, positive word-of-mouth from these early shows could significantly boost the film's prospects. Given its sensitive subject matter—centered around the POCSO Act and the story of a teenager—the film blends courtroom drama with an emotional love story and other compelling elements. With strong pre-release buzz and an intriguing narrative, *Court: State Vs Nobody* is poised to make a strong impact ahead of its theatrical debut.

