

Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD

t°

H 33° C

L 25° C

VIJAYAWADA

t°

H 35° C

L 26° C

TIRUPATHI

t°

H 36° C

L 26° C

CM Siddaramaiah May Seek Rahul Gandhi’s Intervention in Honey Trap Controversy

Minister Rajanna’s son claims digital evidence in honey trap row

Accuses top Congress minister of orchestrating scandal

Siddaramaiah, Rajanna to discuss issue with Rahul Gandhi



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is likely to escalate the ongoing honey trap controversy involving his confidante and Co-operation Minister KN Rajanna to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The controversy erupted after Rajanna’s son, Rajendra, alleged a conspiracy by an influential minister within the Congress party to honeytrap his father and himself. Rajendra met Siddaramaiah at his official residence, Cauvery, on Saturday and reportedly presented digital evidence to support his claims. Speaking at a public event in Madhugiri, Rajendra openly accused the unnamed minister, questioning his motives. “Does he not have a wife and children? Why is he trying to honeytrap us?” he remarked.

The issue has deepened internal rifts within the Congress, with Rajanna and PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi—both close aides of Siddaramaiah—planning to meet Rahul Gandhi in Delhi. The meeting will be facilitated by AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal, a Siddaramaiah loyalist. The two ministers aim to expose what they call a conspiracy to politically sideline them and prevent the accused minister from claiming the chief ministerial position in the future. Meanwhile, the Congress high command is already

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DK Shivakumar Calls Annamalai a ‘Poor Man’

BJP protests with black flags against DK Shivakumar

Shivakumar calls Annamalai a “poor man”

Annamalai responds with a sarcastic remark

TPN Correspondent | Chennai/Bengaluru
Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar reacted to BJP protests against him in Chennai, stating that he welcomed the black flags shown to him. The protests were organized by BJP workers as Mr. Shivakumar arrived in Chennai on the invitation of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin for a meeting on delimitation.

Southern states have raised concerns about the potential impact of delimitation based on population, fearing a reduction in their parliamentary representation. The BJP has opposed the meeting convened by Stalin. Addressing reporters in Chennai, Mr. Shivakumar took a dig at Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai, referring to him as a “poor man” while acknowledging his past service in Karnataka as an IPS officer. “I welcome all these BJP black flags. I was never afraid even when they sent me to Tihar Jail,” Shivakumar said, recalling his past legal troubles under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), a case later quashed by the Supreme Court. “This officer (Annamalai), poor man, is from my state. He

has served us. He knows our strength. Let him do his job. I wish him all the best,” he added. Responding to Shivakumar’s comments, Annamalai took to social media platform ‘X’ with a sharp retort. “Yes, I diligently served Karnataka’s people as a Police Officer. Thanks for the noteworthy mention, Thiru @DKShivakumar avare,” he posted. He further added, “Also, thank you for wishing this poor man & my best wishes to you in your undying efforts in the pursuit of becoming the CM of Karnataka by toppling Thiru Siddaramaiah from his chair!” The exchange has fueled political tensions between the Congress and BJP leaders, especially amid ongoing debates on delimitation.

RSS Opposes Religion-Based Reservation, Calls It Unconstitutional



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Sunday opposed the Karnataka government’s decision to provide a 4% reservation for Muslims in government contracts, asserting that religion-based quotas violate the Constitution. Speaking at the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha in Bengaluru, Hosabale stated, “The Constitution, as drafted by Babasaheb Ambedkar, does not accept religion-based reservations. Any such move goes against his vision.” He pointed out that past attempts by Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra to introduce similar quotas were struck down by the courts. Addressing a range of issues, he criticized the glorification of historical figures like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, stating that India should honor leaders who upheld its cultural values.

RSS says religion-based quota violates Constitution

Courts have rejected similar provisions in past

Calls for unity based on Indian cultural ethos

He praised Mahatma Prataap for resisting foreign rule and claimed that an “invader mindset” still poses a threat to the country. On the Ayodhya Ram temple, Hosabale credited Hindu society rather than the RSS alone for its construction, emphasizing that Hindu identity represents not just a religion but a civilizational and nationalistic expression. He also acknowledged the need for social reforms, including caste eradication and gender equality, stating that RSS Shakhas provide a platform to address these issues. Regarding the BJP’s leadership changes, he maintained that the RSS does not interfere in the party’s internal matters. On the broader ideology of ‘One Nation, One Culture,’ he stressed that efforts must continue to challenge distorted historical narratives and decolonize the national mindset.

SC Releases Report on Delhi HC Judge’s Cash Row

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi
The Supreme Court has made public the report on the alleged discovery of a cash stash at the residence of Delhi High Court judge, Justice Yashwant Varma. The report, submitted by Delhi High Court Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya, contains images, videos, and Justice Varma’s detailed response to the allegations. Justice Varma strongly refuted claims that a large sum of money was found at his home, calling it a conspiracy to malign him. He clarified that a fire broke out in a storeroom near the staff quarters, an area commonly used for storage and accessible to multiple people. At the time of the incident, he and his wife were in Bhopal, with only his daughter and mother present at home. Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, after consulting senior collegium judges, decided to publish the report to counter

Supreme Court publishes report for transparency

Justice Yashwant Varma denies allegations, calls it a conspiracy

Fire at residence storeroom linked to controversy

misinformation. The Supreme Court also clarified that Justice Varma’s transfer to the Allahabad High Court was unrelated to the controversy. Senior advocate Harish Salve raised concerns over the handling of the case, pointing to the Delhi Fire Department’s statement that no cash was found at the



premises. He emphasized the need for fair proceedings and a proper inquiry into the matter. Judicial sources indicated that the fire incident had caused speculation, but the Supreme Court’s move to publish the report is seen as an effort to uphold transparency. The judiciary remains committed to maintaining its integrity amid ongoing scrutiny.

Minister Satish Demands Probe Into ‘CD Factory’ Behind Honey Trapping



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi has alleged the existence of a ‘CD factory’ in the state that engages in honey-trapping political leaders and stressed the need to expose it. He was responding to Minister K N Rajanna’s statement that attempts were made to honey-trap him. Jarkiholi stated that an investigation could be launched if a formal com-

plaint is filed. He emphasized that powerful leaders are often targeted in such cases but ruled out the necessity for a CBI probe, asserting that the police were capable of handling the matter. Regarding BJP MLA Munnirathna’s allegations against Deputy CM D K Shivakumar, Jarkiholi said there was no point in making accusations without an investigation. He added that while Rajanna sug-

gested around 40 leaders had been honey-trapped, the actual number could be significantly higher. Commenting on Shivakumar’s remark—“If someone says ‘Hi,’ why do you reply with ‘Hello?’”—Jarkiholi said that individuals with strong willpower and experience would not fall prey to such traps. “If someone is alert, even if ‘Hi’ is sent

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Special Court Issues Warrant Against Bidar DC in Land-Grab Case

- Court issues warrant for failure to submit report
- MLA Prabhu Chavan accused of encroaching 3 acres, 19 guntas
- District officials allegedly aided the land grab

TPN Correspondent | Bidar

The Karnataka Land Grabbing Prohibition Special Court in Bengaluru has issued a warrant against the Bidar Deputy Commissioner (DC) for failing to submit a report in a land-grab case involving Aurad MLA Prabhu Chavan. The warrant, issued through the Bidar Superintendent of Police, includes a surety bond of ₹1 lakh.

The case was filed by Deepak Patil Chandori, former president of Chandori Gram Panchayat in Aurad taluk, who alleged that MLA Prabhu Chavan created fake documents to encroach upon 3 acres and 19 guntas of government land in Survey No. 102 of Kolara (B) village, Bidar taluk. He further claimed that several officials, including the Bidar District Magistrate (DC), Bidar Divisional Magistrate (AC), tahsildar, additional director of Land Records, and the Bidar sub-registrar, facilitated the encroachment.

The court recorded Chandori's statement on October 5, 2024, and directed the District Magistrate to submit a report by December 12, 2024. However, de-



spite multiple extensions until March 13, 2025, the report was not submitted, prompting the court to issue the warrant.

Chandori stated, "I filed this case to protect government land, not for personal gain. Former DC H.R. Mahadeva had ruled that the land belongs to the government, but the district administration has failed to act."

The special court's action has intensified scrutiny on the Bidar district administration, raising concerns over official negligence in protecting government land. With mounting pressure, the authorities may now be compelled to respond to the court's directives and address the allegations.

Pending Gruha Lakshmi Installments to Be Released After March 31: Minister Hebbalkar

- Two pending Gruha Lakshmi installments to be released
- Minister Hebbalkar confirms disbursement after March 31
- Anganwadi workers' honorarium to be increased

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar has assured beneficiaries of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme that the pending two installments will be released soon. Speaking to reporters on Sunday, she confirmed that the delayed payments will be credited to women's accounts after March 31.

The Gruha Lakshmi scheme, which provides financial assistance to women, has faced delays in disbursing funds for the past two months. Many beneficiaries have expressed concerns over irregular payments, but the minister's latest announcement brings relief.



Hebbalkar also highlighted the government's commitment to Anganwadi workers. "When our government was in power, we increased the honorarium of Anganwadi workers by ₹2,000. No other government has raised it

since then. In this budget, we have proposed an increase of ₹1,000 for workers and ₹750 for helpers, which will be implemented soon," she stated.

On a different note, the minister addressed the ongoing controversy surrounding the alleged honey trap case involving Minister K.N. Rajanna. She termed the incident unfortunate and said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar, and Home Minister G. Parameshwara are handling the issue. She declined to comment further.

With the confirmation of pending Gruha Lakshmi payments and additional support for Anganwadi workers, the government aims to provide financial stability to thousands of beneficiaries across the state.

AAI Team to Visit Bengaluru for Second Greenfield Airport Feasibility Study

- AAI team to visit between April 7 and 9
- Three locations identified for the project
- Proposal for Tumakuru's Sira deemed unfeasible

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A team from the Airports Authority of India (AAI) will visit Bengaluru between April 7 and 9 to conduct a feasibility study for the state's second international greenfield airport. The Karnataka State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (KSIIDC) has paid ₹1.21 crore to AAI for the study.

Industries and Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil stated that two sites on Kanakapura Road and one on Nelamangala-Kunigal Road have been shortlisted for the project. The department has prepared all necessary documents, including revenue maps, 10 years of weather data, and Survey of India maps, as per AAI's requirements. Patil noted that Kempegowda In-

ternational Airport (KIA) is under immense pressure and that the restriction preventing a second airport within 150 km of KIA will be lifted by 2033. "We have initiated the process so that, if everything goes as planned, the airport will be operational by 2033," he added.

Dismissing the proposal for an airport near Sira in Tumakuru, the minister said it would be impractical. "An airport in Sira would be similar to those in Shivamogga and Vijayapura. To effectively serve Bengaluru, it must be closer to the city to attract investors. Otherwise, the project will not be viable," he explained.

Patil also mentioned that Baldota Group plans to set up a ₹54,000 crore steel manufacturing plant in Koppal. However, environmental concerns raised by Gavimath's head have led to protests. An independent agency will assess the potential pollution impact before a decision is made.

160-Year-Old Architectural Marvel Restored, Set to Host Art Enthusiasts

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A 160-year-old architectural gem in the Cantonment area has been restored to its former grandeur and is now set to serve as a hub for art and culture. Originally known as the Chaturveda Siddantha Sabha School, the building, located on Kamaraj Road (formerly Cavalry Road), had been in a state of neglect for over 15 years.

The restored space will host its first major event, the 'Sabha Open House,' on April 12-13, featuring talks by historians Janaki Nair and Annapurna Garimella on the Cantonment's rich history. The event will conclude with a musical performance by Susheela Raman and Jeet Thayil. Additionally, 'Sabha After Hours,' a late-night music and poetry event, will offer art lovers an enriching experience.



The structure, which consists of two interconnected buildings—one with a pitched roof and another with a Madras terrace—underwent an extensive two-year restoration led by architect Bijoy Ramachandran. Key renovations included repairs to the traditional Madras terrace, a power drain to prevent dampness, and the revival of Dutch-style windows by skilled Kerala carpenters. The facility has also been

upgraded with modern amenities like air-conditioning, enhanced lighting, and a sound system. A café has been added to the premises.

The project was spearheaded by the Ammini Trust, with RBANM's Educational Charities retaining ownership. Trustee V Ravichandrar emphasized the importance of preserving heritage while creating a vibrant public space. "We wanted to maintain its historical character while making it accessible for cultural activities. The restoration cost nearly 50% more than constructing a new building, but the value of preserving history is priceless," he noted. Beyond cultural events, the venue has started free art classes for underprivileged children, reinforcing its role as a community space. Ramachandran hopes this initiative will inspire more restorations, envisioning the Cantonment area as a thriving art district.

Devotees Donate ₹3.48 Crore, Gold & Silver at Raghavendra Swamy Mutt

TPN Correspondent | Raichur

A massive donation drive at the Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Raichur has resulted in offerings amounting to ₹3,48,69,621 in cash, along with 32 grams of gold and 1.24 kg of silver. The contributions were made over 30 days, coinciding with the birth anniversary celebrations of the revered 16th-century saint, Raghavendra Swamy.

A video capturing over a hundred priests counting the donations inside the mutt has gone viral on social media, reflecting the devotion of thou-



sands of devotees who visited the temple during the religious event. Last year, the Raghavendra Swamy Mutt gained international attention

when former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, visited the Bengaluru branch of the mutt. They were accompanied by Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy and Rajya Sabha member Sudha Murthy, performing special rituals at the temple. The Raghavendra Swamy Mutt, known for its spiritual significance and rich history, continues to attract devotees in large numbers.

The temple administration has expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support and devotion shown by the people.

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CM Siddaramaiah May Seek Rahul Gandhi's Intervention in Honey Trap Controversy

assessing the situation, gathering intelligence on the scandal and BJP's response to it. The party leadership is weighing its options before taking any action. Rajanna has announced plans to file a formal complaint with CM Siddaramaiah and Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara by Wednesday or Thursday. He also hinted at discussions with like-minded ministers during

the upcoming cabinet meeting. Speaking to reporters in Tumakuru, Rajanna acknowledged that honey-trap cases were neither new nor likely to stop. He left the decision on a potential CBI probe to the CM and home minister. On the suspension of 18 BJP MLAs for Assembly disruptions, he called it a pre-planned protest and defended the Speaker's action.

Minister Satish Demands Probe Into 'CD Factory' Behind Honey Trapping

ten times, they won't respond with 'Hello,'" he remarked. On the Kannada-Marathi linguistic issue in Belagavi, Jarkiholi stated that the conflict that once existed is no longer prominent. He stressed that the government should address such issues through policies and programs rather than bans, as prohibiting organizations like Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) would not prevent similar groups from emerging.

Speaking on Maharashtra's welfare schemes in Karnataka's border areas, he noted that while Maharashtra announces various initiatives, not all Marathi-speaking residents benefit from them. In contrast, Karnataka's programs ensure inclusivity for all linguistic groups. He also highlighted the implementation of MGNREGA projects in the border regions and efforts to provide official documents in Kannada.

Demand Grows for International Airport in North Karnataka

Citizens demand international airport in Hubballi

TPN Correspondent | Hubballi

The Karnataka government has decided to establish a second international airport in Bengaluru by 2033, but the final location is yet to be determined. While the central government's approval is awaited, Tamil Nadu has also entered the competition, proposing a new airport in Hosur. Meanwhile, the demand for an international airport in North Karnataka is gaining momentum.

Currently, the Karnataka state government appears focused on developing a second international airport only in Bengaluru, with no concrete plans for other locations. However, citizens and stakeholders are urging authorities to consider Hubballi, the major city of North Karnataka, for this project. Hubballi Airport is already under the control of the central government, and



social media campaigns are urging Union Food and Civil Supplies Minister Prahlad Joshi to bring the demand to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attention.

Under Joshi's leadership, expansion works, including the construction of a new terminal and the enhancement of infrastructure to accommodate aircraft like Boeing, are already underway. However, the airport currently only serves domestic flights, forcing international travelers to go to Benge-

luru. With increasing congestion at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport, the demand for an international airport in North Karnataka is growing stronger. The region, which has been lagging in development for decades, has the necessary resources to support such an infrastructure.

Residents argue that an international airport in Hubballi would significantly boost the development of surrounding districts, including Dharwad, Haveri, Gadag, and Belagavi. The airport is currently being upgraded to handle up to 2.5 lakh passengers annually, with the central government already approving the construction of a spacious terminal. Citizens remain hopeful that their demand will be met, paving the way for economic growth in North Karnataka.

Politics in the Shadow of Honey-Traps: A Crisis for Karnataka Government

Minister claims 48 politicians, including national leaders, honey-trapped
Opposition BJP demands CBI probe, CM’s resignation
18 BJP MLAs suspended over assembly protest

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka politics has been rocked by a sensational claim made by Minister for Cooperation K. N. Rajanna, who revealed in the state assembly that 48 politicians including central leaders had been honey-trapped. His statement, made in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, has triggered a major political storm. Rajanna, a close confidante of the CM, stated that even he was targeted. Though he did not name any individuals, his remarks have exposed internal rifts within the Congress government.

The BJP has seized the opportunity to target the ruling party, demanding an independent probe into the allegations. Following Rajanna’s statement, Home Minister G. Parameshwara announced a high-level inquiry, a move backed by the CM. However, critics argue that the government should have acted on its own instead of waiting for a formal complaint. The controversy has put the state intelligence system under scrutiny, raising concerns over its failure to detect and prevent such incidents. Adding to the gravity of the situation,

PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi stated that not just 40, but 400 leaders across party lines were victims of honey-traps. Both Rajanna and Jarkiholi, known to be from the Siddaramaiah camp, have called for an end to such practices, further escalating tensions within Congress. Sensing an opportunity, the BJP has demanded a judicial or CBI inquiry into the matter. The issue has also led to a major showdown in the assembly, with BJP legislators staging protests and disrupting proceedings. In response, 18 BJP MLAs were suspended for



six months, leading to dramatic scenes of lawmakers being carried out by marshals. The Siddaramaiah government now faces a credibility test. Any delay in address-

ing the scandal could further erode public trust, while the BJP looks set to use this controversy as a key weapon in its political arsenal.

BJP Urges Speaker UT Khader to Withdraw Suspension of 18 MLAs

BJP terms suspension illegal, unconstitutional
Speaker accused of acting arbitrarily, behaving like Hitler
BJP to continue fight against Muslim reservation in contracts



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Senior BJP leaders, including state president B. Y. Vijayendra and Leader of Opposition R. Ashoka, have urged Karnataka Assembly

Speaker UT Khader to revoke the six-month suspension of 18 BJP MLAs. The leaders termed the decision as “illegal, unconstitutional, and unilateral,” claiming it insulted both the legislators

and their constituents. Addressing the media in Bengaluru, Vijayendra questioned whether the suspended legislators were “terrorists or Naxalites” to be barred even from the Assembly lobby. He also objected to the restriction on their participation in standing committee meetings. Ashoka, comparing the Speaker’s conduct to that of “Hitler,” said the suspension was unprecedented in Karnataka’s history. He revealed that he had spoken to the Speaker, urging him to reconsider the decision. “We will wait until April 1 or

2 for a response, after which we will decide on the next course of action,” he added. The BJP accused the Congress government of taking away reservations from Hindus to grant a 4% quota to Muslims in government contracts. According to party leaders, Muslim contractors in Mangaluru already receive 50% of contracts, which could now increase to 75%. Despite the suspension, BJP leaders have vowed to continue their fight against the reservation policy, both inside and outside the Assembly.

JD(S) Declines to Join BJP’s Protest Against 4% Muslim Quota

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)] has decided not to join its ally, the BJP, in protesting against the Karnataka government’s decision to provide a 4% reservation for Muslims in government tenders. The decision was taken at a party meeting held in Bengaluru on Sunday. JD(S) leaders have instructed their legislators to stay away from the protest and have asked Legislative Assembly floor leader Suresh Babu to communicate the party’s stand clearly to the media. Party sources confirmed the move, emphasizing that JD(S) will not compromise on its ideology. “We support the BJP on issues like price hikes, governance failures, and corruption. However, JD(S) supremo H. D. Deve Gowda had introduced the 4% Muslim reservation, so we cannot stand with the BJP in this matter,” a JD(S) leader stated. Meanwhile, BJP Leader of

the Opposition R. Ashoka said the party would try to persuade JD(S) to join the protest. “They should protest,” he remarked.



BJP state president B. Y. Vijayendra announced that the party would launch a statewide awareness campaign to educate Hindus about what he termed “injustice” by the Congress government. He reiterated that Muslim reservations are unconstitutional and vowed to take the fight against the Congress to its logical conclusion. In a separate development, Ashoka criticized the suspension of 18 BJP MLAs from the Assembly for six months. He stated that a BJP delegation would meet the Speaker to demand the withdrawal of their suspension.

Udupi MLA Accuses Congress Govt of Political Vendetta in Pramod Madhwaraj FIR



TPN Correspondent | Udupi

Udupi MLA Yashpal Suvarna has criticized the filing of an FIR against former Karnataka minister Pramod Madhwaraj, alleging that the police acted under pressure from the Congress government. He accused the administration of attempting to silence voices supporting the local fisher community. The case against Madhwaraj was registered suo motu by the Malpe police for allegedly delivering a provocative speech during a protest at Malpe port on Saturday. Suvarna also questioned why the police swiftly filed a case against the fisherwomen under the Dalit Atrocities Act but took action against Madhwaraj for defending them. Suvarna further accused the police department of being a “puppet” of the state government, claiming that authorities have shown a negligent attitude towards the coastal district’s fishermen. He warned that the continued mistreatment of the community would provoke a strong response from the people in the coming days.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar Likely to be Appointed Kerala BJP President

BJP leadership considers Rajeev Chandrasekhar
for Kerala unit

Official announcement expected on Monday

K. Surendran’s term as state president ends

TPN Correspondent | Thiruvananthapuram

There are reports that the BJP will appoint former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar as the new president of its Kerala unit. Party sources suggest that an official announcement will be made on Monday. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Thiruvananthapuram, lost to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. Chandrasekhar secured 3,42,078 votes, while Tharoor won with 3,58,155 votes. Following his defeat, the BJP is considering him for the key organizational role in the state. Currently, K. Surendran is the president of the Kerala BJP unit. With his five-year term coming to an end, the party has begun discussions for a replacement. Alongside Chandrasekhar, names like Shobha Surendran and M. T. Ramesh have also been considered. However, BJP’s Kerala in-charge, Prakash Javadekar, is reportedly recommending Chandrasekhar for the post. Chandrasekhar, a businessman-turned-politician, was previously a Rajya Sabha MP from Karnataka and served as the Minister of State for Electronics and IT in the Narendra Modi 2.0 cabinet. However, his Rajya Sabha term ended, and he was not re-elected. Now, he is actively focusing on Kerala politics, even purchasing a house in Thiruvananthapuram recently. Party insiders believe that appointing him as the Kerala BJP chief could help attract voters beyond traditional BJP supporters. His non-Sangh Parivar background is seen as an advantage in broadening the party’s appeal in the state. Meanwhile, there is reported dissatisfaction within BJP ranks regarding an extension of K. Surendran’s tenure, strengthening Chandrasekhar’s chances for the position. A final decision is expected soon, with sources indicating that Chandrasekhar’s appointment could be confirmed on Monday.



RSS Acknowledges Centre’s Efforts to Restore Normalcy in Manipur

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Sunday stated that the Union government has taken several administrative steps to restore peace and normalcy in Manipur. Speaking at the Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) meeting in Bengaluru, he expressed satisfaction with the government’s response to the situation. “We are happy that the government has addressed the situation, and people are now experiencing some relief. Let’s hope for continued efforts so that different sections of Manipur’s society can live harmoniously,” Hosabale said. He noted that the government had imposed President’s Rule, suspended the state government, disarmed groups, and reopened highways to ease tensions. However, he clarified that the RSS had not demanded any specific actions, leaving such decisions to the government’s assessment. “We have only suggested that the issues in Manipur be resolved at the earliest,” he added. Regarding the Malegaon blast case, Hosabale declined to comment, stating that the matter is sub judice. On the RSS’s relationship with the BJP, he emphasized that the organization does not interfere in the party’s internal matters. He explained that while RSS volunteers contribute to various national organizations, these entities function independently and make their own decisions. Hosabale also reiterated the RSS’s broader vision of unity, urging society to move towards national harmony while addressing internal challenges.



Bengaluru’s First Rain Brings Relief from Heat but Causes Chaos

TPN Correspondent | Bengalure

Bengaluru experienced its first rain of the year on Saturday evening, bringing much-needed relief from the sweltering heat. However, the intense thunderstorms also led to heavy rainfall, causing severe waterlogging, traffic disruptions, and flight diversions across the city. Gusty winds in the late afternoon gave way to moderate to heavy showers, affecting several parts of east, north, and west Bengaluru.

The three-hour downpour turned several areas into waterlogged zones, affecting neighborhoods such as Yelahanka Old Town, Sahakarnagar, Rajanukunte, Thani-

sandra, Jakkur, and Hebbal. While many residents rejoiced and shared images of the rain on social media, others faced significant hardship as water flooded streets and homes.

More than ten houses in Yelahanka Old Town were inundated, forcing residents to wade through knee-deep water. Lakshmi S, a resident, expressed her frustration, saying, “Every year, we face this issue. The stormwater drains are either clogged or blocked. We have complained to the BBMP multiple times, but nothing has changed.” Shopkeepers also bore the brunt of the flooding. Ganesh R, a small business owner, lamented the situation, stating, “The drains are full of silt, and no one cleans them

before the rains start. Who will compensate for my loss?” According to rainfall data recorded until 6:30 pm, areas such as Hagadur and Vidyanarayapura received 31 mm of rain, while other parts of the city saw varying intensities of rainfall, leading to localized flooding.

The bad weather also affected air travel, with operations at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) severely impacted. Authorities had to divert 20 flights, including two international ones, to Chennai and Coimbatore due to air traffic congestion. Airlines issued advisories urging passengers to check flight statuses before heading to the airport.

The heavy rains once again highlighted Bengaluru’s poor



drainage system, leading to criticism of civic authorities. Many residents took to social media to express their frustra-

tion, with one user sarcastically commenting, “Just a small rain and Bengaluru is already drowning.” Despite the cha-

os, some shared images of the season’s first rainbow, appreciating the much-needed respite from the heat.

NGO Promotes Mental Health Awareness Through Community Sessions



TPN Correspondent | Bengalure

Every alternate Sunday morning, a diverse group of individuals gathers at Cubbon Park in Bengaluru for a unique mental health session called ‘Sundays for Mental Health.’ Organized by Mind and Matter, a Kodagu-based NGO, these sessions provide a safe and supportive space where participants explore key aspects of mental well-being such as communication, empathy, and interpersonal relationships. With carefully curated activities, games, and even painting exercises, Mind and Matter helps attendees engage in meaningful discussions about mental health. For those who require professional intervention, the NGO refers them to qualified mental health professionals. Through these sessions, the organization aims to



break the stigma surrounding mental health and encourage open conversations in a comfortable, community-driven environment.

Venkatesh, a chartered accountant who attended a recent session, shared his experience, saying, “There’s an unmistakable warmth here. It has helped me a lot. The session allowed me to reflect on myself and understand myself much better.” Another participant, Somnath, attending for the second time, said, “This campaign helped me see the same situation from a different perspective, which was truly enlightening.” Apart from the Bengaluru sessions, Mind and Matter extends its efforts to Mysuru and Kodagu. As part of their annual mental health awareness campaign, participants painted the walls of The Wheel Café in Madikeri, using art as an expressive tool

to convey messages of mental well-being. The NGO has ambitious plans to expand its programs to major cities like Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai, ensuring that more people can access free mental health support.

Deepika Appaiah, the founder and trustee of Mind and Matter, emphasized the importance of their work, saying, “We collaborate with schools, colleges, parents, and teachers to promote mental health awareness. So far, our initiatives have reached around 13,000 children and over 700 parents and teachers. Our organization is run entirely by volunteers, and we invite more people to join us. We provide training through the Department of Psychiatric Social Work at NIMHANS in Bengaluru to ensure they are well-equipped to support others.”

1 Dead, 4 Injured as 100-Foot Chariot Topples During Temple Festival

TPN Correspondent | Bengalure

A tragic incident occurred during the annual Madduramma temple festival on the outskirts of Bengaluru, resulting in the death of a 24-year-old man and injuries to four others. The accident took place in Rayasandra, Parappana Agrahara, when strong winds and heavy rain caused a 100-foot-high chariot to collapse. The police have since registered a case of death due to negligence against the festival organizers. The deceased has been identified as Lohith, a resident of Hosur in Tamil Nadu. The accident happened as devotees were pulling two massive chariots toward the temple as part of a long-standing ritual. The sudden change in weather conditions made it difficult to control the movement of the chariots, ultimately leading to the disaster. According to eyewitnesses, the first chariot toppled at Chikka Nagamangala, causing significant damage to several parked vehicles. As devotees handling the ropes fled for safety, the second chariot in Rayasandra also became unstable. The combination of heavy rain, strong winds, and possible miscalculations in handling the structure led to its collapse, resulting in casualties and injuries. Lo-



cal authorities and emergency response teams rushed to the scene to assist the injured and manage the situation. The four injured individuals were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment, while the police launched an investigation into the circumstances that led to the accident. Officials believe that despite the festival’s century-old history, inadequate preparations for unpredictable weather conditions may have contributed to the incident. Rakesh, an event organizer and resident of Hoskur, expressed his shock at the tragedy, stating, “This is the first time such an incident has occurred in the temple’s 100-year history.” He added that the organizers had followed traditional practices while preparing for the festival but had not anticipated the

severity of the weather. The police have now registered a case against the event organizers, citing negligence in ensuring the structural stability of the chariots amid adverse weather conditions. Authorities are also examining whether sufficient safety measures were in place to protect devotees and prevent such mishaps. The incident has raised concerns about safety protocols during large religious gatherings, especially those involving massive structures. Many believe that stricter regulations and contingency plans should be in place to avoid similar tragedies in the future. As the investigation continues, the temple committee and festival organizers may be required to implement new safety measures to prevent such accidents.

Why a Pune Man Regrets Moving to Bengaluru Despite a 40% Salary Hike

TPN Correspondent | Bengalure

A corporate professional who moved from Pune to Bengaluru for a 40% salary hike now deeply regrets his decision. His story, which has since gone viral, was shared by a friend in a LinkedIn post. The post sparked a heated debate about the cost of living in metro cities versus tier-2 cities like Pune. According to the post, the man was earning ₹18 lakh per annum (LPA) in Pune before he accepted an offer of ₹25 LPA in Bengaluru.

At first, the offer seemed like a great opportunity, but within a year, he realized the increase in salary was not enough to compensate for the higher cost of living. Disappointed, he reached out to his friend and admitted, “I shouldn’t have switched cities. Pune was way better. ₹25



LPA feels like nothing in Bengaluru.”

His friend was surprised by his frustration and asked, “What are you saying? A 40% hike is a decent increase. You should be saving more money. Why do you want to come back?” The man explained that Bengaluru’s cost of living far exceeded his expectations,

making his salary hike insignificant. “It’s peanuts for Bengaluru,” he said. “Rents are exorbitantly high, and landlords demand deposits of three to four months’ rent in advance. Traffic is unbearable, and commuting costs a fortune.” He further lamented the rising food costs, saying, “I miss Pune’s ₹15 vada pav. At least



life and savings were decent there. “His friend concluded the post by posing a question: “Which would you prefer—a metro city with more opportunities or a tier-2 city with a better quality of life?” The post resonated with many LinkedIn users, with several sharing similar experiences. One user commented, “Total-

ly relate to this! I spent eight years in Pune and absolutely loved the balance it offered—great weather, affordable living, and a chill vibe. Shifting to Bangalore two years ago made me realize how different things are.

The traffic, high rents, and overall cost of living can really eat into that salary hike. Pune still feels like home, and honestly, I sometimes miss the simpler, more affordable life there. More money doesn’t always mean a better lifestyle!” However, not everyone agreed. Some defended Bengaluru, arguing that the city offers unmatched career growth. One user wrote, “I earn peanuts but I am happy in Bengaluru. It is all about money management, brother. Don’t criticize the city for it.” Another user countered the complaints, saying, “While Bangalore is expensive, calling ₹25 LPA ‘peanuts’ is a bit of a stretch. Yes, rent and deposits are high, and traffic is a nightmare, but it’s also a city full of opportunities and experiences. People manage to live comfortably on much lower salaries too! Maybe your friend just needs

better budgeting skills instead of blaming the city.” Some compared Bengaluru’s cost of living to Mumbai’s. “Absolutely true! I have been in Bangalore for the last three months after spending a lifetime in Mumbai, and let me vouch for this—Mumbai is not even close to Bengaluru when it comes to exorbitant living. Apart from rent, which is higher in Mumbai, everything else is cheaper.”

This is not the first time a professional has regretted moving to Bengaluru. Previously, another individual who relocated from Noida for a better salary shared a similar experience. “It’s not worth moving for that hike,” they wrote, calling Bengaluru “dirty, not organized,” with “bad roads” and the “worst traffic.” The debate over Bengaluru’s cost of living versus its professional opportunities continues, with many arguing that while the city is expensive, it remains one of India’s biggest hubs for career growth and networking. However, for those prioritizing affordability and a slower pace of life, tier-2 cities like Pune might be the better choice.

Shivakumar-Annamalai War of Words

TPN Correspondent | Bangalore

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar addressed the protests by BJP workers in Chennai, saying he welcomed the black flags shown to him upon his arrival. Shivakumar was in the city to attend a meeting convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief MK Stalin, focusing on the potential impact of delimitation. Several southern states, including Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, have raised concerns that they might lose political influence if the delimitation process is based solely on population figures. During his interaction with the media, Shivakumar referred to Tamil Nadu BJP president K

Annamalai as a “poor man” while acknowledging his past service as an IPS officer in Karnataka. “I welcome all these BJP black flags. I was never afraid even when they sent me to Tihar Jail,” Shivakumar said, recalling his imprisonment under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The Supreme Court later quashed the case against him. Speaking about Annamalai, he remarked, “This officer, poor man, is from my state. He has served us. He knows our strength. Let him do his job. I wish him all the best.” His statement, however, triggered a sharp response from Annamalai, who took to social media to thank Shivakumar. In his post on ‘X’, Annamalai

acknowledged his service as a police officer in Karnataka and sarcastically thanked Shivakumar for his wishes. “Yes, I diligently served Karnataka’s people as a police officer. Thanks for the noteworthy mention, Thiru @DKShivakumar avare,” he wrote. He further added, “Also, thank you for wishing this poor man & my best wishes to you in your undying efforts in the pursuit of becoming the CM of Karnataka by toppling Thiru Siddaramaiah from his chair!” The BJP has strongly opposed the meeting convened by Stalin, arguing that it is unnecessary and politically motivated. The delimitation issue remains a contentious topic, with southern states expressing fears of



losing parliamentary seats if population-based criteria are implemented. Shivakumar’s remarks and Annamalai’s response have further fueled the ongoing political battle between the BJP and the ruling parties in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Increased Pension Burden Due to Declining Mortality Rate

Kerala’s Cultural Affairs and Fisheries Minister, Saji Cherian, has pointed out that the state’s declining mortality rate is contributing to an increased pension liability for the government. Speaking at a meeting of the State NGO Union in Alappuzha on Saturday, Cherian remarked that Kerala not only has a low birth rate but also a significantly low death rate, which has led to a growing number of pension recipients. “There are lakhs of people receiving pensions in Kerala. The mortality rate is remarkably low. I don’t mean to say that people should die, but Kerala’s top-ranking healthcare system is also a challenge in this regard,” Cherian said. He noted that many people in the state live well into their 90s and beyond, which prolongs the government’s pension commitments. To illustrate his point, the minister cited the example of his 94-year-old mother, who continues to receive a government pension



of ₹50,000. While acknowledging the state’s commendable healthcare achievements, he hinted at the financial strain this longevity places on the government’s resources. When asked about Cherian’s remarks, CPI(M) state secretary M.V. Govindan chose not to give a direct response. However, he acknowledged that both the birth and death rates are on a downward trend in Kerala. He emphasized that the government remains committed to the welfare of all cit-

izens, including pensioners. Kerala is widely recognized for its advanced healthcare system and high life expectancy, which have contributed to the state’s demographic shifts. However, the increasing number of pensioners has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of the state’s social security programs. The minister’s statement has sparked discussions about balancing welfare policies with economic feasibility as the state grapples with an aging population.

Special Express Train Announced for Ramzan

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

To accommodate the increased passenger demand during the upcoming Ugadi and Ramzan festivals, the Railway Board has approved the operation of a special express train between Mysuru and Vijayapura. This one-time service aims to provide additional travel convenience for passengers journeying between these two cities during the festive period. Train No. 06567 Mysuru – Vijayapura Express Special will depart from Mysuru at 7:10 p.m. on March 28, 2025, and is scheduled to reach Vijayapura at 2:05 p.m. the following day. This train service will help manage the surge in travelers heading home or visiting loved ones for the celebrations. The decision to introduce this special train comes in response to the heavy demand for tickets during major festivals. Ugadi, the Kannada and Telugu New Year, is widely celebrated in Karnataka and other southern states, while Ramzan holds significant religious importance for the Muslim community. With both festivals falling



close to each other, the Railway Board took proactive measures to ensure smooth and comfortable travel for passengers. The train will cover a considerable distance between Mysuru and Vijayapura, passing through several key stations along the route. The railway authorities expect a positive response from passengers and urge them to book their tickets in advance to avoid last-minute hassles. This special service reflects the Indian Railways’ commitment to catering to the needs of passengers during peak travel seasons. Additional measures, in-

cluding crowd management at railway stations and enhanced onboard services, are expected to be in place to ensure a smooth journey for travelers. Passengers can book tickets through the official railway website, reservation counters, or authorized travel agents. The Railway Board has also advised travelers to check for any last-minute updates regarding the schedule or availability of seats. With the introduction of this special train, the Railway Board hopes to ease the burden on regular train services and provide a convenient option for festival travelers.



Five Policemen Compulsorily Retired for Role in Marakkanam Hooch Tragedy

TPN Correspondent | Villupuram

Five police personnel, including two head constables, have been sent on compulsory retirement for their alleged involvement with bootleggers in the Marakkanam hooch tragedy that claimed 14 lives in 2023. A departmental inquiry was conducted, and the charges against them were proven, leading to strict action by the authorities. The orders for their compulsory retirement were issued by Disha Mittal, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Villupuram Range). The personnel facing action include head constables Senthil Kumar (Arakandanalur station) and Velu (Roshanai

station), along with constables Prabhu (Sathiyamangalam station), Muthukumar (Kanjapur station), and Gunasekaran (Vikravandi station). The tragic incident in Marakkanam, a coastal town in Villupuram district, occurred in 2023 when illicit liquor consumption led to multiple deaths and several others falling critically ill. Investigations revealed that certain police personnel had been complicit in allowing bootleggers to operate freely, failing in their duty to curb the illegal trade. Following the tragedy, the Tamil Nadu government had ordered a high-level probe into the incident, leading to a detailed departmental inquiry against the accused police-

men. The inquiry confirmed their involvement, prompting strict disciplinary action. The state police department has reiterated its commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring accountability within the force. Officials have warned that any personnel found engaging in corrupt activities or neglecting their duty will face severe consequences. The Marakkanam hooch tragedy had sparked outrage, with demands for stringent action against those responsible. The latest action against the five policemen is seen as part of the government’s effort to crack down on illicit liquor trade and ensure justice for the victims and their families.

Kerala Governor Urges Universities to Launch Anti-Drug Campaign

TPN Correspondent | Kozhikode

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar has urged universities across the state to actively participate in the fight against drug abuse by launching dedicated awareness campaigns. The initiative will focus on strict action against drug-related crimes, preventive measures, and rehabilitation efforts. Addressing the Senate meeting of the University of Calicut on March 22, 2025, at Tenhipalam in Malappuram district, the Governor, in his capacity as Chancellor, emphasized the importance of a multi-pronged

approach to tackle the growing menace of drug abuse among students and youth. As part of the proposed campaign, universities will implement awareness programs, surveillance using advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), and strict enforcement measures to curb drug use on campuses. Additionally, the project will incorporate rehabilitation initiatives to help those affected by substance abuse reintegrate into society. Governor Arlekar stressed the role of educational institutions in shaping responsible citizens and ensuring a

safe learning environment. He called for collaborative efforts between universities, law enforcement agencies, and social organizations to strengthen the fight against drug abuse. During the event, Calicut University Vice-Chancellor P. Raveendran presented a copy of Aithiyamala to the Governor as a symbolic gesture. The meeting also discussed various academic and administrative matters concerning the university. With drug abuse emerging as a serious social issue, the Governor’s directive is expected to prompt stronger anti-drug measures in educational institutions across Kerala.



Who was Jessica Aber?

Ex-US Attorney Found Dead Two Months after her Resignation

Former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia (EDVA), Jessica Aber, was found dead at her residence in Virginia on Saturday morning. The Alexandria Police Department (APD) confirmed the discovery and stated that an investigation is underway to determine the cause of her sudden demise. Authorities responded to a call at 9:18 AM at a residence in the 900 block of Beverley Drive, where Aber, 43, was found unresponsive. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Virginia is set to conduct an autopsy to establish the cause and circumstances of her death, according to an APD statement. Who was Jessica Aber? Jessica Aber was a distinguished legal professional with a long history in public service. She began her career in the Eastern District of Virginia as an assistant U.S. attorney in 2009. From 2015 to 2016, she worked as counsel to the assistant attorney general in the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ). She later served as the deputy chief of EDVA's criminal division before being nominated as U.S. Attorney by President Joe Biden in 2021. Her appoint-

ment was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Aber stepped down from her position two months ago, following a change in administration under President Donald Trump. Prior to her resignation, she told The Washington Post that she had traveled more than 50,000 miles across Virginia to engage with students and community leaders, underscoring her commitment to outreach and justice. Born in California in 1981, Aber earned her un-



dergraduate degree from the University of Richmond and later obtained her Juris Doctor (J.D.) from William & Mary Law School in 2006. Reaction from colleagues and officials The news of Aber's sudden death has shocked her colleagues and the legal community. Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares expressed his condolences in a statement on social media platform X, saying: "I am saddened to learn of the passing of Jessi-

ca Aber, whose career of public service included U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia and whose work with Ceasefire Virginia saved more lives than we may ever realize." Current U.S. Attorney for EDVA, Erik S. Siebert, described Aber as an irreplaceable leader, mentor, and prosecutor. "We remain in awe of how much she accomplished in her all-too-brief time in this world. Her professionalism, grace, and legal acumen set the standard," Siebert stated. "Though we are devastated by this loss, each of us in the Eastern District of Virginia will look to her example and endeavor to live up to that standard." Investigation into her death While no official cause of death has been determined yet, authorities have stated that they are investigating the incident thoroughly. The APD has not provided any details regarding potential foul play but assured that further updates will be released as the investigation progresses. Aber's passing has left a void in the legal community, with many remembering her as a dedicated public servant who tirelessly worked for justice.

China's Military Drills Near Taiwan

Is This Strategic Posturing?

China's recent military exercises near Taiwan, conducted between March 16 and 17, 2025, have once again raised serious concerns about stability in the Taiwan Strait. The large-scale deployment of warships, fighter jets, drones, and strategic bombers marked one of the most aggressive displays of force by Beijing in recent years. While China insists that these drills were a necessary response to foreign interference, they also serve as a clear demonstration of its military capabilities and strategic intent. The question remains—are these exercises merely strategic posturing, or do they signal a dangerous escalation toward conflict? Beijing's Calculated Show of Force The scope of China's military operations over these two days was extensive. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence reported that 59 Chinese aircraft, including J-10 and J-16 fighter jets, conducted operations near the island. Of these, 42 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, a previously respected boundary that acted as a buffer between Taiwan and mainland China. Additionally, at least 90 Chinese warships were reportedly active in the surrounding waters, engaging in joint air-sea combat drills. China's Eastern Theatre Command described the exercises as a way to test "joint operational capabilities under real combat conditions." However, given the scale of the incursions, it is difficult to see them as anything other than an attempt to intimidate Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) appears to be

rehearsing potential future scenarios, such as a blockade or even an invasion of Taiwan. The US and Taiwan Partnership Beijing claims that the exercises were provoked by statements from both the US and Taiwan, which it views as threats to its sovereignty. Recent adjustments in the US State Department's official language removed references to Taiwan being part of China, a shift that Beijing interpreted as a significant policy change. Furthermore, Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te has reaffirmed his government's commitment to strengthening Taiwan's self-defence, further aggravating tensions. Taiwan has been steadily increasing its defence capabilities in response to Beijing's growing aggression. In 2025, Taiwan's military budget reached 2.45% of its GDP, with significant investments in missile defence systems, naval fleets, and air force capabilities. Additionally, Taiwan has been developing asymmetric warfare strategies, focusing on mobile missile units, sea mines, and drone technology to counter potential Chinese aggression. The US, which has legal obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act to assist in Taiwan's self-defence, strongly criticised China's military actions. The State Department labelled the drills "irresponsible and escalatory," reinforcing Washington's support for Taiwan. In recent years, US-Taiwan military cooperation has deepened, with increasing arms sales, intelligence-sharing, and joint training programs. This growing partnership has been

a major point of contention between Beijing and Washington. Regional and Global Implications China's aggressive military drills near Taiwan have sent ripples across the Indo-Pacific. Japan, which sees Taiwan's security as crucial to its own national interests, expressed concern over Beijing's assertiveness. Meanwhile, Australia and South Korea urged all parties to exercise restraint to prevent unintended military confrontations. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also voiced alarm, as many of its member states fear that escalating tensions could spill over into broader regional conflicts. These developments have led several countries to reassess their own security strategies. Many regional players are considering stronger defence partnerships with the US and its allies, further complicating China's strategic calculus. Beijing's actions may, in fact, be counterproductive, pushing neighbouring nations to seek greater military cooperation with Washington rather than deterring them. While China's military drills serve strategic purposes, they also play a crucial role in domestic politics. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly framed Taiwan's reunification as a historical mission, using nationalist rhetoric to solidify public support. By taking an aggressive stance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks to reinforce its nationalist credentials and project strength to its domestic audience. However, this approach comes with risks. If Beijing continues escalating



military pressure, it could accelerate Taiwan's push toward formal independence and provoke stronger responses from the US and its allies. The Risks of Miscalculation China's military exercises near Taiwan underscore the fragile balance of power in the region. While Beijing aims to send a strong message, such aggressive manoeuvres also increase the risk of accidental conflict. A miscalculation by any side—whether it be China, Taiwan, or the US—could lead to an unintended escalation, with potentially catastrophic consequences. As tensions rise, diplomatic engagement and crisis management mechanisms become increasingly vital. While China may seek to pressure Taiwan into submission through military intimidation, its actions may ultimately have the opposite effect, strengthening Taiwan's resolve and drawing the US and its allies deeper into the conflict. The Taiwan Strait remains one of the most volatile flashpoints in global geopolitics, and how these tensions are managed in the coming years will shape the future of regional stability.

US Lifts \$10 Million Bounty on Sirajuddin Haqqani

Move follows the return of an American citizen held captive for two years

THE POINT DESK The recent decision by the United States to quietly lift its \$10 million bounty on Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister and a key figure in the Haqqani network, has sparked debates on whether this is a calculated diplomatic move or a dangerous compromise. The move, which also includes the removal of bounties on Abdul Aziz Haqqani and Yahya Haqqani, follows the release of an American citizen held captive for two years—a development that raises serious questions about Washington's evolving stance on the Taliban. For decades, the Haqqani network has been one of the most feared militant factions, known for orchestrating deadly attacks, including bombings on the US and Indian embassies in Afghanistan. The group was responsible for a series of kidnappings and extortion activities, all while being

labeled a terrorist organization. Sirajuddin Haqqani himself admitted to planning the 2008 Kabul Serena Hotel attack, which claimed six lives, including that of an American citizen. Yet, in 2025, he finds himself walking a path of international rehabilitation, with the US signaling a thaw in relations. Taliban officials have hailed this as a step toward normalization. Foreign Ministry official Zakir Jalaly framed the decision as a sign that Afghanistan and the US are moving "beyond the effects of the wartime phase." But this raises concerns: Does this move truly indicate a shift toward constructive diplomacy, or is it merely a transactional compromise in exchange for an American hostage? From a strategic standpoint, Washington's decision is not without precedent. Over the years, US administrations have engaged in back-channel

negotiations with the Taliban, recognizing their de facto control over Afghanistan. China and Qatar have already accepted Taliban representatives in various diplomatic capacities. Yet, the Taliban's governance remains under scrutiny, particularly due to its harsh policies against women and girls, which have drawn global condemnation. Moreover, Sirajuddin Haqqani is no ordinary Taliban figure. Unlike the reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada—who faces potential prosecution by the International Criminal Court for gender-based persecution—Haqqani has attempted to position himself as a more pragmatic leader. He has, at times, spoken out against the Taliban's rigid authoritarianism and internal decision-making. Could this be a sign that certain factions within the Taliban are seeking legitimacy on the global stage?

For the US, the risk is clear. By easing pressure on the Haqqanis, Washington may be attempting to open diplomatic channels with a faction of the Taliban that could offer more flexibility. However, this move could also embolden militant networks, setting a precedent that groups with a history of terrorism can eventually be legitimized if they wait long enough. Ultimately, whether this is a masterstroke of realpolitik or a dangerous gamble remains to be seen. If this is a first step toward meaningful engagement and reforms, the US may be charting a new course for Afghanistan. But if it is merely a one-time concession to secure a hostage's return, it risks eroding the very credibility of counterterrorism policies that once made Haqqani one of America's most wanted men.



- Court can reject the report and order further investigation if needed.
- Allegations against Aditya Thackeray remain under scrutiny.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The recent closure report filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the death cases of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput and his former manager Disha Salian has stirred fresh controversy, with legal representatives arguing that the accused have not been cleared.

Speaking to IANS, Advo-

Accused Not Cleared: Disha Salian's Father's Lawyer on Sushant Case Closure Report

cate Nilesh C Ojha, representing Disha Salian's father, stated that the closure report does not necessarily mean the case is shut. He emphasized that courts have the power to reject such reports and direct further investigations if deemed necessary.

"Even after the submission of a closure report, the accused are not automatically freed. Courts can reopen the case, demand additional evidence, and even issue arrest warrants, as seen in past cases like the Aarushi Talwar murder," Ojha said.

He further pointed out that no official statement from the CBI has been released regarding the report's findings. Citing legal precedents, Ojha

highlighted instances where closure reports were rejected, leading to fresh charge sheets and renewed probes.

Ojha also dismissed allegations of political interference, asserting that the case is about justice for Disha Salian and Sushant Singh Rajput rather than political agendas. He revealed that Disha's father had filed a PIL in September 2023, following which the Maharashtra government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) in December. However, despite a formal complaint being lodged in January 2024, no case was registered. The lawyer raised critical unanswered questions, including suspicions about Aditya Thackeray's possible involvement, discrepancies in post-mortem findings, and alleged threats to witnesses. He argued that these gaps indicate possible manipulation in the



investigation.

Sushant Singh Rajput, popularly known as SSR, was found dead at his Bandra residence

on June 14, 2020, sparking national outrage. His postmortem, conducted at Mumbai's Cooper Hospital, cited asphyxia

as the cause of death. However, questions regarding the probe's transparency continue to persist.

Leaders Pay Tributes to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev on Shahid Diwas

- PM Modi, Amit Shah, and Rahul Gandhi paid homage to the martyrs.
- Shahid Diwas marks the sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev on March 23.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

On the occasion of Shahid Diwas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and senior Congress leaders paid homage to freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, remembering their supreme sacrifice for India's independence.

Prime Minister Modi, in a message on X, honored their legacy, stating, "Today, our nation remembers the supreme sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev. Their fearless pursuit of freedom and justice continues to inspire us all."



Home Minister Amit Shah also paid his respects, calling their sacrifice a testament to patriotism. "These great revolutionaries proved through their lives that there is no greater duty than patriotism. Their

sacrifice ignited the nationwide freedom movement and will continue to inspire generations," he wrote on X.

Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, joined in paying tribute. Rahul Gandhi, in his post, highlighted Bhagat Singh's fight against social injustice, stating, "His struggle was not just against British rule but also against casteism and social discrimination. His thoughts on equality and brotherhood will always inspire us."

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge shared a quote reflecting the revolutionary spirit of the martyrs and called their thoughts "immortal," reaffirming their contribution to India's freedom struggle.

Shahid Diwas is observed every year on March 23 to honor the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, who were executed by the British in 1931.

Jama Masjid Sadar chief Zafar Ali Arrested in Sambhal violence case

TPN Correspondent | Sambhal

Jama Masjid Sadar chief Zafar Ali has been taken into custody by the Uttar Pradesh Police in connection with the violence that erupted in Sambhal on November 24, 2024.

A special investigation team (SIT) interrogated him on Sunday regarding the clashes that broke out during the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) examination of the Shahi Jama Masjid.

While being escorted by the police, Zafar Ali told reporters, "I did not incite any violence." His brother, advocate Mohammad Tahir, claimed that the Jama Masjid Sadar chief "will be arrested soon."

The SIT has already filed a chargesheet spanning over 4,000 pages in six of the 12 cases related to the violence, which resulted in the deaths of four individuals and injuries to several others, including security personnel and locals. Zafar Ali, along with his son, had been summoned to the Sambhal Police Station for questioning.

Tight security measures in place

Anticipating potential tensions, the police have deployed heavy security across the city, including personnel from the

Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Response Force (RRF). A flag march was conducted to maintain law and order. Last week, officials and residents celebrated Holi peacefully, with the Friday namaz at the Jama Masjid proceeding without incident. To prevent vandalism, a tarpaulin sheet was placed over the mosque, and the structure was whitewashed as per court orders.

Background of the Sambhal violence

The violence on November 24, 2024, was triggered by a court-ordered ASI survey of the historic Shahi Jama Masjid, following claims that the mosque was built over the remains of a demolished Hindu temple. The situation escalated into violent clashes, marked by stone-pelting, gunfire, and the torching of vehicles.

The unrest led to the deaths of four people and injuries to over 30, including several security personnel. Authorities imposed Section 144 to control the situation, and additional forces were deployed to restore order.

Following the violence, the Uttar Pradesh government set up a judicial commission to investigate the incident.

"Suspected" Arambai Tenggol Members Attack

Meitei Insurgents Who Signed Ceasefire: Manipur Police



TPN Correspondent | Imphal

Four members of the United National Liberation Front (Pambei), or UNLF (P), who had signed a ceasefire with the Centre and the Manipur government in November 2023, were injured in an attack by 15-20 suspected members of the Arambai Tenggol (AT), police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred on Saturday when the alleged AT members arrived at the residence of UNLF (P) functionary Irengbam Nandakumar Singh alias Tonsana, 56. A confrontation ensued, leading to injuries for four UNLF (P) cadres. Manipur Police, in a post on X, stated that security forces responded immediately, detained the injured, and shifted them to a

hospital. "They are reported to be free from any danger and have only blunt injuries (not gunshot)," the statement added.

Following the attack, security forces raided AT Unit-17 under Imphal East district's Porompat police station and recovered various items, including 15 grams of a substance suspected to be heroin and an INSAS assault rifle bayonet.

An AT delegation had met Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on February 25, seeking assurances for civilian safety following the surrender of arms. They requested that central forces and the police ensure security to prevent civilians from rearming themselves.

Ongoing ethnic conflict

The violence in Manipur, ongoing since May 2023, has largely involved the valley-dominant Meitei community and the Kuki tribes, who are concentrated in the hill districts. Kuki civil society groups have accused AT of attacking their villages, prompting the formation of village defense forces. AT, however, claims it was forced to take up arms as "village volunteers" due to inadequate law enforcement.

In September 2024, Manipur Police confirmed the involvement of overground insurgents from both communities in the ongoing conflict. Several Meitei militant groups, including PLA, KYKL, and KCP, reportedly returned from Myanmar after the military junta's influence weakened in certain areas. Meanwhile, nearly two dozen Kuki and Zomi insurgent groups under the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United People's Front (UPF) operate under a controversial suspension of operations (SoO) agreement, which mandates they stay in designated camps with weapons locked under supervision.

Manipur violence has so far claimed over 250 lives and displaced nearly 50,000 people.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar To Take Over As Kerala BJP President

TPN Correspondent | Thiruvananthapuram

Former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar is poised to take over as the Kerala BJP state president, with party sources confirming that he is the sole nominee for the post. A formal announcement is expected following the party's state council meeting on Monday, where BJP's central observer Prahlad Joshi is set to officially declare his appointment.

On Sunday, Chandrasekhar filed two sets of nomination papers at the BJP headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram, in the presence of outgoing state president K Surendran and senior BJP leaders Kummanam Rajasekharan, V Muraleedharan, PK Krishnadas, and MT Ramesh, along with Union Ministers Suresh Gopi and George Kurian.

At 60, Chandrasekhar brings over two decades of political experience, having served as Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Skill Development, and Jal Shakti. A three-term Rajya Sabha MP from Karnataka, he has also been the BJP's national spokesperson and vice-chairman of the NDA's Kerala unit.

Chandrasekhar contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections



from Thiruvananthapuram as the NDA candidate, narrowly losing to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor by 16,077 votes. Born to Keralite parents in Ahmedabad, he has strong family ties to Thrissur.

The leadership change comes as K Surendran completes his five-year term. Speculation about his continuation was dismissed after he stated in a TV interview that he had informed the central leadership of his decision to step down.

While other BJP state leaders, including Shobha Surendran and MT Ramesh, were considered strong contenders

for the post, party members welcomed Chandrasekhar's appointment.

Shobha Surendran expressed confidence in his leadership, calling it a "unanimous decision" that will help strengthen the party. MT Ramesh praised Chandrasekhar's strong electoral performance in Thiruvananthapuram, emphasizing his growing support base. Union Minister of State Suresh Gopi described Chandrasekhar as a "catalyst" for the BJP's organizational expansion in Kerala, stating that a strong team of ministers and senior leaders would back his efforts.

India Can Engage With Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Iran Parallely

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Saturday emphasized that India's foreign policy follows the principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas,' allowing the country to engage simultaneously with conflicting nations like Russia and Ukraine, as well as Israel and Iran.

Speaking at the Business Today Vucanomics 2025 event on 'Diplomacy in the Age of Disrup-

tions,' Jaishankar highlighted India's strategic approach in maintaining relations with diverse global players. "In the current polarized era, India is among the few that can simultaneously engage with Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Iran, the democratic West and the Global South, and the BRICS and QUAD," he said.

Expanding Global Cooperation

Jaishankar stated that India has actively participated

in over 40 international groupings focused on trade, technology, energy, and security. "We have shown the ability to forge different combinations for different domains, ensuring as many doors remain open as possible," he added.

He also underlined the role of Indian diplomacy in securing defense and security partnerships that offer the armed forces and businesses a wide range of options.

The minister stressed that

India's foreign policy is designed to protect economic interests while navigating global challenges. He highlighted the role of Indian embassies in promoting commercial ties, concessional financing for businesses abroad, and facilitating talent mobility.

"Our diplomacy and businesses must continue working together as Team India in the quest for a Viksit Bharat and in promoting India's interests globally," he posted on X. Jaishankar also pointed to tourism and connectivity initiatives as economic drivers, reinforcing



India's efforts to enhance its global footprint while strengthening domestic development.

Pope Francis Leaves Hospital After Five-Week Stay

TPN Correspondent | Vatican City

Pope Francis was discharged from Rome's Gemelli hospital on Sunday after a five-week stay for pneumonia, marking his first public appearance since February 14. The 88-year-old pontiff, who had been battling a severe respiratory infection, was seen waving to well-wishers from a hospital balcony just moments before leaving in a car escorted by police vehicles.

The pope's hospitalization on February 14 was considered the most serious health crisis of his 12-year papacy. Doctors had been closely monitoring his condition, and although he has now been released, they have advised two more months of rest at the Vatican for a full recovery.

Despite his frail condition, Pope Francis made a brief but significant appearance outside the hospital, where he smiled and waved at the gathered crowd. Sitting in his wheelchair, he looked visibly weak, with a swollen face and a feeble voice, but managed



to express gratitude to one of the well-wishers who had brought him yellow flowers.

During his stay, the Vatican released only one public image of the pope, showing him praying in the hospital's chapel, which fueled concerns about his health. On Sunday, as he emerged for a short moment, hundreds of supporters outside the hospital chanted his name in an emotional display of support.

While the pope is now back at the Vatican, his recovery process remains ongoing, and doctors have urged caution in his schedule. His public engagements are expected to be limited in the coming weeks as he regains strength.

Mark Carney to Contest in Nepean as Liberals Revoke Arya's Candidacy

TPN Correspondent | Ottawa

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will contest his first federal election in 2025 from the Nepean constituency in Ontario, replacing incumbent MP Chandra Arya, whose candidacy was revoked by the Liberal Party. The unexpected decision comes as Canada prepares for a snap election on April 28, nearly six months ahead of schedule.

The ruling Liberal Party announced on Saturday that Carney will run for Nepean, a suburban riding in Ottawa. The party highlighted Carney's deep ties to the capital, stating, "Ottawa is where he raised his family, devoted his career to public service, and always gave back to his community."

Arya, who has represented Nepean since 2015, was informed on Thursday that his candidacy for the 2025 election was revoked due to unspecified "new information" reviewed by the party's Na-



tional Campaign Co-Chair. No further details were provided.

Carney Calls Snap Election

Carney, who replaced Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister on March 14, is set to meet Governor General Mary Simon on Sunday to dissolve the House of Commons. The move is seen as an effort to capitalize on the Liberal Party's recent momentum and avoid a

looming no-confidence vote in Parliament. At an event in Edmonton, Carney justified the early election, saying, "In this time of crisis, the Government needs a strong and clear mandate." He is expected to launch his campaign in Atlantic Canada before touring other provinces.

Controversy Over Arya's Removal

The sudden cancellation of Arya's candidacy raises questions about the internal decisions of the Liberal Party. Arya, who was also barred from the party's leadership race in January, has previously criticized the legitimacy of the process.

With Carney yet to face Parliament, this election will be his first major test as Prime Minister.



Indian-Origin Man and Daughter Shot Dead in Virginia Store; Suspect Arrested

TPN Correspondent | Virginia

An Indian-origin man and his daughter were shot dead at a convenience store in Accomack County, Virginia, on Thursday, sending shockwaves through the Indian community in the region. The police have arrested 44-year-old George Frazier Devon White in connection with the shooting.

Pradipkumar Patel (56) and his daughter were working at a relative's store on Lankford Highway when the shooting occurred. According to authorities, the county sheriff's office received a distress call about the incident at around 5:30 AM

on March 20. Upon arrival, officers found Patel unresponsive with gunshot wounds, while his daughter was also discovered shot inside the building.

Patel was pronounced dead at the scene, while his daughter was rushed to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, where she later succumbed to her injuries. Sheriff W. Todd Wessells confirmed the arrest of George Frazier Devon White from Onancock, who is currently held without bond. The accused faces multiple charges, including first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder, possession of a firearm by a felon, and two counts of using

a firearm in the commission of a felony. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive behind the shooting. Authorities have not yet disclosed a motive behind the shooting.

Paresh Patel, the store owner and a relative of the victims, expressed his grief in an interview with Virginia's local WAYV-TV channel.

"My cousin's wife and her dad were working this morning, and some guy just came in and shot them," he said. "I don't know what to do."

The tragic incident has left the Indian community in Virginia in mourning, as investigations continue.

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu Jailed Pending Trial

Main opposition leader of Erdogan faces corruption charges

TPN Correspondent | Istanbul

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a key political rival and main opposition leader against Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, was jailed pending trial on Sunday as part of a corruption investigation. The court's decision, which also saw at least 20 others detained, has sparked widespread criticism from opposition leaders and European officials, with many calling it a politically motivated move.

The charges against Imamoglu, 54, come amid rising tensions ahead of Turkey's next general elections. While no national elections are scheduled until 2028, Imamoglu has been considered a strong contender against Erdogan, even leading in some polls. His arrest has intensified political unrest, with thousands of protesters rallying against the government's actions in Istanbul, Ankara, and other cities. Authorities have responded with heavy police presence, tear gas, and water cannons to disperse demonstrators.

Despite facing corruption and terror-related allega-



tions, Imamoglu has denied all charges, calling them "unimaginable accusations and slanders." The court, however, chose to release him under judicial control for the separate terror-related case, a move that prevents the government from appointing a trustee to take over Istanbul's administration.

Opposition leaders, including Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas of the Republican People's Party (CHP), have condemned the arrest as a "disgrace for the judicial system." The CHP is

currently voting to select Imamoglu as its candidate for the next presidential election, signaling continued resistance to Erdogan's rule.

The Turkish government has denied any political interference, insisting the judiciary remains independent. However, with a nationwide protest ban extended for four more days and over 320 demonstrators already detained, tensions between Erdogan's administration and the opposition are escalating rapidly.

Stock Markets Poised for Gains as FIIs Return

Indian stock markets are likely to see an improved performance this week, as there are no immediate negative signals from international markets. Additionally, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have resumed inflows into the Indian markets, further strengthening investor sentiment.

The Nifty 50, which closed at 23,350 last Friday, faces immediate resistance at 23,800. However, experts suggest that consolidation at the current level is crucial for sustained growth. Once the index stabilizes, it could gain further strength, boosting investor confidence.

Last week, smallcap and midcap indices struggled, while stocks from the realty, healthcare, PSE, energy, pharma, banking, auto, infrastructure, and finance sectors saw gains.



Stock Recommendations

TVS Motors

TVS Motors has been in a downtrend since September last year, correcting nearly 25%. However, it formed a double bottom at the crucial ₹2,230 level, indicating a potential turnaround. The stock gained in five consecutive sessions last week, closing at ₹2,413 on Friday. Investors should consider entering at ₹2,400, targeting ₹2,550–2,600, with a stop loss at ₹2,360.



Mankind Pharma

After a 30% correction from its lifetime high, Mankind Pharma is showing strong momentum. The stock surged 12% in the last two sessions with high volumes, and the pharma sector as a whole is performing well. Mankind Pharma closed at ₹2,415 last Friday.



day, and investors should consider entering at ₹2,350, aiming for a target of ₹2,540 with a stop loss at ₹2,310.

SBI Life

SBI Life, which has been in a downtrend since September, has shown accumulation since the beginning of this year. Despite market fluctuations, the stock displayed resilience, gaining nearly 12% last week. It has now reached a key resistance level at ₹1,550. If it breaks this level, further upside is expected. Investors should enter at ₹1,520, targeting ₹1,660–1,690, with a stop loss at ₹1,480.



MRPL

MRPL shares have been in a downtrend since February last year, but recent trading patterns indicate range expansion with high volume. The stock outperformed the Nifty, rising 13%

last week and 22% over the past month. It closed at ₹135 on Friday with a 14% gain. Investors should enter in the ₹130 range, targeting ₹165, with a stop loss at ₹120.



NHPC

NHPC has been forming a solid base for the past two months, showing a Darvas Box pattern. The stock has reached short-term resistance at ₹82, and a breakout could increase momentum. NHPC rose 6% last week. Investors should enter at ₹80, targeting ₹115, with a stop loss at ₹76. Market experts suggest that while the outlook is positive, investors should follow stop-loss levels and monitor global cues closely.



Boeing lays off 180 employees in India amid global workforce reduction

US aerospace giant Boeing has laid off up to 180 employees from its engineering and technology center in Bengaluru as part of a broader global workforce reduction. The move comes as the company navigates ongoing challenges while maintaining its focus on customer service, safety, and quality.

According to sources, the layoffs were part of strategic adjustments, affecting only limited positions without impacting key operations or government contracts. While some roles have been eliminated, Boeing has also created new positions, indicating a restructuring rather than an outright downsizing of its India workforce. Boeing employs around 7,000 people in India and had earlier announced plans to reduce its global workforce by approximately 10% last year.



However, the company has not issued an official statement regarding the latest layoffs in Bengaluru.

Boeing wins major US Air Force contract
Meanwhile, Boeing secured a significant contract to build the next-generation fighter jet for the US Air Force, marking a major victory for the

aerospace firm. The contract, part of the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) program, will see Boeing replacing Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor with a new crewed aircraft designed to operate alongside drones.

US President Donald Trump, who awarded the contract, named the new aircraft the F-47 but did not disclose the total value of the deal. The announcement led to a 5% surge in Boeing's stock, while Lockheed Martin shares dropped nearly 7%. Trump hinted at potential international sales, stating, "Our allies are calling constantly. They want to buy them also."

For Boeing, this contract represents a crucial turnaround, offering a boost to its St. Louis, Missouri, fighter jet production unit at a time when the company has faced struggles in both its commercial and defense segments.

India to Drive 6% of Global Trade Growth, Ranks Third After US and China



India is set to play a significant role in global trade over the next five years, contributing around 6% to worldwide trade growth, following China at 12% and the United States at 10%, according to a joint report by DHL and the New York University Stern School of Business.

The latest DHL Trade Atlas 2025 projects that India will maintain its third-place position in trade expansion while improving its trade speed ranking by 15 places to reach the 17th spot. India's compound annual trade volume growth rate is expected to rise from 5.2% to 7.2% over the next five years. The report highlights that in 2024, India ranked as the 13th largest participant in international trade, yet its trade volume saw a 5.2% annual growth rate from 2019 to 2024, significantly outpacing the global trade growth rate of 2%. The surge in India's trade reflects its rapid macroeconomic growth and increasing integration into the global trade network.

"The Trade Atlas underlines India's rapid expansion in global trade, positioning the country as a critical hub connecting the East and West. While we anticipate trade volume growth and an increase in global trade share, we remain cautiously optimistic given the global economy's volatility," said R S Subramanian, SVP South Asia, DHL Express.

The report further notes that while China is perceived as a more trade-oriented economy, India's goods trade-to-GDP ratio in 2023 was nearly as high as China's. When accounting for both goods and services, India's trade intensity even exceeded that of China.

Strong foreign investments are expected to bolster India's trade growth. In 2023, India ranked second globally after the US in attracting greenfield foreign direct investment. The manufacturing sector, in particular, has emerged as the primary focus of this investment.

The report also predicts robust trade growth for other emerging Asian economies, including Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. South Asia and Southeast Asia are expected to outperform other regions in terms of trade expansion.

"With the ongoing diversification of supply chains, Asia has firmly positioned itself as a dominant force in global trade," said Ken Lee, CEO - Asia Pacific, DHL Express.

UPI Services to Be Deactivated for Inactive Mobile Numbers from April 1

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has directed banks and payment service providers to remove UPI IDs linked to inactive mobile numbers starting April 1. Users with such numbers will lose access to payment apps like Google Pay, Paytm, and PhonePe due to security concerns.

NPCI stated that inactive mobile numbers linked to UPI pose a security risk, as reassigned numbers may still be connected to previous UPI accounts. This could lead to fraudulent activities if the numbers are misused. To prevent this, NPCI has asked banks and digital payment platforms to delink inactive numbers from the UPI system.

Who Will Lose UPI Access?

- Users who have changed or deactivated their mobile numbers



without updating them in their bank records.

- Those whose mobile numbers have been reassigned to another person.
- Customers with inactive or deactivated numbers that have not been used for banking transactions.

How to Avoid UPI Disruptions?

- Ensure that the mobile number linked to the bank account remains active.
- If a mobile number has changed, update the new number with the bank before April 1.
- Users with inactive numbers should get a new number and update it in their bank records to avoid service disruption.

Role of Banks in the Process

- Banks and PSPs will regularly re-

view and remove UPI IDs linked to inactive or reassigned numbers.

- Telecom providers' Mobile Number Revocation List will be used to identify numbers flagged as inactive or deactivated.
- Banks will notify users before disabling UPI services for inactive numbers.

- UPI access will not be removed for users who update their mobile numbers before the deadline.

With this move, NPCI aims to enhance security in digital transactions and prevent potential fraud linked to reassigned mobile numbers. Users are advised to verify and update their mobile numbers to ensure uninterrupted access to UPI services.

NewJeans vs ADOR Court halts K-pop group’s independent activities



South Korean girl group NewJeans has been barred from conducting independent activities following a legal dispute with their agency, ADOR, a subsidiary of HYBE Corporation. The Seoul Central District Court issued the directive on Friday, ruling in favor of ADOR’s injunction against the group. The conflict began last November when NewJeans—comprising Minji, Hanni, Danielle, Haerin, and Hyein—announced their decision to cut ties with ADOR, citing mistreatment and dissatisfaction with the agency’s management. The group even attempted to rebrand itself as NJZ. Tensions escalated when the members openly opposed the removal of former ADOR CEO Min Hee Jin, fur-

ther straining their relationship with the label. In January, ADOR filed an injunction against NewJeans, arguing that the group was seeking independent contracts without approval. The court sided with ADOR, stating that NewJeans’ actions could “seriously damage” the label’s reputation. The ruling also emphasized that the group failed to provide sufficient proof that ADOR had violated their contractual obligations, noting that the agency had fulfilled its financial commitments. “If (NewJeans) unilaterally terminate the contract, ADOR would suffer greatly. And if (NewJeans) begins activity under a new name, it could severely damage not only the brand of NewJeans but the reputation of

ADOR,” the court stated. The ruling casts uncertainty over NewJeans’ scheduled song release on March 23. The group, while respecting the court’s decision, expressed dissatisfaction with the legal proceedings. In a statement, they said, “We plan to challenge today’s decision during which we will raise additional legal issues and submit further supporting evidence. Regardless, we can no longer remain with a management that has disrespected our identities and undermined our achievements.” Beyond contractual disputes, NewJeans has also accused ADOR of violating artists’ rights and workplace harassment, adding another layer of complexity to the legal battle.

Honor Pad X9a Launched With 11.5-inch LCD, Snapdragon 685 SoC

Honor has unveiled the Honor Pad X9a in Malaysia, featuring an 11.5-inch LCD display with a 120Hz refresh rate and Snapdragon 685 chipset. The new tablet runs on Android 15-based MagicOS 9.0 and comes with an 8,300mAh battery, supported by a 35W fast charger. The device is listed on Honor Malaysia’s website, but the company has yet to announce its price. It will be available in a single Gray color variant and comes in an 8GB RAM + 128GB storage configuration. Honor Pad X9a Specifications The Honor Pad X9a sports a 2.5K (1,504x2,508 pixels) LCD screen, paired with 8GB of RAM. The company also offers virtual RAM expansion, allowing an addi-



tional 8GB of unused storage to be used as memory. In terms of cameras, the tablet features an 8-megapixel rear camera with autofocus and an f/2.0 aperture, while the front 5-megapixel camera handles selfies and video calls. For connectivity, the tablet supports Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5.1, and is com-

patible with Honor’s wireless keyboards and stylus. It is equipped with a quad-speaker setup for an enhanced multimedia experience. The 8,300mAh battery provides up to 70 days of standby time, according to the company. The tablet measures 267.3 x 167 x 6.77mm and weighs 475g.

Meta Weighs UK Subscription Option After Targeted Ads Ban



Meta is considering introducing a subscription model for UK users of Facebook and Instagram after agreeing to stop targeting human rights campaigner Tanya O’Carroll with personalised ads. The move follows a legal challenge that led to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) affirming that users have the right to object to their data being used for direct marketing. Legal Battle Over Targeted Ads The case began when O’Carroll sued Facebook over its collection and use of her personal data for

targeted advertising. The ICO backed her claim, stating that Meta was “processing Ms O’Carroll’s personal data for direct marketing purposes.” Under UK GDPR regulations, individuals have the “absolute right” to object to such processing. Meta settled the case by agreeing to stop processing O’Carroll’s data for direct marketing, effectively blocking targeted ads for her. In response, O’Carroll called it a “victory” for UK and EU citizens, saying it could help others object to surveillance advertising.

While Meta stated it was “pleased to draw a line under this long-running case,” it fundamentally disagreed with the claims. A company spokesperson reiterated that Facebook and Instagram remain free because of personalised advertising and emphasized the company’s compliance with UK GDPR obligations.

Following the settlement, Meta revealed that it is “exploring the option of offering people based in the UK a subscription” similar to the ad-free plan it already provides in the EU. The company said it would share further details in due course.

ICO’s Stand on User Privacy The ICO reiterated that organisations must respect people’s choices regarding their data and provide a clear opt-out mechanism for direct marketing. The regulator encouraged users to file complaints if they believe companies are not complying with their requests. As Meta faces increasing regulatory scrutiny, its potential shift to a paid subscription model in the UK could mark a significant change in how social media platforms operate in the region.

From Delhi to Hyderabad, India goes dark for Earth Hour

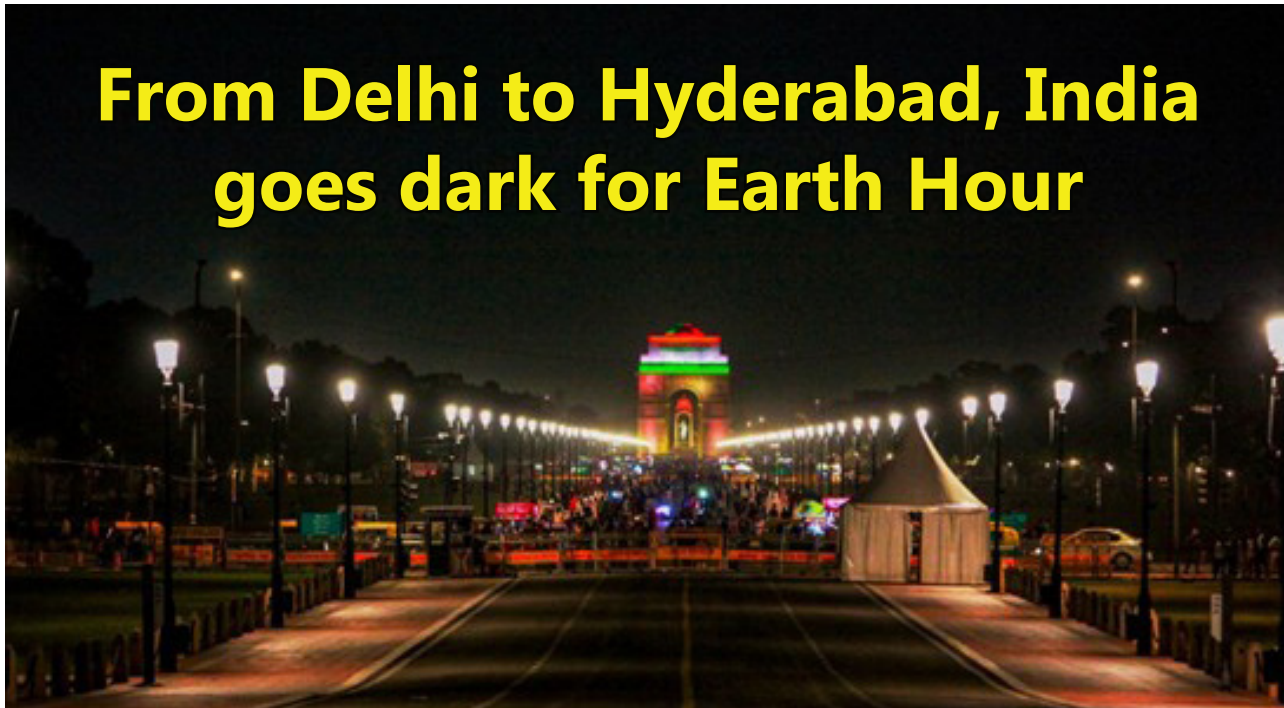


Photo Credit: PTI

Cities across India observed Earth Hour on Saturday night by switching off lights between 8:30 pm and 9:30 pm as part of the global movement to conserve energy. The event, organized by the World Wide Fund (WWF), saw several iconic buildings and landmarks participating across the country. In Delhi, the lights at the India Gate and Qutub Minar were turned off in solidarity with the initiative. The Delhi electricity distribution company, BSES, had urged its 50 lakh-plus consumers and 2 crore residents in South, West, East, and Central Delhi to switch off non-essential lights and appliances during the hour-long observance. Hyderabad also joined the ini-

tiative, with the Dr BR Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat going dark in support of Earth Hour. Similarly, the Kerala Assembly Building switched off its lights, reinforcing the nationwide commitment to sustainability. Earth Hour was first introduced as a lights-out event in Sydney, Australia, in 2007, and has since expanded to over 190 countries, engaging millions of individuals and organizations worldwide. The Ministry of Environment highlighted that major global landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, Sydney Opera House, and Empire State Building, have all participated in this global initiative over the years. This year, Earth Hour coincided with World Water Day,

with WWF-India promoting the theme “Be Water Wise” to emphasize the link between energy conservation and water security. As climate change continues to impact global water resources, the need for sustainable practices has become increasingly urgent. Last year, Delhi residents saved 206 MW of electricity during Earth Hour, with BSES areas contributing 130 MW. This year, the initiative aimed to surpass those figures, reinforcing Delhi’s role as a leader in the fight against climate change. Earth Hour is more than just a symbolic gesture—it serves as a reminder to adopt conscious choices every day that contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future.

Kerala Farmer’s Tiny Goat Karumbi Enters Guinness Records

A Kerala farmer’s pet goat, Karumbi, has made history by securing a place in the Guinness Book of World Records as the shortest living goat in the world. Owned by Peter Lenu, Karumbi, a black female pygmy goat, stands at just 1 ft 3 in (40.50 cm) at the full-grown age of four, setting a new global benchmark. Peter Lenu, who had always known Karumbi was unusually small, was encouraged by those around him to submit her for the world record. After receiving a suggestion from a guest, he took the necessary steps to

get the goat evaluated. A veterinarian confirmed Karumbi’s size, age, and health, clearing her for the record title. Karumbi belongs to the Canadian pygmy goat species, known for their stocky bodies and genetic dwarfism, which limits their leg growth to a maximum of 21 in (53 cm). Despite her tiny stature, Karumbi is one of the most social animals on the farm, living alongside three male goats, nine females, and ten kids, as well as cows, rabbits, hens, and ducks.

Adding to the excitement, Karumbi is currently pregnant, and her next offspring could potentially break new records. Thrilled by Karumbi’s recognition, Peter Lenu expressed his commitment to maintaining the genetic quality of his animals and ensuring their well-being. He eagerly awaits the birth of Karumbi’s baby, which could further cement the farm’s place in history.



Image Credit: Guinness World Records

CSK Triumphs Over Mumbai Indians in IPL 2025



In a thrilling start to the IPL 2025 season, Chennai Super Kings (CSK) defeated Mumbai Indians (MI) by four wickets at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on March 23. Opting to field first, CSK's bowlers restricted MI to 155/9 in 20 overs. Debutant spinner Noor Ahmad impressed with figures of 4/30, including the pivotal wicket of Suryakumar Yadav, who scored 29 off 26 balls.

In response, CSK's chase was anchored by captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, who smashed a rapid 53 off 26 deliveries, reaching his half-century in just 22 balls. Rachin Ravindra contributed significantly with an unbeaten 65 off 45 balls, sealing the victory with a six. Despite a late wobble, CSK achieved the target in 19.1 overs, finishing at 158/6.

This win provides CSK with a positive start to their campaign, showcasing both bowling depth and batting prowess.

Germany Eyes NL Semis as Italy Seeks Comeback in Dortmund



Germany is looking to maintain its momentum from Euro 2024 as they face Italy in the Nations League quarter-final second leg in Dortmund. After a 2-1 comeback victory in Milan, goalkeeper Oliver Baumann expressed confidence that the team would ride the "surge in spirit" that has uplifted them in recent months. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Baumann emphasized the home advantage of Dortmund's 82,000-strong Westfalenstadion, which could prove challenging for Italy. "It can be very loud, and it can carry a team. It can be extremely unpleasant for an opposing team," he said.

Germany's campaign has revived local enthusiasm after disappointing early exits in recent major tournaments. Coach Julian Nagelsmann echoed this sentiment, stating that the team aims to "make our own history" rather than dwell on past encounters, including Italy's 2006 World Cup semi-final victory at the same venue.

Italy, on the other hand, is determined to turn the tie around. Coach Luciano Spalletti acknowledged the first-leg defeat but urged his team to focus on the present. "We need to do something new. We expect a strong opponent, but we know what we need to do to return home with a win," he said.



Ishan Kishan's Explosive Century Powers SRH to Victory

In a stunning display of batting prowess, Ishan Kishan scored a rapid century to lead Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) to a commanding victory over Rajasthan Royals (RR) in their IPL 2025 opener at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad. Kishan, acquired by SRH for ₹11.25 crore during the mega auction, made an immediate impact in his debut match. He reached his century in just 45 balls—the fastest in IPL 2025—finishing unbeaten on 106 off 47 deliveries.

This explosive knock was supported by valuable contributions from Travis Head (67 off 31 balls), Heinrich Klaasen (34 off 14 balls), and Abhishek Sharma (24 off 11 balls). Their collective efforts propelled SRH to a total of 286/6 in 20 overs, narrowly missing their own record of 287 runs.

In response, RR's chase faltered under pressure, and SRH secured a decisive win. This match not only highlighted Kishan's explosive batting but also underscored SRH's dominance in the IPL.



Yuki Bhambri Becomes India's No. 1 Men's Doubles Player

Ends Rohan Bopanna's 286-week reign after Miami Open victory

Indian tennis star Yuki Bhambri has claimed the country's top spot in men's doubles rankings after defeating veteran Rohan Bopanna at the Miami Open. Bhambri, alongside his Portugal partner Nuno Borges, secured a hard-fought victory over Bopanna and Croatia's Ivan Dodig in the round of 32 match, winning 6-4, 3-6, 10-7.

With this win, the 32-year-old Bhambri is set to overtake Bopanna in the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) doubles rankings at the conclusion of the Miami Open. Bhambri now stands at number 29 in the live ATP doubles rankings, while Bopanna has dropped to 43. The Indo-Portugal duo will next face Adam Pavlasek of Czechia and Jamie Murray of the United Kingdom in the round of 16.

Bopanna, a two-time Grand Slam champion and a winner of 26 tour-level titles, had been India's number-one doubles player since October 2019. His reign, lasting 286 weeks, has now come to an end. The 45-year-old had entered the Miami Open as the defending champion, having won the ti-



tle with Matthew Ebden last year. Bhambri has been in impressive form this season, recently clinching his maiden ATP 500 title at the Dubai Tennis Championships alongside Australia's Alexei Popyrin. The duo staged a remarkable comeback in the final, defeating US Open

and Australian Open champions Harri Heliövaara and Henry Patten 3-6, 7-6(12), 10-8. Last month, Bhambri and Ivan also caused an upset by knocking out top-seeded Marcelo Arevalo and Mate Pavić at the Qatar Open. The 2009 Australian Open junior boys' champion, Bhambri was previous-

ly India's top-ranked singles player, breaking into the top 100 twice with a career-best ranking of 83 in April 2018. He shifted his focus to doubles in 2023 and has since won three ATP 250 titles, further cementing his position as one of India's top tennis players.

Irfan Pathan Dropped from IPL 2025 Commentary Panel

Former Indian cricketer Irfan Pathan has been excluded from the commentary panel for the upcoming IPL 2025 season, reportedly due to accusations of bias and targeting certain players in his analysis.

Pathan, a regular in both English and Hindi commentary for IPL and India's international matches post-retirement, was not named by the broadcasters for the 2025 season. According to a report in the Times of India, the decision was influenced by complaints

from players and concerns over his social media activity, where he was accused of taking "potshots" at certain cricketers. A source close to the development stated, "Pathan had a fallout with a couple of players a few years ago. Since then, he has not shied away from referring to them aggressively. The matter was raised that other junior players got caught in the crossfire. He has been accused of taking potshots at them on social media platforms even if he didn't name them."

Following his exclusion, Pathan has reportedly launched his own YouTube channel, where he is expected to share his views on cricket.

Not the First High-Profile Exclusion

Pathan is not the first commentator to be sidelined due to controversial remarks. In 2020, former cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar was removed from the BCCI's commentary panel for India's ODI series against South Africa, following his infamous 'bits and pieces'

remark on Ravindra Jadeja during the 2019 ODI World Cup. At the time, Manjrekar had acknowledged the decision, stating, "I have always considered commentary a great privilege, but never an entitlement. It is up to my employers whether they choose to have me or not & I will always respect that."

With Pathan now out of IPL 2025 commentary, it remains to be seen if he will make a return in future seasons.





The anticipation for Sambaraala Yetigattu, starring Mega Supreme Hero Sai Durgha Tej, continues to grow. Following SDT's intense first look and the teaser's gripping action sequences, the makers have now introduced another pivotal character from the film. On the occasion of Srikanth's birthday, the team revealed his striking transformation as "Britishhu." Sitting atop a hill, clutching a thread, his intense gaze and rugged demeanor

set the tone for a powerful character. With a thick beard, unkempt long hair, a soldier's outfit, and sturdy boots, Srikanth's look exudes dominance and mystery. Directed by Rohith KP and produced by K Niranjan Reddy and Chaitanya Reddy, Sambaraala Yetigattu is shaping up to be a high-octane period action spectacle. The film is currently in production and is slated for a grand Pan-India release on September 25th.



Ever since the intense teaser of Kingdom dropped in February, excitement has been soaring for this Vijay Deverakonda-led action drama. The gripping visuals hinted at a mysterious, high-stakes backdrop, and speculation has been rife that director Gowtam Tinnanuri's period narrative delves into the Sri Lankan civil war. Adding fuel to these rumors, Vijay Deverakonda is now headed to Sri

Lanka for the next schedule of Kingdom. Over the next five days, the team will be shooting a song across multiple picturesque locations, further strengthening the buzz that the film is rooted in the island nation's tumultuous past. Reports suggest that Vijay plays a rebel who stands against the oppressive actions of the Sri Lankan army, fighting to protect his people. While it remains to be seen if

the film directly references the LTTE conflict, all eyes are on Kingdom as it gears up for a grand release on May 30th. The film stars Mr. Bachchan actress Bhagyashri Borse as the female lead and is bankrolled by Naga Vamsi under the Sithara Entertainments banner. With a massive pan-India rollout planned, Kingdom is shaping up to be one of the summer's biggest cinematic spectacles.

Robinhood Trailer Blend of Comedy and Action

With just five days left for its theatrical release, the much-anticipated trailer of Robinhood has finally been unveiled, heightening excitement among fans. The film marks the reunion of Nithiin and director Venky Kudumula after their blockbuster Bheeshma, and is backed by Mythri Movie Makers. Nithiin plays a burglar who unexpectedly finds himself working for a security agency led by Rajendra Prasad. His team, consisting of elderly members, is assigned to protect a wealthy young woman, played by Sreeleela, who arrives from Australia. However, the plot takes a sharp turn when a ruthless villain, portrayed by Devdatta Nage, steps in with his illegal operations. The trailer showcases a perfect blend of comedy, action, and adventure, with Nithiin impressing in multiple avatars, effortlessly delivering humor and charm. His chemistry with Sreeleela adds a lighthearted touch, while Rajendra Prasad and Vennela Kishore contribute hilarious moments. Devdatta Nage's villainous presence intensifies the narrative, and David Warner's stylish cameo adds an extra layer of excitement. Visually, Sai Sriram's cinematography enhances the film's appeal, while GV Prakash Kumar's energetic music complements the high entertainment factor. With top-notch production values from Mythri Movie Makers, Robinhood promises to be a fun-filled entertainer with a gripping storyline. Releasing worldwide on March 28, Robinhood is shaping up to be a crowd-puller, offering an exciting mix of humor, action, and adventure.

Warner makes his cinema debut with Robinhood

Australian cricketer David Warner has arrived in Hyderabad ahead of the grand trailer launch and pre-release event of his debut Telugu film, Robinhood. Warner, who enjoys a massive fan base in India, was welcomed with a huge bouquet and greeted by excited supporters seeking autographs. Directed by Venky Kudumula, Robinhood features Nithiin in the lead role. Warner has expressed his enthusiasm for his first acting experience, stating that he thoroughly enjoyed shooting for the film. Last week, the film's production house, Mythri Movie Makers, introduced Warner's entry into Indian cinema with a social media post. "After shining and leaving a mark on the ground, it is time for him to shine on the silver screen. Introducing the widely loved @davidwarner31 to Indian Cinema with #Robinhood in an exciting cameo. Grand release worldwide on March 28th," they wrote on X (formerly Twitter). Warner also shared his excitement, posting, "Indian Cinema, here I come. Excited to be a part of #Robinhood. Thoroughly enjoyed shooting for this one. Grand release worldwide on March 28th."



Raashi Khanna Flaunts Post-Workout Glow!

Tollywood star Raashi Khanna is giving major fitness goals as she shared a post-workout snap with her trainer, Kuldeep Sethi, revealing the dedication behind her sculpted physique. Dressed in a chic brown bralette, matching gym pants, and trendy sneakers, Raashi looked effortlessly radiant, proving that hard work and style go hand in hand. Adding a dash of humor to her fitness journey, she captioned the picture, "Proof that I made it through the session without tears and still felt cute enough for a selfie! @kuldepsethi." Meanwhile, on the professional front, Raashi is gearing up to share the screen with Siddhu Jonnalagadda in her upcoming film Telusu Kada.



Amanda Seyfried Calls Jennifer's Body "Perfect"

Amanda Seyfried has praised her 2009 film Jennifer's Body, calling it a "perfect" movie while criticizing its marketing for cheapening its impact. Directed by Karyn Kusama and written by Diablo Cody, the horror-comedy starred Seyfried alongside Megan Fox. Though it failed at the box office, it later developed a strong cult following. Seyfried, in an interview with GQ, expressed her admiration for the film, highlighting its bold storytelling and unique tone. "I can't critique this movie. To me, it's perfect. It's got guts. Diablo Cody was outspoken, brilliant, and hilarious. We were expressing a certain angst in a very specific, comedic way within a distinct genre. The special effects were incredible, there were stunts—everything you could want. If there's anything to criticize, it's the marketing," she said. The film follows Fox's character, a high school girl possessed by a demon who preys on male classmates. Seyfried played her best friend, Needy Lesnicki, who ultimately tries to stop her. According to Seyfried, the marketing campaign misrepresented the movie, portraying it as a standard horror flick rather than the sharp, feminist satire it was intended to be. "The marketing team cheapened it, making it seem like just a gory romp. I think they ruined it. Karyn and Diablo were an amazing team. I loved playing Needy—it was my first time embracing a nerdy character, glasses and all. Megan got to transform into a demon—it was awesome. We had so much fun, and I'd love to celebrate it with a sequel," she added. Up next, Seyfried will star in Paul Feig's psychological thriller The Housemaid.

