

Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD

H 33° C

L 25° C

VIJAYAWADA

H 35° C

L 26° C

TIRUPATHI

H 36° C

L 26° C



BJP accuses Congress of Ambedkar's defeat in 1952 polls

Minister Priyank Karge blames Savarkar, citing a handwritten letter

Speaker sets Friday afternoon for a debate on the issue

Ruckus in Karnataka Assembly Over Ambedkar's 1952 Poll Defeat

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka Legislative Assembly witnessed heated exchanges on Monday as BJP accused Congress of being responsible for Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's defeat in the 1952 Lok Sabha elections. In response, Minister Priyank Karge countered that it was Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar who played a role in Ambedkar's loss. Karge challenged the BJP, stating he could produce Ambedkar's handwritten letter proving Savarkar's involvement. BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal accepted the challenge and called for an open debate. Speaker U.T. Khader intervened, announcing that time would be allocated for discussion on Friday afternoon.


Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, while replying to the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, highlighted that it was the Congress government in Karnataka that implemented the Scheduled Castes Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan in 2013, following Andhra Pradesh. He pointed out that BJP-ruled states and the Central government had not taken similar steps. During the debate, BJP MLA Vedavyas Kamath questioned, "Who defeated Ambedkar in the elections?" Priyank Karge responded, "It was Savarkar," and was backed by Congress legislators, including Byrathi Suresh. As the argument escalated, BJP members countered that it was Congress and Nehru who campaigned against Ambedkar and later removed him from the Cabinet.

Karge insisted that Ambedkar's handwritten letter explicitly mentioned Savarkar's role in his defeat. "Will you resign if I show the letter? I challenge you," he said, triggering further chaos. BJP MLAs, including Bellad, claimed Ambedkar had himself called Congress a "disease" and accused it of disrespecting him. With both sides refusing to back down, Speaker Khader reiterated that a debate would be held on Friday afternoon. However, tensions continued, with BJP MLAs shouting slogans against Congress and objecting to Karge reading the letter in the House.


CM Siddaramaiah Announces Study Chair for MD Nanjundaswamy Amid Funding Concerns

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in his 16th budget, has announced the establishment of a Study Chair at the University of Mysore to honor his political mentor and Raitha Sangha founder Prof. M.D. Nanjundaswamy. The move is seen as a tribute to the late farmer leader who played a crucial role in shaping Siddaramaiah's early political career. Nanjundaswamy, known for his global vision on agriculture, strongly opposed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and fought against corporate control over farming, including the use of genetically modified seeds. He was instrumental in bringing Siddaramaiah into active politics by appointing him as the Mysuru district Raitha Sangha general secretary. However, the lack of financial allocation for the proposed Chair has raised concerns about its effectiveness. Experts point out that several existing study chairs, barring a few like the Basava Chair and Ambedkar Chair, have become defunct due to insufficient funding. Currently, the University of Mysore has 26 study chairs, out of which seven are government-funded, but many remain non-functional due to financial constraints. Retired professor and KRRS leader Prof. Basavaraju welcomed the decision but stressed the need for dedicated financial support. He urged the government to provide sufficient funds to ensure meaningful research and activities focusing on Nanjundaswamy's contributions, agricultural policies, and farmer welfare. Some activists believe that the Chair should be established at an agricultural university instead, given Nanjundaswamy's close association with farmer rights and agro-economics. Without proper funding, they fear this initiative might end up as another symbolic gesture rather than a functional research center.



Dy CM DKS Challenges BJP's Vijayendra to Give Key Posts to Minorities



Deputy CM challenges BJP to appoint minorities in key positions

Accuses BJP of lacking true commitment to equal rights

Karge criticizes Centre for neglecting education sector

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka
Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has challenged BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra to prove his commitment to equality by appointing members of minority communities as MLAs, Rajya Sabha members, or ministers in the Central cabinet. Speaking at an event in Gadag honoring the late K.H. Patil, Shivakumar took a sharp dig at Vijayendra's remarks on equal rights. "If Vijayendra truly believes in equality, let the BJP appoint two Christians and three Muslims in prominent positions within the party," he said. He further emphasized that Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, and Buddhists are all equal citizens of Karnataka and India, and the Congress party remains committed to their welfare. Meanwhile, All India Congress Committee (AICC) President Mallikarjun Kharge launched an attack on the Central government, accusing it of neglecting the education sector. He highlighted that nearly 50% of teaching positions in Kendriya Vidyalayas and Central universities remain vacant, which he attributed to the government's lack of priority for

marks on equal rights. "If Vijayendra truly believes in equality, let the BJP appoint two Christians and three Muslims in prominent positions within the party," he said. He further emphasized that Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, and Buddhists are all equal citizens of Karnataka and India, and the Congress party remains committed to their welfare. Meanwhile, All India Congress Committee (AICC) President Mallikarjun Kharge launched an attack on the Central government, accusing it of neglecting the education sector. He highlighted that nearly 50% of teaching positions in Kendriya Vidyalayas and Central universities remain vacant, which he attributed to the government's lack of priority for

Tighten Indo-Bangladesh Border, Ease Deportation Rules - Karnataka HM


15,000 illegal Bangladeshis in Vijayapura, says BJP MLC

HM Parameshwara calls for stricter deportation policies

33 Bangladeshis, 10 Pakistanis deported from Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara has urged the central government to strengthen security along the Indo-Bangladesh border and simplify the deportation process for illegal immigrants. He acknowledged that while official figures exist, the actual number of illegal immigrants could be significantly higher. During a legislative council discussion, BJP MLC P.H. Purjar claimed that over 15,000 illegal Bangladeshis have been



residing in Vijayapura district for more than two decades. He pointed out that despite differences in language and appearance, many had managed to obtain Aadhaar and ration cards. Purjar suggested verifying their birth and school transfer certificates to identify illegal immigrants. In response, Parameshwara revealed that 33 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants have already been identified and deported. He further stated that Karnataka has also deported 10 Pakistani nationals found residing illegally in the state. "Illegal immigrants are not just confined to Vijayapura but are also found in districts like Chikkamagaluru, Madikeri, and Udupi," he said. Highlighting the national security implications, the Home Minister called for border security measures similar to those implemented along the Indo-Pakistan border. He emphasized that illegal immigrants are spreading across the country and that a proactive approach is necessary to address the issue.

BJP to Challenge Karnataka's 4% Muslim Quota in Government Contracts


BJP calls Muslim quota in contracts "unconstitutional"

Will challenge the move in court, assembly, and Parliament

Karnataka Cabinet approved a 4% quota in public procurement

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced that it will challenge the Karnataka government's decision to provide 4% reservation for Muslims in government contracts, calling it an "unconstitutional misadventure." BJP leaders have vowed to oppose the move legally and politically until it is revoked.



The controversy erupted after the Karnataka Cabinet, on Friday, approved an amendment to the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (KTPPP) Act. The amendment reserves 4% of government contracts for Muslim contractors, covering civil works valued up to ₹2 crore and goods/services

Invest Karnataka 2025 Outpaces Previous Editions

- MoUs worth ₹10.27 lakh crore signed
- Two projects already underway, more nearing finalization
- Renewable energy sector leads with ₹3.44 lakh crore investment



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The latest Invest Karnataka – Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2025, held from February 12 to 14, has seen rapid progress compared to its 2022 edition, with ₹10.27 lakh crore in MoUs and committed investments. Already, two projects have begun operations, and several others are set to be finalized soon.

Of the total investments, ₹4 lakh crore has been approved, as confirmed by Additional Chief Secretary S Selvakumar from the Department of Industries and Commerce.

Two projects already in progress include:

- Krones, a German food and beverage company, setting up a ₹315 crore bottling machine manufacturing plant in Kolar.
- International Battery Company (IBC) establishing a ₹390 crore lithium-ion battery plant near Devanahalli.

Several more projects are nearing execution, such as:

- Lam Research (USA) investing ₹10,000 crore in semiconductor equipment manufacturing.
 - Exide expanding its cell manufacturing with a ₹4,000 crore investment.
 - Emmvee Energy committing ₹15,000 crore for a solar panel manufacturing plant.
 - Baldota Group's ₹54,000 crore steel plant in Koppal, currently facing environmental protests but expected to proceed.
- Across 21 districts, Vijayanagara received the highest investment (₹1.9 lakh crore), followed by Koppal (₹1 lakh crore) and Tumakuru (₹75,480 crore). The renewable energy sector attracted ₹3.44 lakh crore, making it the leading investment area. Compared to Invest Karnataka 2022, where only two projects were implemented out of ₹5.41 lakh crore pledged, this year's progress has been significantly faster. Authorities expect full implementation of large-scale projects to take 3-5 years.

Karnataka Governor Encourages Students to Join NSS, Serve Society

- NSS volunteers play a vital role in national and social initiatives
- 48 awards presented to outstanding NSS contributors



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot emphasized the need to make the National Service Scheme (NSS) a people's movement, urging students to actively engage in social welfare and community service. Speaking at the NSS State Award ceremony for 2022-23 at Raj Bhavan, he highlighted the role of NSS in fostering national integration, environmental conservation, and social reform.

Gehlot quoted Swami Vivekananda, stating, "Youth power is the foundation of any nation's progress," and praised NSS volunteers for their contributions to cleanliness drives, health awareness programs, disaster relief, and literacy campaigns. He also commended their role in initiatives like Make

in India, Digital India, and Swachh Bharat. The Governor lauded the efforts of over five lakh NSS volunteers in Karnataka and presented 48 awards, recognizing the best universities, coordinators, programme officers, and volunteers. He encouraged NSS units to adopt backward areas and work towards reducing school dropout rates. Reiterating the NSS motto, "Not Me, But You," Gehlot urged students to embrace selfless service and strive for national development, drawing inspiration from Vivekananda's call: "Arise, be alert, and do not stop until the goal is achieved."

Karnataka Govt Grants Direct Admission to Class 6 for Underprivileged Children

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has announced direct enrolment for underprivileged children into residential schools under the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS) for the 2025-26 academic year. This initiative aims to support children of child and bonded labourers, sanitation workers, and other vulnerable groups by granting them direct admission into Class 6 without an entrance test.

As per a circular issued by the Labour Department, 50% of the 41,500 seats in these schools—amounting to 20,750 seats—are reserved for special category students. Of these, 10% will be allocated specifically for children of child and bonded labourers. The policy

also benefits orphans, children with disabilities, and those with HIV-positive or single parents.

These English-medium residential schools offer free education, food, accommodation, and essential learning materials, including uniforms, books, and stationery. Officials emphasized that this move aims to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation by ensuring quality education for disadvantaged children. To qualify, students must be permanent residents of Karnataka and have completed Class 5 in a government-recognized school during the 2024-25 academic year. Parents or guardians can apply online through the official KREIS website by submitting the necessary documents.

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Dy CM DKS Challenges BJP's Vijayendra to Give Key Posts to Minorities

education. "Education and healthcare were given importance by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar, and Mahatma Gandhi. But today, these crucial sectors are being ignored," Kharge remarked. While praising Karnataka's progress in education, Kharge expressed concern over rising vacancies. "In Hyderabad-Karnataka alone, there are 37,000 unfilled positions. Across the country, there are 40,000 vacancies in Navodaya universities, 7,400 in Kendriya

Vidyalayas, and 5,400 in other universities," he noted. Kharge also pointed out that around 90,000 government schools have been shut down nationwide, including 50,000 in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, forcing poor children out of the education system while private schools continue to rise. The event was held as part of the birth centenary celebrations of K.H. Patil, where Congress leaders reaffirmed their commitment to education and minority rights.

Tighten Indo-Bangladesh Border, Ease Deportation Rules - Karnataka HM

Parameshwara also raised concerns about African nationals who enter the country illegally and use legal loopholes to stay. "Their modus operandi is to get arrested in a case and secure bail, which makes deportation extremely difficult," he explained. He urged the central government to enact stricter laws that allow for the direct deportation of such individuals without prolonged le-

gal battles. The Karnataka government has committed to monitoring and taking necessary action against illegal immigration. However, Parameshwara reiterated that the onus lies with the central government to implement comprehensive policies for border security and deportation procedures to address the growing issue.

BJP to Challenge Karnataka's 4% Muslim Quota in Government Contracts

contracts up to ₹1 crore. At a press conference, Bangalore South MP Tejasvi Surya strongly condemned the decision, alleging that the Congress-led government was engaging in "blatant appeasement politics" at the behest of senior party leaders, particularly Rahul Gandhi. "This patently unconstitutional and prima facie illegal act will be challenged in court. The BJP will fight against it inside the assembly, on the streets, and in Parliament," he said. He further accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's government of endangering national integrity and vowed to take the issue directly to the people of Karnataka. "Until and unless this unconstitutional move is rolled back, our

fight will continue," he asserted. State BJP President B.Y. Vijayendra also criticized the Congress government, clarifying that the party is not against Muslims but strongly opposes what he termed "Congress's appeasement politics." Responding to remarks by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Vijayendra pointed out that the BJP has given key positions to Muslims, including appointing Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam as President and Najma Heptulla, Justice S. Abdul Nazeer, and Mohammad Arif Khan as Governors. The BJP has now launched a statewide campaign against the new reservation policy, promising legal action and public protests to ensure its withdrawal.

Bengaluru's Second Airport to Boost Kanakapura Growth

- New airport to ease congestion at KIA
- Kanakapura set for rapid infrastructure growth
- Real estate and commercial boom expected



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has finalized three potential sites for Bengaluru's second airport and submitted them for central approval. Two of these sites are located on Kanakapura Road, making it the most likely location for the project. This new airport aims to reduce congestion at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) while driving economic and infrastructural growth in the region. Kanakapura Road is already witnessing rapid development, with improved connectivity and an expanding metro

network. If the airport is built here, experts predict a major real estate boom similar to what happened in Devanahalli after KIA's establishment. Land prices within a 50-km radius are expected to rise sharply, attracting investors and businesses. The metro extension to Kanakapura Road is also likely, further enhancing accessibility. One of the proposed locations, Harohalli, is a strategic link between Ben-

galuru and Kanakapura. If chosen, it would strengthen commercial activities, accelerate urbanization, and boost tourism in the region. With several tourist resorts and destinations nearby, the airport is expected to transform Kanakapura into a thriving business and tourism hub.

The entire Ramanagara district is set to benefit, with improved infrastructure and increased business opportunities. The development of the airport is also seen as a major advantage for Kanakapura, the home constituency of Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who has actively promoted its growth. With strong political backing, growing investor interest, and enhanced connectivity, Bengaluru's second airport is poised to make Kanakapura a major economic and commercial hub in the coming years.

Dakshina Kannada DC Forms Squads to Curb Illegal Sand Mining

- Five squads formed to check sand mining violations
- Nodal officers appointed to oversee enforcement
- Strict action against offenders, including legal cases

TPN Correspondent | Mangaluru

Dakshina Kannada Deputy Commissioner Mullai Muhilan M P, who also chairs the district sand committee, has constituted five squads to prevent illegal sand extraction, stocking, and transportation. This action follows multiple complaints about violations in various areas.

To curb illegal activities from Addur Muloor to Gulpura Bridge, including Doninje, Kelagina Kere, and Mallur, the DC appointed the PWD Executive Engineer as the nodal officer. Similarly, the Minor Irrigation Executive Engineer will oversee enforcement from Gulpura Bridge to Adyapadi, while the Senior Geologist from Mines and Geology will monitor Thumbe, Arkula, and Farangipete. Additionally, Panambur ACP and Mangaluru Tahsildar will lead efforts in their respective jurisdictions. The squads will operate in shifts to ensure continuous monitoring. Cases will be registered against individuals involved in illegal sand mining, with illegally stocked sand being seized. Landowners enabling illegal extraction by constructing 'dakkes' or roads will face legal action under the Karnataka Mines and Minerals Act. Nodal officers must inspect sand stockyards, verify bills issued by leaseholders, and report unauthorized stockpiles. Weekly compliance reports on enforcement measures must be submitted to the DC's office. The DC warned that officials failing in their duties will face disciplinary action. With these stringent measures, the district administration aims to crack down on illegal sand mining and ensure proper regulation of sand extraction activities.

BBMP Achieves 88% Property Tax Target, Issues 2.25 Lakh e-Khatas

- BBMP collects ₹4,604 crore, reaching 88.36% of target
- 2.25 lakh e-Khatas issued since October 2024
- Real estate slowdown impacts revenue collection

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has collected ₹4,604 crore out of its property tax target of ₹5,210 crore for the fiscal year 2024-25, achieving 88.36% of the goal. With two weeks remaining in the financial year, officials have been directed to focus on collecting the pending ₹606 crore. BBMP Special Commissioner (Revenue) Munish Moudgil has instructed zonal officials to intensify efforts, particularly targeting institutions and commercial properties with significant outstanding dues. Since the introduction of the e-Khata system in October 2024, BBMP has issued 2.25 lakh e-Khatas. The digital ser-

vice allows property owners to apply for and verify their Khata online without visiting municipal offices.

North Bengaluru's Yelahanka zone leads with a 99.97% collection rate, meeting nearly all of its ₹445 crore target. Mahadevapura recorded the highest absolute collection, reaching ₹1,223 crore. Bengaluru West followed with ₹770 crore, achieving 93% of its target. The IT hubs of Whitefield and Electronic City recorded an 86% collection rate.

BBMP attributes the revenue shortfall to a slowdown in real estate transactions, caused by technical delays in issuing Encumbrance Certificates (ECs) and mandatory e-Khatas for property registrations. Property registrations in Bengaluru dropped 21% in October 2024 compared to the previous month, impacting tax inflows. Despite these challenges, BBMP remains optimistic about crossing ₹5,000 crore in tax collection this year.





Girinagar Police Have Arrested Four for Defrauding Elderly Woman in Bengaluru

- Bank employee, husband, and two accomplices arrested
- ₹50 lakh fraudulently transferred from elderly woman’s account
- Crime uncovered when victim’s son checked bank balance

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Girinagar police have arrested four individuals, including a woman-an deputy manager of a private bank, for allegedly defrauding an elderly woman of Rs 50 lakh. The accused have been identified as Meghana (bank employee), her husband Shivaprasad, and their associates Varadaraju and Anwar Ghosh.

According to police, the elderly couple had a joint account and Fixed Deposit (FD) accounts at the bank. Meghana, aware that they had recently sold their house for Rs 1 crore, misled the elderly woman during a bank visit, claiming that two of her FDs had matured and needed renewal.

Later, Meghana visit-

ed the victim’s home, obtained her signatures on multiple documents, including a Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) form, and transferred Rs 50 lakh into her own account.

The fraud was exposed when the couple’s son checked their mobile banking app and noticed the unauthorized transaction.

Upon inquiring with the bank, they found that the money had been transferred to another account, prompting them to file a police complaint.

Following an investigation, all four accused were arrested, with police revealing that Meghana’s husband and their associates had conspired in the crime and shared the stolen money. Legal proceedings are underway.



Three Killed in Car-Truck Collision Near Chikkodi

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

In a tragic accident near Siddapurwadi cross in Chikkodi taluk, three people lost their lives on the spot, while three others sustained severe injuries after their car collided with a truck on the Chikkodi-Kagwad road early Monday morning.

The deceased have been identified as Kalpana Ajitkumar Koli (37), Ma-

hadev Kanappa Koli (76), and Rukmini Mahadev Koli (60). The injured, Ajitkumar Mahadev Koli (45), Aditya Ajitkumar Koli (17), and Anuja Ajitkumar Koli (13), were immediately rushed to a hospital by the police for treatment. All the victims hail from Sangli in Maharashtra. The Ankali Police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the cause of the accident.

Suspected Food Poisoning in Mandya

- 13-year-old student dies; one critical in Mysuru hospital
- Food samples sent for forensic testing
- Three arrests made; cases filed against six others

TPN Correspondent | Mandya

A tragic case of suspected food poisoning in Malavalli taluk, Mandya district, has left a 13-year-old student dead, while over 40 others fell ill at Gokula Vidyasamsthe, an educational institution in T Kagepura village.

Authorities report that the affected students consumed leftover food from a Holi celebration, arranged by a local businessman on Friday afternoon. The food was later supplied to the school that evening, lead-

ing to students experiencing vomiting and diarrhea by Saturday.

They were initially treated at a primary health center before being shifted to the Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences. While most students are now stable, one critically ill student has been moved to a private hospital in Mysuru.

District officials, including Deputy Commissioner Kumara, have initiated a thorough investigation. The school had permission to operate



as a day school but was running a hostel illegally. **A notice has been issued, and a report from the Block Education Officer (BEO) is awaited.**

Food samples sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for testing.

Police arrested three

suspects—Siddaraju, Lankesh, and Abhishek.

Cases filed against six individuals, including the hotel owner, businessman, and school secretary.

Authorities verifying the legality of similar institutions operating in the

district.

Many of the students are children of migrant laborers and orphans. The district administration is ensuring their parents and guardians are informed while continuing a detailed probe into the incident.

Delayed Development Worries Site Owners in Kempegowda Layout

- BDA awards Rs 159.92 crore roadwork contract to a single company
- Two-year timeline raises concerns among site owners
- Basic amenities still lacking since 2022

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

People who purchased sites in the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) are facing fresh challenges as delays in infrastructure development persist. Despite acquiring plots since 2022, residents allege that essential services like roads, electricity, and

sewage remain incomplete, making house construction difficult.

The BDA has now awarded a Rs 159.92 crore contract for internal roads in six blocks of the layout to a single company, with a two-year deadline for completion. This decision has raised concerns among site owners, who fear further delays in their housing plans.



KempeGowda Layout

Previously, the BDA had floated three separate tenders in March 2024 for road development in Blocks 5, 6, and 7, with a three-month deadline. However, the work remains unfinished, increasing frustration among site owners.

Critics argue that awarding the entire roadwork contract to one company might slow progress instead of expediting it.

Adding to the delays, crucial infrastructure, including drinking water, sewage, and electricity,

remains incomplete in the six blocks. Residents question why a multi-agency approach, successfully implemented in Dr. Shivarama Karantha Layout, was not followed here. They fear that consolidating the work under a single contractor could lead to further postponements.

In response, the BDA has defended its decision, assuring residents that the company will complete the work on time. However, site owners remain skeptical, urging authorities to ensure timely execution of the project so they can finally build their homes.

Bengaluru’s Mosque Road Faces Business Slump Due to Roadwork This Ramzan

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The ongoing road construction on Mosque Road, Frazer Town, has severely impacted business during Ramzan, leading to an 80% decline in footfall. The area, once a vibrant food street, typically hosts 150-200 food stalls during the festive season, but open drains and poor road conditions have driven customers away.

Hoteliers say that despite repeated appeals to



authorities to speed up the work, the slow progress has shattered hopes

of completion before Eid. Many have cut down their menus to just Haleem

and Kebabs to minimize losses, while some have relocated their stalls to RT Nagar, Nagawara, and Kammanahalli.

The ban on outdoor food stalls, imposed last year due to traffic concerns, remains in effect. Although restaurants were permitted to set up stalls outside their premises, traffic police have reportedly stopped them, citing congestion due to roadwork.

Mohmeen, a restaura-

teur from Savera Restaurant, stated that their evening sales—typically the peak business hours—have plummeted, with only 80-100 customers per night. He added that online food orders offer little relief, as Ramzan delicacies are best enjoyed hot and fresh.

With businesses struggling and no clear timeline for road completion, the festive spirit on Mosque Road remains subdued this year.

Pro-Pakistan Slogans Scribbled on Factory Walls in Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

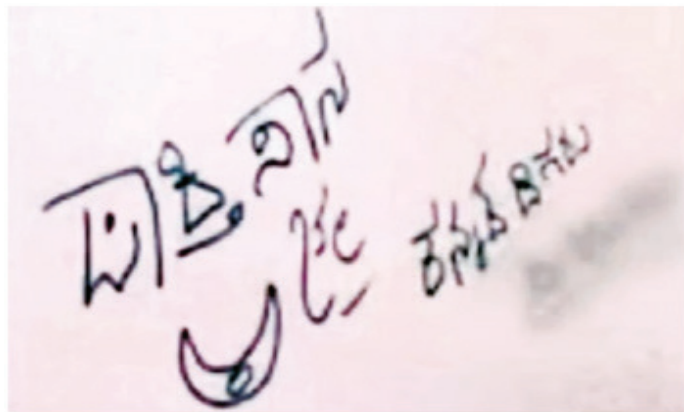
Tension erupted at a multinational company’s factory in the Bidadi industrial area on the outskirts of Bengaluru after pro-Pakistan slogans were discovered scribbled on the restroom walls. The writings, which included “Pakistan Jai” and “Victory to Pakistan” in Kannada, were found on Friday night and later circulated on social media, leading to widespread outrage.

By Saturday morning, Kannada organisations gathered outside the factory, demanding the arrest of those responsible. The protestors also con-

demned offensive remarks written against Kannadigas. In response, the Bidadi police rushed to the scene, inspected the premises, and launched an investigation.

With over 3,000 employees working at the factory, authorities suspect that some individuals among them may be involved in the incident. The police have reviewed CCTV footage and are gathering information from the management and workers to identify those responsible.

The factory management has since issued a notice warning employees against such acts and



urging them to maintain workplace harmony. Meanwhile, police have registered a case under Section 196 and Section 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with relevant provisions of the Information

Technology (IT) Act.

Officials have assured strict action against those involved, emphasizing that such incidents will not be tolerated. Investigations are ongoing to track down the individuals behind the slogans.

Three Arrested Over Holi Clash at Bengaluru’s Lalbagh

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Siddapura police have arrested three individuals in connection with a violent clash that erupted during Holi celebrations at Lalbagh Botanical Garden on Friday. The accused, identified as Rakesh, Umesh, and Ramesh, all aged between 20 and 26 and working in hotels, were taken into custody Monday.

According to police, the accused were intoxicated while celebrating Holi when a dispute between two groups escalated into a physical altercation. Videos of the incident circulating on social media showed individuals fight-

ing with sticks at the Lalbagh rock, causing panic among visitors.

Taking suo motu cognizance of the incident, the Siddapura police registered a case under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for affray, as the fight disturbed public peace. After analyzing the video evidence, authorities arrested three suspects and are actively working to identify others involved.

The accused reportedly assaulted a street hawker



during the brawl. Alarmed visitors alerted horticulture department officials, but the culprits fled before authorities arrived. The police are now reviewing CCTV footage from the area to track down and arrest the remaining individuals linked to the violence.

Karnataka HC Orders CBI Probe into Kolar Congress Leader Srinivas Murder Case



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the murder of Kolar Congress leader and former Zilla Panchayat President M. Srinivas. The decision comes after a petition by Srinivas's wife, Dr. S. Chandrakala, who argued that the local police and CID failed to conduct a proper investigation.

Srinivas, a close associate of Home Minister G. Parameshwara and former Speaker Ramesh Kumar, was brutally murdered on October 23, 2023, on the outskirts of Srinivaspur. He was attacked with deadly weapons, and his murder has been suspected to have political motives.

A bench led by Justice M. Nagaprasanna, acknowledging the lapses in the initial investigation, directed the CBI to take over the case and submit a report within three months. The court also instructed the local police to extend full cooperation to the CBI.

Dr. Chandrakala, in her petition, alleged a political conspiracy behind her husband's murder and argued that only a CBI probe could bring out the truth. Senior Public Prosecutor C.H. Hanumantharaya also supported the demand for a CBI investigation, citing failures in the current inquiry.

The High Court's order has intensified the political debate around the case, with calls for an impartial probe into the murder.

Protests Erupt Over Swathi Byadgi's Murder, Demands for Strict Punishment

TPN Correspondent | Haveri

The brutal murder of 22-year-old Swathi Byadgi, a farmer from Masura village in Rattihalli taluk of Haveri district, has sparked widespread outrage, with demands for severe punishment for the accused. Swathi was allegedly killed by Nayaz, Durgachari, and Vinay, whose immediate execution was demanded by protesters.

A massive protest took place in Ranebennur, where over ten nursing and pharmacy college students joined the call for justice. The demonstrators urged authorities to conduct an impartial investigation and ensure that the culprits face the strictest possible punishment.

Meanwhile, Swathi's close friend Anu, who also participated in a protest in Masura village, shared her grief. Recalling their bond, she said, "I met Swathi

five years ago through a Hindu organization. She was passionate about its activities and participated in many events, including Durga Puja. Later, when she started her nursing studies, she had to take a break from the organization's work. This year's Hori festival marked her five-year association with the group. She was on her way to see the festival when this tragedy struck."

Fighting back tears, Anu expressed her anger, saying, "Hand over the accused to us, and we will punish them ourselves."

The shocking murder has intensified calls for swift justice, with protests growing across the region. Authorities have assured that strict action will be taken against the culprits.

Dy CM D.K.S Cracks Down on Unauthorized Flexes, Warns Youth Congress Leaders

- DCM warns Youth Congress leaders over unauthorized banners
- Orders BBMP to impose fines, remove illegal flexes
- ₹5 lakh penalty imposed; 170 banners taken down

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has issued a strong warning to Karnataka Youth Congress leaders after unauthorized banners and flexes were put up in Bengaluru ahead of their oath-taking ceremony. The newly elected office bearers, including Youth Congress President

Manjunath Gowda, had planned a grand inauguration at Palace Grounds on Monday, but the event drew criticism due to widespread rule violations. Shivakumar expressed his anger over the unauthorized display of flexes and banners, directing the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to take immediate

action. He stated that such acts of publicity should not be encouraged and instructed party members to prove their strength in polling booths instead. "Those who have put up illegal banners should remove them immediately. If not, strict action, including fines, will be imposed," he warned.

Following his orders, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath led an overnight crackdown, removing over 170 unauthorized banners, including 40 large-sized flexes from Bellary Road and other key areas in Bengaluru. A penalty of ₹5 lakh has been imposed on the offenders, and officials have



been instructed to recover the costs of removal from those responsible. Additionally, authorities have warned of criminal cases against repeat violations.

The swift action comes as part of a broader effort

to regulate unauthorized advertising in Bengaluru. Shivakumar's directive reinforces his commitment to maintaining city aesthetics and ensuring compliance with municipal regulations.

Kids Who Abandon Parents May Lose Property – Karnataka Minister

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Medical Education Minister Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil has directed officials to revoke property transfers made in favor of children who later abandon their elderly parents in government hospitals.

During a review meeting at Vikasa Soudha, the Director of Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS) reported that over 150 cases of elderly individuals being deserted at BIMS had been recorded.

Additionally, more than 100 similar cases have been found across various government medical colleges in Karnataka.

Following this, Dr. Patil instructed all government medical colleges to report such cases and file complaints with assistant commissioners (revenue sub-division) for legal action. He also directed the Director of Medical Education, Dr. B.L. Sujatha Rathod, to take immediate measures.

Dr. Patil emphasized that under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, parents have the legal right to revoke property transfers if their children neglect them. He cited Section 23 of the Act,



which allows for property to be returned to the parent if a child fails in their duty of care. Medical officers present at the meeting revealed that many elderly

individuals had been left at hospitals under the pretext of treatment, only to be abandoned.

While some families cited financial hardships, in many cases, abandonment occurred after the parents had transferred their property to their children.

Hospitals provide basic necessities, leading some families to leave elderly parents there intentionally. To address the issue, BIMS has already relocated 70 elderly individuals to retirement homes.

BJP MLA Yatnal's Controversial Remark on Ranya Rao Sparks Outrage

- Yatnal's remark on Ranya Rao draws criticism
- Promises to expose key figures linked to smuggling case
- DRI investigation reveals VIP protocol misuse

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal has stirred controversy with his remarks on actor Ranya Rao, who was arrested in a gold smuggling case. Alleging that she "hid gold everywhere she has holes," Yatnal's comment has drawn sharp criticism. Ranya Rao was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on March 3 upon

her arrival at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport from Dubai. Authorities seized 14.2 kg of foreign-origin gold bars worth ₹12.56 crore from her possession.

Yatnal claimed to have detailed information on individuals involved in the case, including ministers, and vowed to reveal their names during the upcoming Assembly session. "I have collected complete information



about her connections, who helped her secure security clearance, and how the gold was smuggled. Those guilty must be held accountable," he asserted.

Reports indicate that Ranya Rao allegedly bypassed security checks multiple times using VIP protocol facilitated by

her stepfather, senior IPS officer DGP K Ramachandra Rao. Investigators noted her frequent trips to Dubai, prompting the DRI to monitor her movements. She was eventually intercepted upon her return, and 12 gold bars of foreign origin were seized. A police officer at the

airport, Basappa Billur alias Basavaraj, admitted in his statement to the DRI that he personally assisted Ranya in avoiding regular security checks.

The BJP leader has also demanded action against customs officials for their lapses in handling the case.



TPN Correspondent | Mangaluru

An FIR has been reg-

istered against orator and Yuva Brigade founder Chakravarthy Sulibele

FIR Against Activist Chakravarthy Sulibele for 'Provocative' Statement in Mangaluru

at Ullal police station for allegedly making provocative statements during an event in Mangaluru. His remarks, urging Hindu youth to marry girls from other religions, have sparked widespread controversy and opposition.

The incident occurred on March 9 during the closing ceremony of the VHP's Koragajjan Adi Kshetra Namma Nade Padayatra. Sulibele's state-

ments on religious conversions and interfaith marriages have drawn sharp criticism, with the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) and Congress leaders strongly opposing his views.

Congress leader Abdul Rasheed lodged a complaint at Ullal police station, accusing Sulibele of making inflammatory speeches that could incite communal tensions.

Based on the complaint, the police have booked him under sections related to promoting enmity between different groups.

During his speech, Sulibele reportedly said, "Enough of the taunts about conversion. Now talk about returning to Hinduism. How long will we discuss love jihad and conversion? Instead of asking our sons to look only at our girls, we

should encourage them to consider girls from other religions as well."

He further added, "If we face a shortage of girls in our community, shouldn't we acknowledge the same issue in other communities too? We need to play aggressively now. The era of defensive play is over—test matches are done, and it's time for Twenty20. Let's focus on bringing back those who

have left Hinduism."

The remarks have ignited a heated debate on social media, with critics arguing that his statements could fuel religious tensions.

Following the FIR, law enforcement officials have assured a thorough investigation into the matter.

The police have assured a thorough investigation into the matter.

- Sworn in at Bengaluru’s Palace Grounds
- Succeeds Mohammed Haris Nalapad
- Focus on youth engagement and revival
- Backed by senior Congress leaders

TPN Correspondent | Bangalore

H.S. Manjunath was sworn in as the new president of the Karnataka Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (KPYCC) at a ceremony held at the Palace Grounds in Bengaluru on March 17, 2025. The event was attended by prominent leaders including Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, D.K. Shivakumar, IYC President

Uday Bhanu Chib, and former IYC president B.V. Srinivas.

In his new role, Manjunath takes over from Mohammed Haris Nalapad, who previously held the position. Manjunath, who has a significant track record in student leadership, having served as the State chief of the National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) twice, is seen as a prominent figure within

H.S. Manjunath takes oath as Karnataka Youth Congress president



the Congress party. The ceremony was marked by the presence of senior Congress leaders, with Shivakumar congratulating Manjunath and wishing him success in his new role. Speaking at the event, Shivakumar expressed confidence in Manjunath’s leadership abilities and his potential

to drive the Youth Congress to greater heights in the state.

B.V. Srinivas, the former all-India Youth Congress president, also attended the event, offering his support to the newly appointed president.

The event underscored the unity within the Youth Congress, with party leaders reiterating their commitment to furthering the Congress party’s agenda at both the state and national levels.

As the new KPYCC president, Manjunath’s leadership is expected to focus on revitalizing the Youth Congress and engaging the state’s youth in political processes. His prior experience with the NSUI, which works closely with student and youth communities, is seen as an asset in mobilizing the younger demographic.

With the Youth Congress now under his leadership, Manjunath’s tenure marks a new chapter for the Congress party’s youth wing in Karnataka. His efforts will likely play a key role in strengthening the party’s base and increasing youth participation in the political landscape of the state.

Encounter Breaks Out Between Security Forces, Terrorists In J&K’s Kupwara



TPN Correspondent | Srinagar

An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, according to officials. The confrontation occurred after security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the Krumhoora village of Zachaldara, based on intelligence reports about the presence of terrorists in the area.

The operation, which began as a search to locate the militants, quickly escalated when the terrorists opened fire at the security forces.

In response, the forces retaliated, leading to an ongoing firefight between the two sides.

As the operation con-

tinues, further details on the outcome of the encounter remain unavailable. The situation in the region is still developing, with additional forces deployed to assist in the operation and ensure the safety of nearby areas.

Authorities have yet to confirm any casualties or injuries as a result of the clash. The security forces remain on high alert as they work to neutralize the militants and secure the area.

This encounter is part of a broader, ongoing effort by Indian security forces to eliminate terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in areas such as Kupwara, which has been a hotspot for militant activities. Further updates are expected as the situation unfolds.

Tamil Nadu to Generate ₹3,450 Crore in Revenue from New Mineral Tax Act

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Tamil Nadu is set to generate an estimated ₹3,450 crore in the 2025-26 fiscal year through the newly-introduced Mineral Bearing Land Tax Act, which was enacted following a Supreme Court ruling last year. The ruling allows states to impose a tax on mines and minerals, paving the way for the state government to establish this tax framework.

In the current year, the state government anticipates a revenue of around ₹1,545 crore from the non-ferrous mining and metallurgical industries.

This figure is expected to rise significantly to ₹4,980 crore in the coming year, as stated in the latest budget document presented in the Tamil Nadu Assembly last week.

The Mineral Bearing Land Tax Act, which received the assent of Governor R.N. Ravi on February 20, 2025, outlines the tax rates for different categories of minerals, including both major and minor minerals, as well as for mineral oil, crude oil, and natural gas. For example, a rate of ₹250 per tonne has been set for lignite, while the highest tax rate for major minerals, such



as sillimanite, is ₹7,000 per tonne. Rates for minor minerals range from ₹40 per tonne for clay to ₹420 per tonne for black granite. The tax on crude oil is ₹8,500 per tonne, and natural gas is taxed at ₹3.5 per cubic metre.

However, the implementation of this tax has



Despite these concerns, the state government is moving ahead with its plan to leverage this tax as a significant source of revenue, with the aim of bolstering the state’s economy while adhering to the Supreme Court’s judgment.

Karnataka Government to Rename Gadag Medical Institute After K. H. Patil

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

The Karnataka government has announced plans to rename the Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) in honor of the late K. H. Patil, a former minister and the former president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC). Chief Minister Siddaramaiah made the announcement during a video message on March 16, which coincided with the birth centenary celebrations of K. H. Patil.

The Chief Minister expressed regret at not being able to attend the event in person due to health reasons but praised Patil’s numerous contributions to the state, particularly in the cooperative sector and the education system. He described K. H. Patil as a “beloved and proud leader,” acknowledging his key role in organizing the cooperative sector and his unyielding commitment to the welfare of farmers. Patil’s work in establishing the Gadag Co-operative



Cotton Sale Society was highlighted as a prime example of his pro-farmer initiatives.

Patil, who served as a minister in the Devraj Urs cabinet, was also instrumental in introducing strict laws to protect the

forest cover in Karnataka, a pioneering move that made the state the first to empower the State Assembly to make decisions regarding forest conservation. His visit to the forest areas of H.D. Kote and Mysuru, followed by his advocacy for reducing the discretionary powers of the forest minister, played a key role in the protection of Karnataka’s forests.

Furthermore, K. H. Patil was credited with leading the committee that officially declared the state as

‘Karnataka,’ a significant milestone in the state’s history. CM Siddaramaiah lauded Patil for his embodiment of values like truthfulness, simplicity, courage, and hard work, stating that these ideals continue to inspire the youth of Karnataka.

The Chief Minister also noted the ongoing contributions of K. H. Patil’s son, H. K. Patil, who continues to uphold his father’s legacy by working toward the empowerment and welfare of the state’s society.

ASHAs Intensify Agitation in Kerala, Lay Siege to Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram



TPN Correspondent | Kerala

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) in Kerala, who have been protesting for 35 days, intensified their agitation on Monday by laying siege to the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram. Under the banner of the Kerala ASHA Health Workers’ Association (KAHWA), thousands of ASHAs from across the state blocked the North Gate of the Secretariat, bringing life to a standstill along the busy MG Road.

The police had earlier blocked traffic and secured the gates of the Secretariat, but the ASHAs, undeterred, continued their sit-in protest. KAHWA leaders vowed not to disperse until the government acknowledged their demands for basic rights and improved compensation.

The protesting ASHAs, though few in number at the Secretariat, represent the collective voice of over 10 lakh ASHAs nationwide. Their fight, centered around inadequate pay and recognition, has drawn national attention. The ASHAs, who play a crucial role in the grassroots health system, have

long faced challenges due to their underpaid and overworked status. In response to their struggles, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda recently mentioned in Parliament that the incentive pattern for ASHAs would be revised, though no timeline was given.

At the state level, however, the Kerala government has taken a more passive stance, stating that the issue lies with the central government. The state has argued that it is up to the Centre to formalize the employment status of ASHAs, granting them minimum wage benefits rather than classifying them as health volunteers.

Despite calls for intervention from political figures, including Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, the Kerala government has not responded favorably. Satheesan, along with senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, visited the protest site, offering solidarity and criticizing the government’s lack of engagement. They accused the Chief Minister of taking a “vengeful stance” and ignoring the plight of the ASHAs.

LDF convener T.P. Ramakrishnan expressed empathy with the ASHAs’ cause but reiterated that the resolution depended on the Centre’s actions.



Election Commission Needs Urgent Course Correction on Voter Rolls

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is facing growing criticism from Opposition parties over discrepancies in electoral rolls and issues of duplicate Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers. As the country approaches a significant milestone of 100 crore eligible voters, these concerns have raised alarm over the integrity of the electoral process. If not addressed swiftly, these issues could undermine the credibility of India's democratic framework. The ECI has acknowledged that while some EPIC numbers may appear identical, other voter details such as demographic information, assembly constituency, and polling booth are different. However, this assurance has done little to quell concerns, and many believe it is insufficient. The need for a comprehensive national exercise to

ensure each voter has a unique EPIC number has become critical. In addition, there must be stronger coordination between the ECI and state electoral officers to ensure accurate and updated voter databases. Lapses by these officers, particularly in managing voter records independently, seem to have contributed to these discrepancies. A key point of contention is the ECI's move to link voter IDs with Aadhaar. Although current law allows for voluntary linking of Aadhaar details to electoral rolls, the government has assured that those who do not comply will not be removed from the voter list. This approach aims to prevent coercive actions and ensure inclusivity. Aadhaar, being a unique identifier, plays a pivotal role in eliminating duplicate voters, ensuring transparency, and improving

service delivery to citizens. However, the government must focus on resolving the current issues with voter rolls before undertaking major reforms like 'One Nation, One Election.' The concerns raised by Opposition parties are valid, as voter roll integrity is the cornerstone of any fair election. For a democracy as vast as India's, it is crucial to ensure that the voter list is accurate and free from duplication. The ECI's upcoming high-level meeting on March 18 to discuss the Aadhaar linkage issue must result in a clear, time-bound plan to address these concerns. Failure to act swiftly and decisively could lead to widespread disenchantment with the electoral process, damaging the trust that citizens place in their democratic institutions.



Ukraine Faces Potential "Frozen" Conflict Amid Ceasefire Talks

Ukraine may be on the verge of a "frozen" conflict, as international pressure mounts for a ceasefire, yet both sides remain far from agreeing on a lasting peace. The recent proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, brokered by the U.S., has brought global attention to Moscow's stance. While Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed conditional support for a ceasefire, emphasizing that it should address the root causes of the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has warned that Putin's intentions are manipulative and aimed at gaining further territorial concessions. Putin's response is strategic; he recognizes that the conflict is not just a military struggle but a geopolitical one, and he aims to prolong negotiations to maximize his gains. With Russia regaining control of significant areas in Ukraine, including the Kursk region, Putin is pushing for a halt to Western military support to Ukraine during the ceasefire period, further complicating negotiations. The situation mirrors the Korean War's armistice, where an official peace agreement was never signed, only a temporary halt to hostilities. Just as the Korean conflict remained unresolved for years, Ukraine could face a similar fate, with no peace deal in sight. Putin's demands to keep Crimea and parts of Donbas under Russian control are unacceptable to Ukraine, which remains determined to reclaim its territory. Zelenskyy, meanwhile, is in a weaker position, as the Trump administration has hinted that Kyiv may have to accept significant territorial losses, including not joining NATO. The ill-fated Ukrainian offensive in Kursk last year only compounded the country's strategic challenges, with Russia regaining lost ground. While the U.S. puts pressure on Moscow to accept the ceasefire and toughens sanctions on Russian energy and banking sectors, Zelenskyy is calling for guarantees to ensure Russia adheres to the ceasefire. The Kremlin, however, opposes the idea of European peacekeepers in Ukraine, with Putin preferring a role for countries like India and other BRICS nations, who have maintained neutral relations with Russia. As talks progress, the conflict risks becoming a prolonged "frozen" war, where violence stops but a lasting peace remains elusive. For Ukraine, the challenge is to ensure its sovereignty while navigating complex international pressures.

India Must Deftly Walk the Tariff Tightrope

India faces a significant challenge in negotiating trade tariffs with the United States under President Donald Trump. The tariffs being used as leverage for non-trade objectives, such as reducing illegal immigration and bolstering the dollar, have caused global trade turmoil. While Trump's trade war strategy appears erratic, India must navigate these tumultuous waters carefully to avoid serious economic setbacks. India's trade surplus with the U.S. has become a point of contention for the Trump administration, particularly as India runs a large overall trade deficit with the world. India's high tariffs on agricultural products, automobiles, and alcohol—ranging from 100% to 165%—have particularly drawn criticism. In response, India offered to reduce tariffs on items of American interest, like bourbon whiskey, but this gesture has not mollified Trump. The situation has become a complex balancing act. On the one hand, India is protective of its domestic industries, such as agriculture and automobiles, where high tariffs shield local businesses and farmers from foreign competition. On the other hand, India has significant vulnerabilities. For instance, if India agrees to reduce tariffs for the U.S., it risks setting a precedent for other countries, such as the European Union and the U.K., who have long sought similar concessions. Moreover, the United States is unlikely to significantly increase its exports even if India cuts tariffs, making this trade dispute more emotional than practical. India's economic situation is far stronger today compared to 1991, when it faced an economic crisis. The 1991 economic reforms opened up India's economy, making it the world's fifth-largest economy today. However, India's agricultural and automobile sectors remain overprotected, reminiscent of the country's pre-reform era. With growing global competition and changing economic dynamics, India must reconsider its high tariff policies. Eliminating tariffs on agriculture and manufactured goods would help India integrate more deeply into the global economy, boosting its manufacturing sector and attracting foreign investments. This shift would also create jobs in new industries,



while freeing up resources to address pressing domestic issues such as the over-reliance on agriculture. India should not only focus on tariff reductions but also harness its labor force's potential in emerging sectors like sports, entertainment, and personal services. By retraining workers and investing in global opportunities, India can ensure long-term prosperity without compromising its economic independence. In conclusion, India must tread carefully with the U.S. on tariffs, aiming to strike a deal that protects its interests while positioning itself as an open and competitive player in the global economy.



Pakistan Faces Growing Internal Crisis Amid Baloch Separatism and TTP Resurgence

Pakistan is grappling with a significant internal crisis, driven by escalating separatist insurgencies and a surge in terrorist attacks. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has intensified its activities, conducting at least 14 attacks between 2020 and 2025 against Chinese nationals, killing 20 people and injuring 34. In addition, over 400 Pakistani security personnel have died in similar attacks. While the BLA's militancy continues, the Baloch independence movement is also supported by non-violent activists, such as Mahrang Baloch, advocating for provincial autonomy and social justice. The BLA's March 13 hijacking of the Jaffar Express, a high-profile operation, has propelled the movement into the international spotlight. This event parallels other global incidents, such as the October 2023 Hamas attack, highlighting the BLA's strategy to rejuvenate the Baloch cause. However, this bold action risks triggering a harsh response from Pakistan's military establishment, which traditionally leans towards military solutions rather than diplomatic engagement. Pakistan's counterinsurgency history reveals the limits of force in resolving separatist

movements. In 1971, the state's heavy-handed tactics led to the separation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Similarly, while Operation Zarb-e-Azb against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) brought temporary peace, it failed to address the underlying issues, with the TTP quickly resurfacing when the Taliban gained control of Afghanistan. The Baloch insurgency shares key similarities with past conflicts, where the state's reliance on military might has proven ineffective. Pakistan's failure to address the grievances of ethnic minorities like the Baloch, Sindhis, and Kashmiris has prolonged regional instability. As the TTP resurges and Baloch separatism gains momentum, Pakistan faces a perilous situation where military responses alone could lead to a prolonged, unwinnable conflict. Pakistan's military engagement across its borders, including operations along the Durand Line, and its ongoing internal conflicts threaten to undermine recent economic stabilization. With tensions rising and the situation spiraling out of control, Pakistan must reconsider its approach, shifting from forceful suppression to genuine political dialogue to prevent further destabilization.

PM Modi-Christopher Luxon meeting: India, New Zealand ink defence pact

- Focus on maritime security and cooperation
- Roadmap planned for future defence ties
- Joint training and exercises to increase
- Supports Indo-Pacific peace and stability



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India and New Zealand have signed a defence cooperation agreement aimed at boosting their partnership in maritime safety and security. This pact follows a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon on Monday, marking a significant step in strengthening the two nations' ties.

Following the talks, Modi emphasized the decision to strengthen and institutionalize the defence and security relationship between the two countries. He also revealed that a roadmap would be developed to guide future cooperation in the defence industry sector, ensuring more strategic collaboration.

As a member of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, New Zealand plays a vital role in global security, and this agreement is seen as a move to

enhance both countries' strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The focus on maritime safety and security is particularly significant given the increasing geopolitical challenges in the region, which call for stronger partnerships between like-minded nations.

The new agreement is expected to deepen defence engagements and facilitate greater collaboration on training, joint exercises, and the sharing of best practices in the defence sector. Both leaders acknowledged the importance of maintaining a rules-based international order in the maritime domain, and this agreement serves as a step towards enhancing peace and stability in the region.

This development also reflects India's growing global influence and its efforts to strengthen ties with key partners like New Zealand, in line with its broader foreign policy strategy to bolster defence cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.



India and Sweden Aim to Strengthen Trade and Investment Ties

Discussions focus on green technologies, smart infrastructure, and economic cooperation

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India and Sweden are actively exploring ways to enhance their bilateral trade and investment relations, with a focus on fostering economic cooperation in key sectors. During a recent meeting in New Delhi, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, and Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maria M. Stenergard, discussed opportunities for collaboration in areas such as green technologies, renewable energy, smart infrastructure, and healthcare.

Sweden is currently the 21st largest investor in India, with a cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) of USD 2.51 billion from April 2000 to March 2024. Key sectors attracting Swedish investments include automobiles, industrial machinery, engineering, electrical equipment, and metallurgy. The two countries aim to further strengthen their trade and investment ties through increased cooperation, opening up new avenues for business in both nations.

Minister Goyal emphasized the importance of these discussions, saying, "We discussed ways to further strengthen the India-Sweden bilateral trade and investment partnership, fostering economic cooperation and

opening up new business opportunities in both nations." The Joint Economic Commission (JEC) continues to serve as the primary platform for government-to-government dialogue between India and Sweden.

In recent trade statistics, India's exports to Sweden reached USD 104 million in June 2024, while imports totaled USD 171 million, resulting in a trade deficit of USD 66.6 million. However, compared to June 2023, India's exports to Sweden saw significant growth of 45.2%, while imports increased by 21.6%. Key exports from India to Sweden include ready-made cotton garments, electric machinery, automobile spare parts, and iron and steel products. Imports from Sweden include iron and steel, pulp and waste paper, paper products, auto components, and industrial machinery for various sectors.

This growing engagement between the two countries comes as Sweden strengthens its global partnerships, responding to shifts in international dynamics, including the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its evolving stance toward China. Both nations continue to deepen their ties, focusing on shared goals of economic growth and mutual prosperity.



RG Kar Rape-Murder Case: SC disposes of parents' plea for fresh CBI probe – 'free to approach Calcutta HC'

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Supreme Court of India on Monday, March 17, dismissed a petition filed by the parents of a victim in the RG Kar rape-murder case, seeking a fresh investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). However, the court granted them the option to pursue their case in the Calcutta High Court.

Chief Justice of India, Sanjiv Khanna, stated, "Without making comments, we dispose of the application observing that the applicant is at liberty to pursue the proceedings before the HC," according to legal news agency LiveLaw.

The case relates to the horrific rape and murder of a 31-year-old post-graduate trainee doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. Her body was discovered on August 9, 2024, within the hospital premises. Investigations revealed that the woman had been raped and murdered, sparking widespread protests across the country.

During a prior hearing, the CJI-led Bench directed hospitals and medical colleges nationwide not to penalize doctors and medical professionals who had participated in protests over the case but had returned to their duties after the Supreme Court's appeal. Senior Advocate Karuna Nundi represented the victim's parents, while Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta appeared on behalf of the CBI.

In February 2025, a special court in Kolkata ordered the CBI to submit a progress report on the case by February 24. The CBI had taken over the investigation following a directive from the Calcutta High Court.



Centre has accorded approval for Chandrayaan-5 Mission: ISRO chief

ISRO to Launch 250 kg Rover to Study the Moon

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Centre has granted approval for the ambitious Chandrayaan-5 mission, aimed at studying the lunar surface, ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan announced on Sunday. Speaking at an event to felicitate his appointment as the new head of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Narayanan highlighted the significance of the mission, which will carry a 250 kg rover, a substantial upgrade from the 25-kg rover 'Prayagyaan' aboard Chandrayaan-3.

The Chandrayaan-5 mission, a key part of ISRO's lunar exploration program, will focus on detailed surface studies of the moon. Narayanan noted that this mission would be a step forward in ISRO's lunar exploration capabilities, following the success of the previous Chandrayaan missions. Chandrayaan-1, launched in 2008, provided crucial data on the moon's chemical, mineralogical, and photo-geological characteristics. Despite a partial setback during the Chandrayaan-2 mission in 2019, which was 98% successful, the high-resolution camera on the spacecraft continues to send valuable images from the lunar surface.

Narayanan also spoke about the recent success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which achieved a significant milestone with the Vikram lander performing a soft landing on the moon's South Pole on August 23, 2023.



India, New Zealand resume FTA talks, bilateral meet held

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

India and New Zealand have officially resumed negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA), marking a significant step towards strengthening economic ties after a nearly decade-long pause. The two countries began discussions on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in April 2010, aimed at boosting trade in goods, services, and investment. However, after nine rounds of talks, negotiations stalled in 2015.

The announcement of the resumption of talks came after Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met with New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment, Todd McClay, during a high-level visit by New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to India. The two leaders agreed to pursue a comprehensive and mutually beneficial FTA that seeks to enhance supply chain integration, improve market access, and unlock new business opportunities for both countries.

Bilateral trade between India and New Zealand has been steadily growing, surpassing \$1 billion during April-January 2025. However, a report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) suggests that the proposed FTA may offer limited benefits to Indian companies, as many already enjoy duty-free access to a significant portion of goods in the New Zealand market. The report notes that New Zealand's average import tariff is just 2.3%, compared to India's 17.8%. Despite this, the FTA negotiations aim to further enhance trade relations and unlock new opportunities for businesses and consumers. India's exports to New Zealand include clothing, textiles, refined petroleum, agricultural machinery, and basmati rice.



Trump Attempts to Void Biden's Pardons, Raising Legal and Political Controversies

TPN Correspondent | Washington

U.S. President Donald Trump has moved to annul several of his predecessor Joe Biden's pardons, marking the latest in a series of actions to challenge political opponents. Among the pardons Trump declared void were those granted to Members of the U.S. House of Representatives investigating the January 6, 2020, Capitol attack, as well as prominent figures such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, who headed the Biden Administration's COVID-19 response, and former Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley.

Trump's statement on his 'Truth Social' media platform claimed that these pardons, signed by Biden just before he left office on January 20, were invalid because they were allegedly signed using an autopen. "The 'Pardons' that Sleepy Joe Biden gave to the Unselect Committee of Political Thugs... are hereby declared VOID, VACANT, AND OF NO FURTHER FORCE OR EFFECT," Trump wrote early Monday morning.

The January 6 Select Committee, which Trump criticized, included several high-profile figures, such as Republicans Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, and Democrat Adam Schiff, all vocal critics of Trump. On his first day in office, Trump had pardoned over 1,500 individuals involved in the Capitol attack, further emphasizing his controversial use of pardons.

Trump also claimed—without evidence—that Biden might not have been aware of the pardons and suggested that members of the Select Committee might have signed them on his behalf. He asserted that these individuals, who he accused of destroying evidence during their investigation, should be prepared for high-level scrutiny.

While Trump's attempt to nullify these pardons raises significant questions about executive power, he acknowledged that it would ultimately be up to the courts to decide if the rescinding of presidential pardons is legally valid. Presidential pardoning power, granted by Article II Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, is broad but has historically been used to protect allies and family members. Despite these powers, the courts have largely refrained from limiting presidential pardons, leaving their scope open to interpretation.



Ukraine Appoints Major General Andrii Hnatov as New Chief of General Staff

TPN Correspondent | Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has appointed Major General Andrii Hnatov as the new Chief of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, replacing Lieutenant General Anatolii Barhylevych. The decision, announced through decrees published on the presidential website, did not specify the reasons behind the leadership change.

Defense Minister Rustem Umerov confirmed the reshuffle, emphasizing that the move was aimed at improving the combat effectiveness of the armed forces. Umerov noted that the promotion of Hnatov, which he recommended, is part of Ukraine's broader efforts to transform its military. Hnatov brings over 27 years of military experience to the position, having previously commanded various units, including a marine brigade, Operational Command East, and the Joint Forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

As part of the restructuring, Barhylevych has been appointed chief inspector of the Ministry of Defence. His new role will focus on ensuring compliance with military standards and reinforcing discipline within the Ukrainian military. Barhylevych had served as Chief of the General Staff since February 2024.

Competition is fine, not conflict: PM Modi on China

- PM Modi Emphasizes India-China Cooperation
- Criticizes Pakistan's Role in Global Terrorism

TPN Correspondent | Washington

Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated on Sunday that cooperation between India and China benefits not only the two nations but also the global community. Speaking to Lex Fridman in a podcast, he highlighted the progress made in normalizing the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and noted that both countries are working toward restoring the pre-2020 status along the border, although the process might take time.

Modi emphasized that India-China cooperation is crucial for global stability and prosperity, stating, "The 21st century is the Asian century. Competition is natural, but there should not be conflict." Reflecting on the historical ties between India and China, Modi pointed out that the two countries, both ancient civilizations, have learned from each other throughout history. He noted that they once contributed to half of the world's GDP and had little history of conflict.

Looking ahead, Modi expressed India's desire to maintain strong ties with China. "Differences between neighbors are natural, and occasional disagreements are also natural. Our aim is to ensure that these differences



do not escalate into disputes. We prioritize dialogue over discord," he said. Modi acknowledged that the 2020 border standoff had strained relations, but emphasized that efforts are underway to rebuild trust.

On relations with Pakistan, Modi reflected on his previous attempts to foster peace, including his invitation to Pakistan at his 2014 swearing-in ceremony. He said, "The biggest breakthrough was inviting Pakistan, but the results were disappointing." Modi criticized Pakistan for continuing to pursue conflict

instead of peace and harmony, despite the heavy emotional toll of the Partition on India. He pointed to Pakistan's role in global terrorism, particularly its involvement in the 9/11 attacks, as a source of global instability.

Modi urged Pakistan to abandon its policy of state-sponsored terrorism, stating that such actions were harming both India and the world. He expressed hope that Pakistan would eventually choose peace and that its people, too, were frustrated with the ongoing cycle of violence.

NASA announces Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore's return date to earth



TPN Correspondent | Cape Canaveral

NASA has confirmed the return date for astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, who have spent an extended mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The pair, along with fellow astronauts Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov, will return to Earth in mid-March aboard a SpaceX capsule.

Williams and Wilmore were originally scheduled for a brief mission lasting about a week when they launched in June 2024 aboard Boeing's first astronaut flight. However, due to several issues with the Boeing Starliner capsule, which delayed their scheduled return, they ended up spending nearly nine months in space. The capsule had encountered multiple technical problems, forcing NASA to leave

their mission crew behind until a SpaceX capsule could transport their replacements.

On Sunday, a new SpaceX crew capsule arrived at the ISS, delivering replacements for Williams and Wilmore. The four astronauts, hailing from the US, Japan, and Russia, will spend a few days aboard the station, learning about its operations from the experienced crew members before the pair return to Earth. This marks the end of their unexpected extended stay.

In a lighthearted moment, one of the Russian astronauts, Ivan Vagner, wore an alien mask as the new crew arrived. Wilmore greeted them with enthusiasm, ringing the space station's bell as the new crew members entered. Williams shared her excitement with Mission Control, saying, "It was a wonderful day. Great to see our friends arrive."

The planned return is set for mid-March. After some additional delays, including extensive repairs to their replacement capsule's batteries, Williams, Wilmore, and their fellow astronauts will undock from the ISS on Tuesday morning and splash down off Florida's coast later that evening. Weather permitting, their return will conclude an extended and challenging mission aboard the space station, with 11 astronauts currently aboard the orbiting laboratory.

"Lack Of Trust": Israel's Netanyahu Seeks To Fire Internal Security Agency Chief

TPN Correspondent | Jerusalem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Sunday, March 17, 2025, that he intends to seek the dismissal of Ronen Bar, the head of Israel's internal security agency, Shin Bet. Netanyahu's decision follows weeks of public disputes between the two, especially after the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, which triggered the ongoing war in Gaza. Netanyahu criticized Bar's leadership and accused him of failing to prevent the attack, which resulted in over 1,200 Israeli deaths.

In a video statement, Netanyahu explained that the lack of trust between him and Bar had led to the decision, stating that the Shin Bet's leadership needed to be restored in order to meet Israel's war objectives and prevent further disaster. He claimed that Bar's actions, including alleged media leaks, had obstructed necessary reforms within the agency.

However, Bar has rejected the notion that his dismissal is tied to the failures surrounding the October attack. He argued that Netanyahu's



motive is political, suggesting the prime minister expects "personal loyalty" that contradicts Shin Bet's ethical standards. Bar emphasized that an in-depth investigation into the broader causes of the attack, including government policies, is crucial.

The proposed dismissal has sparked controversy. Israel's attorney general, Gali Baharav

Miara, called Netanyahu's move "unprecedented" and questioned its legality, stating that the decision should be fully reviewed before any action is taken. The political opposition, led by former Prime Minister Yair Lapid, has vowed to challenge the decision in the Supreme Court, claiming it is an attempt to derail a criminal investigation into Netanyahu's office.



Stock Markets Start the Week on a Strong Note



Domestic stock markets surged on Monday, closing at their highest levels amid positive cues from Asian and international markets. Investor sentiment was lifted as all major Asian indices opened with gains, and quality stocks were available at attractive prices. The BSE Sensex gained 341 points, closing at 74,169, after touching an intraday high of 74,376. The NSE Nifty rose 111 points to settle at 22,508, with the Nifty Bank advancing 293 points to 48,354.

Among Nifty50 stocks, Dr. Reddy's, Bajaj Finserv, SBI Life, Trent, and Axis Bank led the gainers, while Wipro, Britannia, BPCL, Hero Moto, and ITC were the biggest losers. Pharma, healthcare, finance, and auto stocks saw strong demand, while FMCG, PSU banks, and oil & gas stocks faced selling pressure. Market breadth favored sellers, with 1,134 stocks gaining and 1,781 losing on the NSE. A total of 29 shares hit 52-week highs, while 433 shares reached 52-week lows.

In corporate updates, NMDC declared a ₹2.50 per share dividend for FY25, while Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki announced price hikes of 2% and up to 4%, respectively. Airtel received a buy rating from Macquarie at a ₹1,800 target price, and HSBC upgraded Tata Motors to a buy. Hudco shares surged after sanctioning a ₹10,000 crore loan for Amara-vati construction.



Voltas Ltd
Voltas saw strong demand in the air conditioning and cooling segment due to rising temperatures and increased sales of commercial refrigeration products. The company has a ₹500 crore expansion plan to boost its production capacity for cooling appliances. Jefferies has retained a 'Buy' rating with a target price of ₹1,620, citing growth potential in the consumer durables sector.

Coromandel International Ltd
Coromandel is expanding its specialty fertilizer business to cater to increasing demand in the agri-tech sector. The company reported a 12% YoY growth in revenue, supported



by stable raw material costs and rising domestic demand. HSBC has maintained a 'Buy' rating with a target price of ₹2,250, emphasizing growth in agri-inputs.



Bharat Forge Ltd

Bharat Forge has secured a ₹900 crore defense order for artillery components and armored vehicle parts. The company is expanding its EV components business to capitalize on growing demand in the electric mobility sector. Analysts remain bullish, with Motilal Oswal giving a 'Buy' rating and a target price of ₹1,350.



HUDCO

HUDCO (Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd) announced fresh loan approvals worth ₹3,000 crore for affordable housing projects. The government's focus on infrastructure and urban development is expected to boost HUDCO's loan disbursement pipeline. ICICI Securities upgraded the stock to 'Buy' with a target price of ₹260.



Coal India Ltd

Coal India's production increased by 8% YoY, driven by higher demand from the power and industrial sectors. The company declared a third interim dividend of ₹5 per share, benefiting long-term investors. strong fundamentals and steady production growth.



India's Wholesale Inflation Rises to 2.38% in February, Food Prices Ease



India's wholesale inflation, based on the wholesale price index (WPI), rose to 2.38% in February, slightly up from 2.31% in January, according to provisional data released by the Union Ministry of Commerce on Monday. The increase in inflation was driven by a slower pace of decline in fuel and power prices and a rise in the prices of manufactured products.

The WPI inflation in February was marginally higher than the 2.36% predicted by economists in a Reuters poll.

Food Prices Show Moderate Increase Food prices, a major contributor to the overall inflation, increased by 5.94% annually in February, although this was a decrease compared to December's 8.85% and January's 7.47% rise. Within the food category,

cereal prices rose by 6.77% in February, a slight decline from January's 7.33%. Meanwhile, vegetable prices fell by 5.80%, following an 8.35% surge in January. However, the prices of onions and fruits continued to rise.

Despite the softer rise in food prices, they have remained elevated for over a year, largely due to uneven monsoon rains between November 2023 and June 2024.

Sonal Badhan, economist at the Bank of Baroda, noted that food inflation softened, helped by a broad-based slowdown. "The vegetable inflation index eased the most, followed by food grain inflation and inflation for protein-based items like milk, eggs, meat, and fish," she explained.

Manufactured Products and

Fuel Prices Manufactured product prices, which account for about 64% of the WPI, rose by 2.86% year-on-year in February, up from 2.51% in January. The prices of fuel and power fell by 0.71%, a smaller decline compared to January's 2.57% drop.

Rahul Agrawal, senior economist at ICRA Ltd., said that the overall uptick in wholesale inflation was primarily driven by non-food items. He added that the cooling in food inflation was offset by the narrowing deflation in fuel and power and an increase in core WPI inflation, which reached a 24-month high of 1.3%. Looking ahead, experts predict volatility in commodity prices due to factors like the trade war and uncertainty surrounding US Federal Reserve rate cuts.

Swiggy Shares Rise 2% as Instamart Expands to 100 Cities in India



Swiggy's shares gained nearly 2% in intraday trade on Monday, March 17, reaching ₹359.30 apiece, following the announcement of a significant milestone for its Quick Commerce platform, Instamart. The platform, which was launched in August 2020, has now expanded to 100 cities across India, responding to the growing demand for fast 10-minute deliveries, especially in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

In its filing to the exchanges, Swiggy revealed that it had introduced Instamart to 32 new cities this month alone, includ-

ing Raipur, Siliguri, Jodhpur, and Thanjavur. This expansion brings the convenience of rapid deliveries to millions of customers, who now have access to over 30,000 products, ranging from groceries and daily essentials to electronics, fashion, makeup, and toys, all delivered within 10 minutes.

Amitesh Jha, CEO of Swiggy Instamart, spoke about the milestone, noting that the platform has gained significant traction not only in metro cities but also in smaller towns. He emphasized that the demand for quick

commerce has grown substantially beyond Indian metros, highlighting the importance of their expansion to underserved areas.

In 2025, Swiggy reported that one in four new users came from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, demonstrating the increasing demand for quick commerce in these regions. The company remains committed to offering convenience, variety, and value to a broader customer base while empowering local ecosystems by supporting dark store staff and delivery partners.

Despite a 43% drop in Swiggy's share price from its peak, analysts remain optimistic about the long-term potential of the quick commerce space. They view the recent correction as an opportunity, with some brokerages offering positive outlooks. JM Financial has set a "buy" rating with a target price of ₹500, suggesting a 34.6% upside. ICICI Securities also maintains a "buy" call with a target price of ₹740 per share.

Tata Motors to Hike Prices of Commercial Vehicles by Up to 2% from April

Tata Motors announced on Monday, March 17, 2025, that it will increase the prices of its commercial vehicle range by up to 2% starting April 1, 2025. The price hike is aimed at partially offsetting the rising input costs the company has been facing.

In a regulatory filing, Tata Motors stated that the price increase will vary depending on the individual model and variant. The company noted that the move was necessary to address

the rising costs of materials and other inputs that are impacting the commercial vehicle segment.

Tata Motors, a part of the \$165 billion Tata Group, is a major player in the automobile industry, manufacturing cars, utility vehicles, trucks, and buses. With a market capitalization of \$44 billion, it has a significant footprint in both the passenger and commercial vehicle markets.

This price increase is expected to affect the company's range of commercial vehicles, which includes trucks and buses that are used for various industrial and transportation purposes. The decision comes in the wake of increasing raw material costs, including steel and other components, which have impacted the cost structure for automobile manufacturers worldwide.

Despite the price hike, shares of Tata

Motors closed 0.84% higher on Monday, trading at ₹660.90 per share on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The rise in stock prices indicates investor confidence, despite the increase in operational costs.

Tata Motors' decision is in line with broader industry trends, where automakers are passing on a portion of the rising costs to customers through price adjustments. As input costs continue to rise globally, especially for



critical materials used in vehicle production, companies like Tata Motors are increasingly under pressure to balance profitability with consumer affordability.

As the industry adapts to these market conditions, the price increase is expected to impact both businesses and consumers, particularly in the commercial vehicle segment.

iPhone 17 Air Was Supposed to Be Port-Free, But Apple Scrapped the Idea: Mark Gurman



The iPhone 17 series has been a topic of extensive speculation, with rumors suggesting the lineup will include the iPhone 17, iPhone 17 Air (or iPhone 17 Slim), iPhone 17 Pro, and iPhone 17 Pro Max, with an expected launch in the second quarter of this year. Among these, the iPhone 17 Air was slated to be Apple's thinnest iPhone yet, potentially replacing the Plus variant in the lineup. Bloomberg's Mark Gurman has revealed new details about the iPhone 17 Air, including an ambitious plan that Apple initially considered. According to Gurman's weekly Power On newsletter, Apple originally planned to make the iPhone 17 Air "Apple's first completely port-free iPhone." The device would have relied on wireless charging and cloud-based data syncing, eliminating the traditional charging ports altogether. This move was intended to pave the way for even slimmer models in the future, with a sleek, minimalist design that further pushed the limits of device thinness. However, Apple reportedly scrapped this plan to avoid po-

tential regulatory issues, particularly from the European Union (EU), which has recently mandated that tech companies like Apple adopt the USB Type-C charging standard. Apple's decision was likely influenced by the need to comply with the EU's regulations and maintain its broad consumer appeal. The iPhone 17 Air's thin design would have required a thinner battery, which could have compromised battery life. To avoid this, Apple instructed engineers to redesign key components, including the display and silicon, to optimize efficiency while maintaining performance. Expected Specifications: The iPhone 17 Air is expected to feature a 9.5mm thick profile, including the 4mm camera bump. It may offer a 6.6-inch OLED display with a 120Hz ProMotion refresh rate and Dynamic Island. The device could house a 24MP front camera, a 48MP rear camera, and be made with a titanium frame. It may also include Apple's first 5G modem and Wi-Fi chip. Rumored pricing is between \$1,299 and \$1,500.

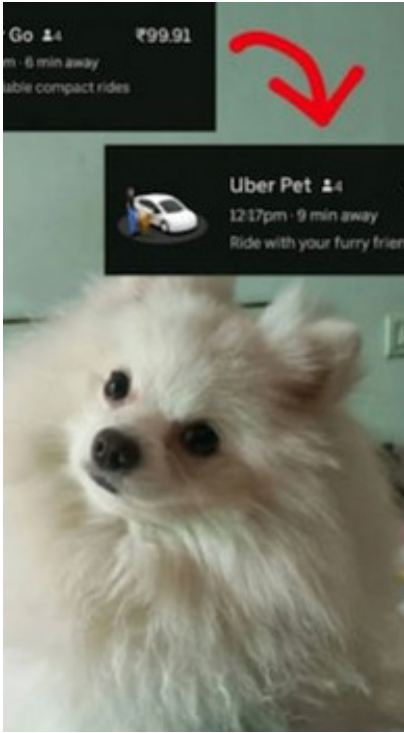
Amazon Echo Users Will No Longer Have Option to Process Alexa Voice Recordings On-Device



Amazon has announced that starting March 28, Echo users will no longer have the option to process their voice commands and recordings locally on their devices. Instead, all Alexa voice recordings will be sent to Amazon's cloud for processing, as the company expands Alexa's capabilities with generative AI features. This change affects all Echo devices such as smart speakers and displays. In an email to users who had previously enabled the 'Do Not Send Voice Recordings' option, Amazon explained that on-device processing is being discontinued to enable the new AI-driven features that require the processing power of Amazon's secure cloud. The company emphasized that Alexa voice requests will remain encrypted during transmission to the cloud, where they are processed under security protections. Although voice recordings will still be deleted automatically after processing, the new policy raises privacy concerns. Many users may be uncomfortable with Amazon having access to their voice data, especially in the context of

in-home devices that can listen continuously. Amazon assures users that privacy controls will still be available through the Alexa Privacy dashboard, where they can manage how their data is handled, including the option to prevent their voice recordings from being stored at all. Amazon also announced the upcoming launch of Alexa+, a subscription-based, generative AI version of Alexa, which will include advanced features like Alexa Voice ID. This feature will allow Alexa to recognize individual users based on their voice, and share personalized content like calendar events and music. However, Amazon clarified that Voice ID may not function if users choose not to save voice recordings. This shift in policy is part of Amazon's ongoing push to enhance Alexa's AI capabilities but raises concerns about privacy, particularly in light of past controversies surrounding the handling of user data. Notably, Amazon has faced scrutiny over allowing employees to listen to Alexa voice recordings for training purposes and other privacy violations related to its Ring doorbell cameras.

Gurugram Woman Calls Out Uber Pets For Overpricing



A Gurugram woman has raised concerns over the steep pricing of Uber's new service, Uber Pets, which allows passengers to travel with their pets. In a LinkedIn post, she highlighted the significant price difference between regular Uber rides and Uber Pets. For a short 2 km ride, the regular Uber fare was ₹100, while Uber Pets cost a staggering ₹530, over five times the price of a regular ride. The woman questioned whether the price hike was justified, speculating that it could account for cleaning fees, premium drivers, or simply be an added charge for pet owners. She pointed out that her local auto-rickshaw charges just ₹60 for a similar ride and even

offers belly rubs for her dog, making the Uber Pets pricing seem excessive. In her post, she expressed her surprise at the service's pricing, asking, "If the goal was accessibility, why is this service a luxury?" She further criticized the fact that many pet owners might struggle with these higher costs, especially when pets are considered family members. While some commenters suggested booking a regular Uber and informing the driver about the pet, others speculated that Uber might be capitalizing on the growing trend of pet ownership in India. One user pointed out that Uber may be trying to monetize this shift in consumer preferences.

Forget 2 Minutes, This Eatery Serves Noodles in Just 48 Seconds!



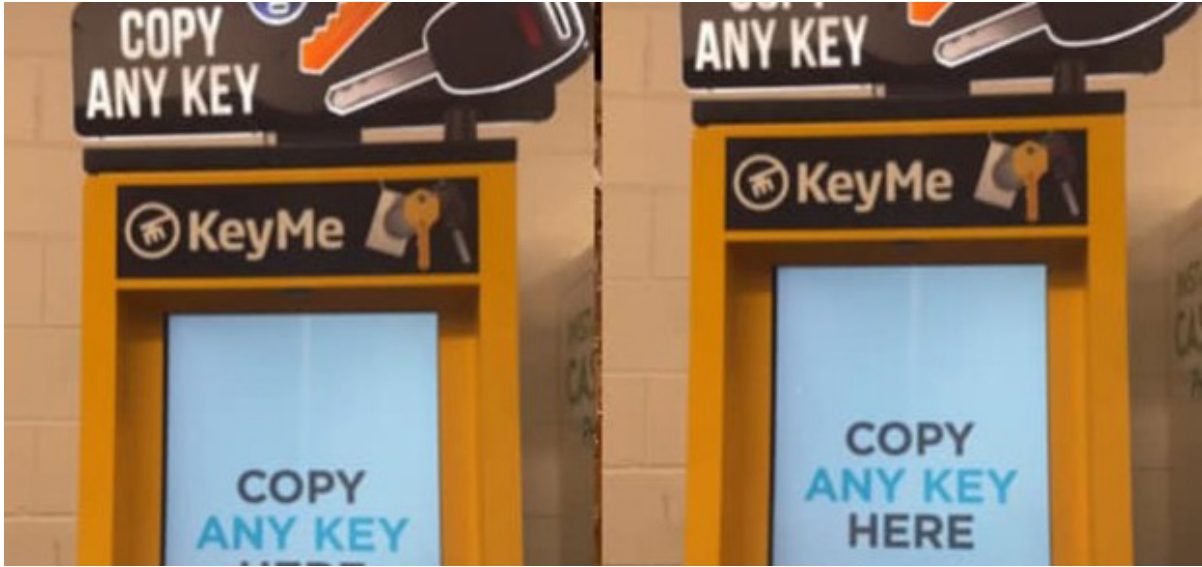
In the bustling city of Shenzhen, China, a new eatery is turning heads with its incredible speed of service, offering freshly cooked noodles in just 48 seconds. The Future Noodle Restaurant, a small but highly efficient establishment, has taken fast food to a whole new level. While most noodle dishes take at least two minutes to prepare, this restaurant uses a robotic system to make noodles from scratch in record time. The process is nothing short of fascinating. A robotic arm mixes flour and water, shaping the dough into perfect noodles in just eight seconds. The noodles are then plunged into hot water, where they cook with various ingredients like marinated eggs and grilled sausages for 40 seconds. The result is a hot, fresh, and delicious bowl of noodles, served in under a minute. The restaurant, which spans only eight square

meters, uses a self-service kiosk for ordering. Customers can choose from ten different noodle varieties, paired with sides such as marinated eggs and grilled sausages. The price of a meal ranges from 6 to 20 yuan (roughly Rs 122 to Rs 250), making it an affordable and quick dining option. A transparent window allows customers to observe the robotic cooking process, which has garnered praise for its speed, efficiency, and, most importantly, the flavor of the final product. With its cutting-edge technology and quick turnaround time, Future Noodle Restaurant is setting a new standard for fast food, proving that great meals don't need to take long to prepare. This innovative concept is a glimpse into the future of dining, where automation and robotics combine to deliver convenience and quality in record time.

US Vending Machine Goes Viral for Duplicating Keys in Minutes

A viral video is captivating social media users, showcasing a unique vending machine in the US that can duplicate keys within minutes. Shared by Tanvir Shaikh on Instagram, the video demonstrates an alternative to the traditional and often time-consuming process of visiting a locksmith. In the video, Tanvir walks up to a vending machine resembling an ATM and taps the screen to begin the key duplication process. The machine offers several options, including standard keys, vehicle keys, access cards, and key fobs. Tanvir selects the standard option for a basic key copy, inserts his original key into a scanning slot, and chooses his preferred key

type—brass in this case. After selecting the number of copies—two in this case—he proceeds to the payment section. Within minutes, the machine dispenses three keys instead of two, surprising Tanvir with a free extra key. This fast, automated process has drawn attention for its convenience and efficiency compared to traditional locksmith services, where customers often face longer waiting times. Tanvir's Instagram reel has sparked interest, highlighting how technology is transforming everyday services like key duplication, making it quicker, easier, and more accessible.



PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen Aim for Strong Show at Swiss Open



Star shuttlers PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will look to regain their top form at the USD 250,000 Swiss Open in Basel, which begins on Tuesday. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist and 2022 champion, is seeded seventh and will face Malvika Bansod in a clash between two generations of Indian women's singles players. Lakshya Sen will meet HS Prannoy, the 2016 Swiss Open winner, in his opening match. Sindhu is recovering from a hamstring

injury and suffered an early exit at the All England Championship, while Malvika gained confidence with a win in Birmingham. Lakshya reached the quarterfinals at All England, while Prannoy faced early exits. Indian shuttlers have a strong record at the Swiss Open, with past champions including Sindhu, Prannoy, and Saina Nehwal. The tournament will feature several other Indian players aiming for success in singles and doubles events.

National Women's Hockey League 2024-25 Final Phase to Begin on March 18

The final phase of the inaugural National Women's Hockey League 2024-25 will kick off on March 18 at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh AstroTurf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi, Jharkhand. The U-21 Women's tournament will feature eight of India's top state teams: Hockey Haryana, Hockey Maharashtra, Hockey Jharkhand, Hockey Madhya Pradesh, Hockey Bengal, Hockey Mizoram, Manipur Hockey, and Hockey Association of Odisha. The teams will compete in a round-robin format from March 18 to 28, with each team facing the others once. Three points will be awarded for a win, one point for a draw, and no points for a loss. The team with the most points at the end of the league will be crowned champions. The opening match will see Hockey Haryana face Manipur Hockey at 7:00 AM IST.



The tournament will showcase young talent and provide valuable exposure for rising players in domestic hockey.

Mirra Andreeva Shocks Aryna Sabalenka to Win Indian Wells Title

Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva stunned world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka with a 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory to claim her second WTA 1000 title at Indian Wells. This win follows Andreeva's historic triumph in Dubai, where she became the youngest player to win a 1000-level title. After a challenging start, Andreeva broke Sabalenka three times in the third set, showing resilience and determination. She will rise to a career-high world No. 6 following this victory. Reflecting on the match, Andreeva said, "I was running like a rabbit today," crediting her ability to fight to the end. Sabalenka, who had been in dominant form leading into the final, expressed



frustration with her performance, admitting to unforced errors and emotional struggles. This marks Andreeva's first

hard court victory over Sabalenka, after losses to the Belarusian earlier this year at the Australian Open and Brisbane.

Hockey India Names 36-Member Core Probable Group for Senior Men's National Camp

Hockey India has named a 36-member core probable group for the senior men's national coaching camp at SAI Bengaluru, which started on Monday and will run until March 28. The group includes goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Pawan, Suraj Karkera, and Mohith Honnena-halli Shashikumar, alongside defenders like Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Varun Kumar, and Yashdeep Siwach. Midfielders such as Rajkumar Pal, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad, along with forwards including Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, and Gurjant Singh, have also been called up.



Following a successful start to their FIH Hockey Pro League campaign, where they won five of eight home matches, the team will focus on fitness, conditioning, and evaluating

their recent performances. Chief Coach Craig Fulton emphasized preparing for upcoming Pro League matches in Europe and assessing new talent during the camp.

Panchal's 145 Guides Super Strikers to Elite Cricket Tournament Title

Super Strikers dominated the inaugural Elite Cricket Tournament, defeating Dynamic Daredevils by six wickets in the final on Sunday. Panchal was the hero of the match, blasting an astonishing 145 runs off just 34 balls, earning the 'Player of the Match' award. Dynamic Daredevils posted 200/6 in their 20 overs, with Sushant Singh scoring 83, Ansh contributing 31, and Amaan Alvi adding 43. However, Super Strikers made light work of the target, chasing down 201 in just 9.3 overs. Despite a shaky start at 15/2, Panchal's explosive innings, featuring 5 boundaries and 20 sixes, turned the match around. Jas-si's quick 26 off six balls helped seal the victory.



The tournament offered young cricketers a platform to compete along-

side experienced professionals, showcasing emerging talent and pro-

viding valuable exposure to high-level competi-tion.

Avani Prashanth Shoots 65, Finishes Tied-13th at Australian Women's Classic

Avani Prashanth shot an impressive 5-under 65 in the final round of the Australian Women's Classic, securing a solid top-15 finish in her first season on the Ladies European Tour. With earlier rounds of 72-70, she finished at 3-under 207, six shots behind winner Manon De Roey, who claimed her third LET victory. Starting on the tenth, Avani birdied five holes in a row before a couple of dropped shots. However, she regained momentum, adding a birdie on the seventh. Avani was pleased with her performance, especially after overcoming challenges with reading the greens earlier in the tournament. Pranavi Urs, the only other Indian to make the cut, finished tied-65th. Manon De Roey's victory moved her to second in the 2025 Order of Merit, while the LET heads to Wollongong for the WPGA Tour next.





Kangana Ranaut Confident ‘Emergency’ Will Win National Award



Kangana Ranaut, actor and director of the historical drama *Emergency*, has rejected suggestions that the film should compete for an Oscar. The movie, based on the 1975 Emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, has been trending on Netflix, sparking polarized reactions. While some fans have suggested it should be considered for the Oscars, Ranaut has made it clear that she isn't seeking international recognition. Reposting a fan's praise on social media, Ranaut remarked, "America wouldn't like to acknowledge its real face... they can keep their silly Oscar, we have National Awards." Expressing confidence in her film's success, she emphasized her belief that *Emergency* would win a National Award, highlighting her pride in the Indian award system over foreign accolades.

Anushka Sharma Shares Cryptic Post After Virat Kohli Slams BCCI's Family Rule

Anushka Sharma recently posted a cryptic message on Instagram about the multiple versions of ourselves that exist in others' perceptions. Reflecting on how different people see us in varying ways, she shared, "A different version of you exists in the minds of everyone who knows you," emphasizing that our core identity remains elusive even to ourselves. This introspective post came shortly after her husband, cricketer Virat Kohli, criticized the Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) over their new restrictions on family time during international tours. Virat voiced his frustration at the lack of understanding about the mental well-being families provide to players. Anushka and Virat, who married in 2017, are parents to two children, Vamika and Akaay. Anushka's upcoming project is the biopic *Chakda Xpress* on cricketer Jhulan Goswami.



Shah Rukh Khan's Upcoming Movie in South: Collaboration with Sukumar

Shah Rukh Khan, fresh off the success of *Jawan*, is reportedly in talks with acclaimed South director Sukumar for an intense, rural-set political action drama. This collaboration is generating major buzz as it might mark a departure for SRK, who is expected to play an anti-hero, a significant shift from his usual roles. The film is rumored to explore caste and class struggles, with Sukumar's signature raw storytelling style. Adding to the excitement, the movie is believed to be linked to Sukumar's *Pushpa* universe, a franchise known for its



high-impact, mass-appealing moments. However, the film's production might take time, as both Shah Rukh Khan and Sukumar are currently busy with other commitments. Sukumar is working on a project with Ram Charan, while SRK is preparing for *Pathaan 2* and *King*.

Shruti Haasan's De-Glam Look Stuns Fans in Coolie BTS Photos

Shruti Haasan's simple yet striking look in the behind-the-scenes pictures from *Coolie* has taken the internet by storm. Shared on March 14, the images celebrate the birthday of director Lokesh Kanagaraj. In one photo, Shruti can be seen wearing a modest salwar-kameez with her hair tied in a neat braid, flaunting her natural glow with minimal makeup. Her understated appearance has

garnered attention, showing her effortless beauty and charm. *Coolie*, featuring an ensemble cast including Rajinikanth, Nagarjuna, and others, is expected to release in 2025. The film, produced by Sun Pictures, marks the reunion of Rajinikanth and composer Anirudh Ravichander. Action choreographers Anbu-Arivu



are also part of the project. Fans eagerly await more updates following the film's first-look poster release in March 2024.

Tamannaah Bhatia Aspires to Play Sridevi on Screen



revealing her desire to portray her on screen. Speaking at the *Blenders Pride Fashion Tour*, Tamannaah called Sridevi "super iconic," highlighting her immense influence and versatility. Sridevi, who passed away in 2018, was renowned for breaking stereotypes and portraying diverse roles across

various genres, from comedy to drama. She remains one of Indian cinema's most celebrated actresses, known for her unforgettable performances in films like *Mr. India*, *Sadma*, *Khuda Gawah*, and *English Vinglish*. Tamannaah, who was last seen in the heist thriller *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, will next appear in the Telugu supernatural thriller *Odela 2*. She also expressed her ongoing admiration for Sridevi's legendary career and the wide range of characters she portrayed.

Malaika Arora Rebukes 16-Year-Old Contestant for “Indecent” Gestures on Hip Hop India Season 2



Malaika Arora, a judge on *Hip Hop India Season 2*, schooled a 16-year-old contestant for making suggestive gestures during his performance. In a now-viral video, Malaika can be heard reprimanding the teenager, saying, "Mummy ka phone number do!" (Give me your mother's phone number!), expressing disbelief at his behavior. She pointed out his inappropriate actions, including winking and sending flying kisses.

Other contestants also voiced their objections to the participant's conduct. Malaika, known for her straightforward nature, emphasized the importance of respectful behavior, especially considering the contestant's young age. On the work front, Malaika recently appeared in the Marathi film *Yek Number* and continues to judge popular reality shows like *India's Got Talent* and *India's Best Dancer*.

Taapsee Pannu Wraps Up Shooting for Gandhari

Taapsee Pannu has officially wrapped up the shoot for her upcoming film *Gandhari*, an intense revenge action thriller. Sharing a series of pictures from the set, she reflected on the challenging experience, describing it as running on "fuel of grit and determination" and experiencing a "burnout like never before." The film's title, inspired by the character from the *Mahabharata*, follows a mother's emotional and powerful journey to rescue her kidnapped child. In her post, Taapsee expressed immense satisfaction with the project, saying, "Some bruises give a feeling of contentment like never before." *Gandhari* is directed by Devashish Makhija and marks

her sixth collaboration with writer-producer Kanika Dhillon. The film promises to be a powerful tale of revenge and redemption.

