



7.7 Magnitude Earthquake Devastates Myanmar and Thailand

Massive earthquake causes destruction across Myanmar and Thailand

Bangkok declares emergency zone; rescue operations underway

Historic sites in Bagan suffer extensive damage



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State to Conduct Fresh Survey for SC Sub-Quota



Cabinet approves survey to gather SC empirical data

H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission's recommendations accepted

Survey aims to address internal reservation demand

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka government has decided to conduct a fresh survey to gather empirical data on Scheduled Castes (SC) in the state. The decision, made during a recent cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, aims to

address the persistent demand for internal reservation, particularly from Dalit Left communities. The move follows recommendations from the H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission, which submitted an interim report to CM Siddaramaiah on March 27. The commission was established to address the issue of internal reservation for Dalit communities. Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil, speaking to reporters after the cabinet meeting, stated that the commission proposed four key recommendations. These include conducting a fresh survey, using modern technologies to complete the survey within 30 to 40 days, preparing a structured questionnaire, and collecting detailed data on SCs and

their sub-castes for classification purposes. The cabinet has agreed to extend the tenure of the commission to oversee the survey process and provide further guidance. The survey aims to clarify confusion surrounding sub-caste nomenclature such as Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravida, and Adi Andhra—terms that were historically introduced during the rule of the Mysuru Maharajas to counter caste-based discrimination. Dalit activists have consistently argued that these names continue to cause ambiguity in caste classification across various regions. The upcoming survey is expected to address these concerns and provide a clearer framework for internal reservation policies.



Former CM Basavaraj Bommai Slams Govt Over Notices to BJP MLAs, Price Hikes

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Former Karnataka Chief Minister and Haveri MP Basavaraj Bommai has reacted sharply to the notices issued to BJP MLAs S.T. Somashekar and Shivaram Hebbar by the party's disciplinary committee. Bommai stated that the concerned MLAs would respond to the notices and declined to comment further on the matter. Shifting his focus to the state government, Bommai accused it of financial mismanagement, alleging that it has been covering up its failures by increasing prices across essential commodities. According to Bommai, the government has raised milk prices in the name of supporting farmers but has failed to release pending incentives worth approximately ₹500 crore to milk producers for the last six months. Bommai further claimed that farmers and milk unions are facing severe difficulties due to the lack of incentives. He criticized the government for imposing additional burdens on the people by hiking prices un-

BJP MLAs Somashekar, Hebbar face party disciplinary notices

Bommai alleges financial mismanagement, delayed farmer incentives

Price hikes blamed for public distress and frustration

der the pretense of supporting farmers, labeling it as proof of the state's financial bankruptcy. He also alleged that the state government had raised milk prices by ₹9 in three phases over the past year, terming it an "irresponsible and anti-state" approach. Additionally, Bommai pointed out other price increases, including electricity rates, petrol, diesel, stamp registration fees, and excise tax rates, accusing the government of exploiting the public. Bommai stated that despite imposing heavy taxes totaling around ₹55,000 crore, the government has taken a loan of approximately ₹1.16 lakh crore. According to him, this combination of rising taxes and price hikes has severely impacted the middle class and poor communities. Concluding his remarks, Bommai asserted that the Congress government is directly responsible for the state's current financial instability and urged for its removal, emphasizing that the public is growing increasingly frustrated with its governance.

CID Launches Probe Into Alleged Honey-Trap Complaint

Investigation initiated after complaint from Minister KN Rajanna

CID sleuths inspect multiple locations, record statements

Government directions awaited for further legal action



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Karnataka Police has initiated a probe into alleged honey-trapping attempts targeting several politicians across party lines. The investigation was ordered by Director General of Police (DGP) Alok Mohan following a complaint from State Minister and Congress leader KN Rajanna, whose statements in the assembly stirred a massive uproar during the recently concluded budget session. Rajanna, who serves as the Minister for Cooperation in the Sid-

daramaiah-led state cabinet, submitted a petition to State Home Minister G Parameshwara, seeking a detailed investigation into the matter. Responding to the complaint, Home Minister Parameshwara referred the issue to the CID for a comprehensive probe. Confirming the development, CID DGP MA Saleem stated that a copy of the complaint had been received from the DGP and that an inquiry was underway. "We are gathering details of the case, and after receiving directions from the government, appropriate

legal action will be taken," Saleem said. As part of the investigation process, CID officials visited Rajanna's government residence at Jayanagar in Bengaluru on Thursday. They also inspected the minister's guest house located on Jayamahar Road and recorded statements from household staff members stationed there. The probe is expected to continue as officials compile evidence and await further instructions from the government regarding the next steps in the legal process.

Controversy Erupts Over 4% Muslim Reservations in Karnataka

Karnataka amends law to provide 4% Muslim quota

BJP alleges unconstitutional religion-based reservation

Congress claims quota targets OBC sub-category

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka government's decision to introduce 4% reservations for Muslims in government civil contracts has sparked a political controversy, with allegations of unconstitutional religion-based quotas. The Congress-led government recently amended the Karnataka Transparency in Public



Procurements Act to offer these reservations, drawing sharp criticism from the BJP. The BJP has alleged that the provision is unconstitutional, claiming it amounts to providing reserva-

tions based on religion. According to the party, the move goes against constitutional principles since affirmative actions under

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Karnataka High Court Limits Pension Deductions for Loan Recovery

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that Canara Bank cannot deduct more than 50% of a retired employee's pension for recovering loan dues, emphasizing that pension serves as financial security for retirees. Justice S.G. Pandit delivered the verdict, clarifying that exceptions to this restriction apply only in cases of fraud, forgery, or misconduct. The case was filed by 70-year-old Murugan O K, a retired Canara Bank employee from Thrissur, Kerala. Despite consistently paying EMIs from his pension, the bank began deducting his entire pension from July 2024 to recover Rs. 8.5 lakh in outstanding dues. Murugan sought legal intervention, also requesting exemption from penal interest on an educational loan for which he was a co-obligant with his daughter. Justice Pandit highlighted that banks can



recover dues but must protect pensioners' livelihoods, as complete deductions may infringe upon Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, ensuring the right to life and personal liberty. He noted that for active employees, loan deductions generally do not exceed 50% of their take-home salary, a principle that should apply to pensioners as well. The court advised Canara Bank to explore other legal options for recovery, such as enforcing collateral, ensuring that pensioners' financial stability remains intact.

Karnataka HC Reserves Order on ED's Plea Against Single-Bench Ruling Favoring Ex-MUDA Chief Natesh

- Division bench reserves order on Enforcement Directorate's (ED) plea
- ED claims single-bench ruling cited in several cases, affecting ongoing investigations
- Allegations involve site allotment case linked to CM Siddaramaiah's wife

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court reserved its order on the plea filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seeking an interim stay on a single-bench order in favor of former MUDA commissioner D B Natesh. The case involves alleged irregularities in a site allotment scheme linked to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife, Parvathy B M, and others. A division bench comprising Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice K V Aravind reserved the order after hearing Additional Solicitor General S V Raju and Aravind Kamath for the ED, and senior advocate Dushyant Dave representing Natesh. The ED argued that the single-bench order is being repeatedly cited in several other cases, leading to stays that hamper ongoing investigations. According to the ED, the 'B' summary report filed by the Lokayukta police highlighted that Natesh's actions caused a loss to the exchequer and warranted further



investigation. In defense, Dushyant Dave stated that the matter pertains to a site allotment scheme that has been upheld by the High Court multiple times and does not involve money laundering aspects. He also alleged that the ED's probe was politically motivated, targeting states governed by the Congress and other opposition parties. On January 27, 2025, a single bench allowed Natesh's petition, stating that the ED's search and seizure operations lacked prima facie evidence under Section 3 of the Prevention of Money Laundering (PML) Act, terming it an abuse of legal process. The division bench is expected to pronounce its decision on the ED's plea soon.

Karnataka Electricity Bills to Increase from April; Gruha Jyothi Beneficiaries Unaffected

- Electricity bills to rise from April for households and businesses
- Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries exempted from hike
- Fixed charges to increase gradually over three years

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

The Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) has approved a hike in electricity bills for households and businesses starting from April, while beneficiaries of the Gruha Jyothi scheme will remain unaffected. The revised tariffs will reflect in electricity bills from May onwards. Under the new tariff structure, the



per-unit charge has been reduced by 10 paise to ₹5.80 for the first two years and ₹5.75 in 2027-28. However, fixed charges will increase progressively —

by ₹25 in 2025-26, ₹30 in 2026-27, and ₹40 in 2027-28. Currently, the per-unit energy charge stands at ₹5.90, with fixed charges at ₹120. The decision follows a proposal submitted by electricity supply companies (Escoms) in November 2024, seeking increases of 67 paise per unit for 2025-26, 75 paise for 2026-27, and 91 paise for 2027-28. KERC finalized the new tariffs after conducting public hearings and reviewing the proposals. While the tariff hike is expected to impact general consumers, those under the Gruha Jyothi scheme will continue to have their electricity costs covered by the government, providing them relief from the increased charges.

Brigade Group to Develop Luxury Apartments, Senior Homes in Mysuru

- Project to include 25% senior living spaces, 75% luxury apartments
- Gross Development Value estimated at ₹300 crore
- Part of Brigade Group's expansion strategy in Mysuru

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Bengaluru-based real estate developer Brigade Group has announced a new luxury residential project in Mysuru through a Joint Development Agreement (JDA), aiming for a revenue of ₹300 crore. The company made the announcement on March 28, highlighting its continued efforts to expand its footprint in key markets. The proposed project will span a developable area of 4.5 lakh sq ft, with a Gross Development Value (GDV) of ₹300 crore. According to Brigade Group, the project will include 25% senior living spaces and 75% luxury apartments, catering to a diverse segment of home-



part of Brigade Group's long-term strategy, we aim to bring thoughtfully designed residential spaces to key markets like Mysuru, and nurture vibrant communities that symbolize quality, innovation, and holistic living." The Mysuru project is part of Brigade Group's broader strategy to strengthen its presence in Karnataka's real estate market. The company is also undertaking a ₹2700 crore residential project on Whitefield-Hoskote Road in Bengaluru, spread over 20 acres with a saleable area of approximately 2.5 million sq ft through its subsidiary, Ananthay Properties Private Limited. Brigade Group's latest venture is expected to contribute significantly to its growth, with its innovative approach to combining luxury living and senior-friendly housing within the same development.

Karnataka Police Oppose Disbanding of Anti-Naxal Force

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Police in Karnataka are expressing strong opposition to the state government's decision to disband the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF), highlighting concerns that while there may be no active Naxals in Karnataka, Naxalism as an ideology is not dead. The decision was announced in the 2025 budget by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah following the surrender of the last known Maoists in the state earlier this year. On January 8, six Maoists, including four women, surrendered at a government event attended by the Chief Minister. Shortly thereafter, another Maoist also surrendered. Declaring Karnataka "Naxal-free," the government decided to dissolve the ANF. However, top police officials argue that the decision was made without consulting law enforcement agencies. A high-ranking police officer stated, "This is a wrong move. Just because there are no known Maoists now doesn't mean the movement won't resurface. We must prevent that from happening." The officer further noted that ongoing Naxal crackdowns in Chhattisgarh could potentially push Maoists southwards into Karnataka, making it essential to continue combing operations. The ANF, comprising 1,000 personnel selected from various



police wings, possesses unique skills and expertise that may be lost if the force is disbanded. Additionally, the ANF plays a crucial role in forest protection, anti-poaching operations, prevention of illegal logging, and maintaining rapport with tribal communities to gather intelligence on Maoist activity. Police officials are expected to formally recommend that the government reconsider its decision, emphasizing the need to retain the ANF's specialized skills and established networks to prevent a resurgence of Naxalism in Karnataka.

Ranya Rao Previously Smuggled 14.56 kg Gold, Claims DRI

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), investigating the gold smuggling case involving Kannada actress Ranya Rao, has alleged that she previously smuggled around 14.56 kg of gold into India, causing a customs duty loss of approximately Rs 4.45 crore. According to the DRI, Ranya Rao, with the assistance of Sahil Sakariya Jain, sold the smuggled gold in India through hawala transactions. Jain, identified as the third accused, allegedly played a key role in the smuggling syndicate by facilitating the disposal of gold and managing illicit transactions. Investigations revealed that Ranya Rao



previously smuggled gold into India on multiple occasions. One such instance

occurred on January 11, when gold worth over Rs 11.55 crore was allegedly brought in by her with Jain's assistance, resulting in a customs duty loss of Rs 4.46 crore. Ranya Rao was arrested on March 3 at Kempegowda International Airport (KIAD) in Bengaluru after DRI officials, acting on a tip-off, intercepted her upon her arrival from Dubai. She was allegedly smuggling 14.8 kilograms of gold at the time of her arrest. The DRI continues to probe the case, with Jain's arrest on Wednesday providing further insights into the smuggling network. Authorities are expected to intensify their efforts to dismantle the syndicate and recover the smuggled gold.

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7.7 Magnitude Earthquake Devastates Myanmar and Thailand

TPN Correspondent | Southeast Asia

A powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar near Mandalay on March 28, 2025, at 12:50 PM local time, causing widespread destruction across Southeast Asia. The earthquake was followed by an aftershock of 6.4 magnitude, further worsening the devastation. In Myanmar, the quake led to severe damage, including the collapse of several buildings like Mandalay University and a mosque, with numerous casualties reported. Historic temples in the ancient city of Bagan, a UNESCO World Heritage site, also suffered significant damage. The military government declared a state of emergency across six regions and initiated rescue operations, although efforts are hindered by ongoing political instability. Tremors were felt as far away as Bangkok, Thailand, where the shaking prompted evacuations and panic among residents. A 30-story government office under

construction in the Chatuchak district collapsed, resulting in at least three deaths and trapping approximately 90 workers. Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra declared the capital an emergency zone, deploying police and emergency services for immediate rescue operations. The quake also led to the temporary suspension of metro services in Bangkok and the closure of the Stock Exchange of Thailand for the day. Shaking was reported in Chiang Mai and other regions across Thailand, intensifying fears of aftershocks. The international community has responded swiftly with offers of assistance. India has already begun providing immediate aid to affected areas. Rescue operations are ongoing as authorities continue to assess the extent of the damage and provide relief to the affected populations. The full scale of the disaster remains uncertain, but the devastation caused by the powerful earthquake has left Southeast Asia reeling.

Controversy Erupts Over 4% Muslim Reservations in Karnataka

Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution are meant for the advancement of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Historically, certain Muslim communities identified as socially and educationally backward have received reservation benefits under the OBC category. In Karnataka, former Chief Minister Devaraj Urs established the LG Havanur Commission in 1977 to recommend reservations for Muslims under backward classes. Following political opposition and legal challenges, the third Backward Classes Commission led by Justice O Chinappa Reddy categorized socially and educationally backward Muslim communities under Category II-B of the state OBC list in 1994.

The Congress maintains that the latest amendment aims to provide reservations to this OBC sub-category, not based on religion but on social and educational backwardness. Congress leaders argue that the provision is consistent with previous classifications and does not violate constitutional provisions. The BJP, however, insists that the move is designed to provide religion-based reservations under the guise of an OBC category. The issue has drawn fresh political and legal scrutiny, with opposition leaders calling for a rollback of the amendment. As the controversy deepens, the Karnataka government's decision continues to stir debate on the constitutional validity of quotas based on religious identity.



MP Brijesh Chowta Urges Nitin Gadkari for Spur Roads to Pilgrimage Sites

TPN Correspondent | Dakshina Kannada

Dakshina Kannada MP Brijesh Chowta met Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi to propose the construction of spur roads aimed at improving connectivity to prominent pilgrimage sites Kukke Subrahmanya, Dharmasthala, and Kollur. Belthangady MLA Harish Poonja accompanied him during the meeting.

Chowta requested the development of two spur roads—Periyashanti-Paichar and Guruvayanakere-Bajagoli—to ensure direct travel for devotees and tourists visiting the coastal region's temples. The proposal includes upgrading the Periyashanti-Paichar road to connect NH-75 and NH-275, thereby enhancing accessibility for pilgrims traveling from Bengaluru via Shiradi Ghat and from Kerala through NH-275.

Additionally, Chowta urged Gadkari to review and approve the Guruvayanakere-Bajagoli road as a spur road connecting NH-73 and NH-169. This improvement is expected to reduce travel time for visitors to Dharmasthala and Sri Mookambika Temple in Kollur, while also easing traffic congestion on existing highways in the region.

According to Chowta, these new routes would boost temple tourism, improve local infrastructure, and provide an economic boost to the area with minimal environmental impact.

Responding positively, Gadkari assured that a feasibility study would be conducted to assess the benefits and challenges of the proposed projects. He has directed relevant authorities to take the necessary steps for further evaluation and implementation.

Shivaram Hebbar Warns of Repercussions Following Yatnal's Expulsion

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

BJP MLA Shivaram Hebbar has cautioned that the impact of Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's expulsion from the party will become apparent in the next few days. Speaking to reporters in Mundagod, Uttara Kannada district, Hebbar remarked, "I don't know why MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal was expelled. It was the party's decision. I will not comment on it. However, its impact will be known in two to three days."

The BJP Central Disciplinary Committee recently expelled Vijayapura BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal from the party for six years due to his repeated criticism of senior leaders and outspoken opposition to family politics within the BJP. The move is seen as a stern message from the high

command to curb dissent and maintain discipline among party members.

Despite the disciplinary action, some BJP leaders have expressed support for Yatnal. Hebbar's remarks are viewed as an indirect warning to the state leadership that the consequences of the expulsion may soon unfold.

Highlighting what he called selective action, Hebbar pointed out that while 18 MLAs were suspended during the assembly session, only those considered corrupt faced consequences, while senior leaders remained unaffected. Shivaram Hebbar, who represents the Yellapur constituency, expressed his support for MLA Somashekar's statement criticizing the BJP's approach, adding that only time will reveal the true impact of the decision.

C T Ravi Calls Yatnal's Removal Unfortunate, Avoids Analysis

TPN Correspondent | Chikkamagaluru

BJP MLC C T Ravi expressed his disappointment over the removal of Basanagouda Patil Yatnal from the party, describing it as unfortunate but inevitable. Speaking to the media on Thursday in Chikkamagaluru, Ravi acknowledged Yatnal's strength as a leader but maintained that no individual is bigger than the party.

"The party has come to an inevitable decision for several

reasons. If I tell the truth, people may interpret it in the way they want. If an atmosphere of everyone going together had been created, I would have been the first to be happy," Ravi stated, choosing not to elaborate on the reasons for Yatnal's removal.

Despite his reservations about the decision, Ravi emphasized the importance of unity within the party and declined to further analyze the issue.

K J George Denies Corruption Allegations in Smart Meter Tender Process

- Energy Minister K J George dismisses BJP's corruption allegations
- Claims the tender process was transparent and in line with KERC regulations
- Contract awarded to Rajshree Electricals, the lowest bidder, through a legal process

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Energy Minister K J George has rejected allegations made by the BJP and JDS regarding corruption in the smart meter tender process. Speaking at a press conference at the Vidhana Soudha, George asserted that the tender process was conducted transparently as per the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) guidelines.

He clarified that smart meters are being installed only for new and temporary connections as per KERC's orders. The tender process, initiated under

the KTPP Act, followed all required procedures, including answering queries from interested bidders during a pre-bid meeting. Eventually, the contract was awarded to Rajshree Electricals on December 23, 2024, based on the lowest bid.

George highlighted that the BJP disrupted Assembly proceedings when he tried to provide clarification, alleging that they are making false claims to mislead the public.

He further explained that the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) initiated by the Central Government was not implemented in Karnataka



to avoid burdening consumers. While other states applied bulk replacement of smart meters and adjusted costs in monthly bills, Karnataka chose to install meters only for new and temporary connections to avoid imposing costs on consumers.

Under the current scheme, customers must pay for the smart meter installation (Rs. 4,998 for single-phase meters), with BESCOM handling technical maintenance costs. George also emphasized that the tender process complied with the

Standard Bidding Document (SBD) guidelines set by the Union Ministry of Power.

Rajshree Electricals, a Class 1 Super Grade Electrical Contractor with a turnover of Rs. 354 crore, partnered with Schneider, Genus, Opus, and BCITS for smart meter manufacturing and software services.

George reiterated that the tender was legally awarded through a transparent process and accused the opposition of making baseless allegations for political gain.

Tejasvi Surya Presents Ancient Manuscript to PM Modi During Post-Wedding Visit

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and his wife Shivshree Skandaprasad visited Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, seeking his blessings following their recent marriage. During the meeting, Surya shared that the Prime Minister mentioned having seen their wedding photographs, which surprised the newlyweds.

As a special gift, Surya and his wife presented Modi with a preserved manuscript of the Sarvamula Granth, a 750-year-old work written by Shrimadhwacharya. The manuscript has been preserved using Waferfiche technology, a patented semiconductor process



involving the deposition of gold or aluminum metal on silicon wafers.

This technique allows hundreds of images to be embedded in a single wafer, making them fireproof, waterproof, and durable for nearly a thou-

sand years.

Tejasvi Surya noted that the same technology was utilized by NASA to create a time capsule during the first moon landing. The preservation effort was undertaken by Tara Prakashan, a non-governmen-

tal organization from Surya's constituency dedicated to safeguarding ancient manuscripts.

Prime Minister Modi, described as "an enthusiastic student" by Surya, asked several questions about the preservation technology and the importance of maintaining India's traditional knowledge. Surya highlighted Modi's commitment to this cause through initiatives like the Gyan Bharat Mission and related budgetary support.

Founded in 2006 by Prof. P.R. Mukund, Tara Prakashan specializes in preserving Vedic knowledge using advanced methods such as multi-spectral imaging, 3D printing, and Waferfiche technology.

Kumaraswamy Targets Congress-led Govt Over Repeated Price Hikes



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Former Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy has launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led Karnataka government, accusing it of burdening the public with repeated price hikes in essential commodities like milk and

electricity. Kumaraswamy expressed his criticism on X (formerly Twitter), alleging that the government was exploiting people under the pretense of welfare schemes.

Pointing out the frequent price hikes in Nandini milk, Kumaraswamy noted that this was the third time prices

had been increased since the current government assumed power. He detailed that milk prices were first raised by ₹3 in August 2023, followed by another ₹2 increase in June 2024. The most recent hike of ₹4 in March 2025 has left the public distressed, particularly during the festive season of Ugadi.

The former Chief Minister also highlighted the government's decision to increase electricity tariffs, imposing a 36-paise surcharge per unit. He criticized the timing of the hike, describing it as an unwanted "gift" for the people of Karnataka during the festive period. "Is this the Ugadi gift the government wishes to present to the people? Increasing prices of essential commodities like milk and electricity will only further burden the common man," Kumaraswamy tweeted.

- Three milk price hikes since 2023; latest increase by ₹4 in March 2025
- Electricity tariffs also increased with a 36-paise surcharge per unit

Kumaraswamy's remarks have ignited fresh debates about the state government's policies and their impact on ordinary citizens. Critics argue that the back-to-back price hikes on essential items could adversely affect the lower and middle-income groups, especially during a festival season when expenses are generally higher.

Political observers note that Kumaraswamy's statements are likely aimed at consolidating public sentiment against the Congress-led government, as opposition parties prepare to leverage these issues in the upcoming electoral battles.

Yatnal's Expulsion from BJP Sparks Political Speculation

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP MLA Basavanagouda Patil Yatnal, known for his outspoken remarks against BJP state president BY Vijayendra and former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, has been expelled by the BJP high command for six years. Yatnal, considered a Hindutva firebrand, now finds himself at a

political crossroads.

Yatnal has been vocal in his criticism of Vijayendra and Yediyurappa, even forming a faction to challenge Vijayendra's leadership. Despite prior warnings and notices from the BJP disciplinary committee, Yatnal continued his attacks, leading to his eventual expulsion. The party's high command deemed his actions

detrimental to the party's unity and image.

Reacting to the expulsion, Yatnal expressed disappointment but insisted he would not form a new party or join Congress.

Instead, he reiterated his commitment to bringing the BJP back to its Hindutva roots, accusing the party of straying from its original ideology.

He stated that BJP's decline in Kalyana Karnataka during the Lok Sabha elections resulted from neglect by the leadership and 'adjustment politics' within the party.

Yatnal also criticized the increasing influence of family politics within BJP, sharing a video of BJP National President J.P. Nadda denouncing dynasty politics. Highlighting the

party's struggles in Kalburgi, Raichur, Bellary, and Chikkodi, Yatnal lamented that the BJP, once known for its grassroots workers, is now mired in internal politics.

While some party members have supported Yatnal's stance, others believe his expulsion was inevitable due to his relentless attacks on party leadership. Speculation re-

mains about whether Yatnal will establish a new political platform or attempt to influence BJP's future direction from outside.

For now, Yatnal insists his focus is on realigning BJP with its foundational Hindutva principles. Whether his expulsion leads to further political shifts in Karnataka remains to be seen.

Woman’s Body Found in Suitcase, Husband Detained for Questioning

TPN CCorrespondent | Bengaluru
Bengaluru police discovered the body of a 32-year-old woman stuffed in a suitcase inside her home, leading to the detention of her husband for questioning. The deceased, identified as Gauri Anil Sambrekar alias Gauri Khedekar, was a mass media graduate. Gauri lived with her husband, Rakesh Rajendra Khedekar, 36, in a duplex house in Doddakammanahalli near Huli-

navu. The couple, originally from Maharashtra, had been married for two years and moved into their rented third-floor home in February 2025. While Rakesh worked as a project manager for a private firm, Gauri was staying at home and searching for a job. According to police reports, Rakesh left for Mumbai on Tuesday. However, on Thursday evening, he called their landlord and informed him about Gauri’s murder. The landlord immediately

alerted the police control room around 5:30 pm. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Sarah Fathima confirmed that the woman’s intact body was found stuffed inside a suitcase placed in the washroom. A forensic analysis revealed a stab injury on her body, indicating a possible violent struggle before her death. Upon receiving the landlord’s report, the Hulinavu police, along with forensic teams and Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO), reached the

crime scene and conducted a thorough investigation. They collected fingerprints and other crucial evidence before the body was sent for an autopsy. The police are now working to determine the exact circumstances of the crime, including the motive behind the murder. Authorities have detained Rakesh for questioning and are verifying his statements to establish his role, if any, in the crime. As investigations continue, officials are piecing



together the timeline of events leading up to Gauri’s death. The shocking incident has sent ripples through the community, with neighbors and acquaintances expressing their disbelief. Police officials remain at the scene, ensuring that every detail is examined as they work toward solving the case.



Four Arrested for Smuggling Exotic Wildlife

TPN CCorrespondent | Bengaluru
In a major crackdown on international wildlife smuggling, the Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) of the Customs Department at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) arrested four individuals on Wednesday for attempting to smuggle exotic birds, reptiles, and mammals into India. Suspects have been identified as Manoj Kumar Rengaraj, Jayaraman Ramaraj, Anandan Kumaravel, and Khamar Taj. Officials revealed that Manoj Kumar and Jayaraman are residents of Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, while Anandan hails from Bengaluru’s J. P. Nagar, and Khamar Taj is from Devanahalli. Investigators determined that the four were acting as couriers, or “mules,” and were paid between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000 per trip. In addition to the payment, they were provided with free food and accommodation during their travel. The smuggled animals were concealed inside check-in baggage, care-

fully packed in cages to avoid detection. The accused were reportedly instructed to hand over the baggage to handlers waiting outside the airport, with a prearranged code word serving as confirmation for the exchange. Officials suspect the operation to be part of a larger smuggling network engaged in illegal wildlife trade. Authorities are now investigating the syndicate behind the operation and are working to identify the handlers and end recipients of the smuggled animals. Wildlife trafficking has been a growing concern in India, with exotic species being smuggled for illegal pet trade, medicinal use, and breeding purposes. This latest bust underscores the increasing vigilance of Indian authorities against wildlife crime. Officials have warned that strict action will be taken against those involved in such activities, as smuggling poses a serious threat to biodiversity and violates both Indian and international laws protecting endangered species.

TPN CCorrespondent | Devanahalli
Devanahalli, a rapidly developing area in Bengaluru, is transforming into a major real estate and investment hotspot. With significant infrastructure projects such as the Kempegowda International Airport, the Satellite Town Ring Road (STRR), and proposed IT and business parks, experts believe it has the potential to become Bengaluru’s version of Gurugram. Once a quiet suburban locality, Devanahalli has witnessed rapid urbanization over the past 15 years, especially after the establishment of the international airport. The Karnataka government is actively working to support this transformation while balancing the interests of local farmers, who are parting with their land for industrial and commercial

Bengaluru’s Emerging Real Estate and Business Hub



development. The expansion of Devanahalli is being closely monitored by investors and real estate developers. The

connectivity improvements brought by the STRR and other road networks are making the area more accessible, enhancing

its appeal for residential and commercial projects. Additionally, proposed IT parks and business hubs are expected to drive employment opportunities, attracting professionals and businesses to the region. While the potential for Devanahalli to become Bengaluru’s Gurugram is high, experts note that sustained infrastructure growth, job creation, and investor confidence will be key to its long-term success. If these factors align, Devanahalli could emerge as a major business and residential destination, mirroring the rapid growth and transformation seen in Gurugram.

How to Book a Theatre for Your Play in Bengaluru

TPN CCorrespondent | Bengaluru
Bengaluru has a thriving theatre scene with a mix of old and new auditoriums that cater to various performances. Whether you’re a theatre enthusiast or an aspiring playwright, several venues in the city offer spaces for staging plays. Here’s a look at some of the most sought-after theatres and how to book them. Ranga Shankara, located in J P Nagar, is one of Bengaluru’s most renowned theatre venues. Established in 2004, it is known for its commitment to theatre arts. According to Arundhati Nag, the managing trustee and artistic advisor, the auditorium features a 300-seat capacity with a thrust stage and arena-style seating. It hosts approximately 400 shows annually, covering 21 different languages. Kannada plays dominate the programming, comprising 70%

of the performances, followed by Hindi, English, and other languages. Booking slots open once every three months. The current rental fee is ₹2,500 per day for one show and ₹5,000 for two shows. From April 1, an additional 20% of the ticket price will be charged, an increase from the previous 10%. Another popular venue is Jagriti Theatre in Whitefield. It features a modern black-box theatre with a seating capacity of 200. Known for its intimate setting, Jagriti Theatre is ideal for experimental plays and independent productions. It provides a space that fosters creative storytelling and innovative performances. For those seeking a more flexible venue, Medai – The Stage Bengaluru in Koramangala offers a versatile performance space. Its movable seating arrangements make it ideal for interactive theatre and alter-



native performance formats. Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Malleshwaram is an excellent choice for large-scale productions. With a seating capacity of 1,000, this violin-shaped auditorium is a prominent landmark in Bengaluru’s cultural landscape. It hosts theatre productions, music concerts, and other performing arts events.

Alliance Française in Vasanth Nagar is another well-known venue with a seating capacity of around 180. It frequently hosts theatre performances, poetry readings, and cultural workshops. These theatre spaces provide valuable opportunities for artists and theatre lovers to showcase their talent in Bengaluru’s vibrant arts scene.

Bengaluru’s Sari-Clad Saxophonist Defies Norms



TPN CCorrespondent | Bengaluru
Bengaluru’s music scene has been captivated by Subbalaxmi, a sari-clad saxophonist who has become an internet sensation. A recent viral video on social media featured her performing at a resto-bar, drawing admiration from netizens for her unique blend of traditional attire and contemporary music. She is one of the few professional female saxophonists in India, breaking stereotypes with her powerful performances. Subbalaxmi hails from Mysuru and comes from a family of musicians. Her grandfather, Rajappa, was a court musician in the erstwhile Mysore kingdom, and her father, M. R. Sainath, is a renowned percussionist who worked with All India Radio. Despite growing

up in a musical household, her journey to mastering the saxophone was anything but conventional. Her love for the saxophone began when she watched her father perform with legendary saxophonist Kadri Gopinath in Mangaluru. Although she had been training in classical vocal music from the age of five, she was drawn to the saxophone’s rich, deep tones. When her parents asked her at 13 which instrument she wanted to learn, her response shocked them. The saxophone is often considered a “male instrument” due to its size and the physical strength required to play it. Her parents encouraged her to choose a simpler instrument, but she remained determined. Under the guidance of Kadri Gopi-

nath, she mastered the saxophone. Her sister, Lavanya, was also inspired to take up the instrument. Today, Subbalaxmi plays a wide range of genres, from Karnatik classical to jazz and pop. In 2023, she achieved a Guinness World Record for the longest saxophone-playing marathon, performing continuously for 26 hours and 23 minutes. Dedicated to her craft, she practices at least four hours a day, incorporating pranayama and breathing exercises to strengthen her core. She hopes to inspire more women to take up the saxophone, as most of her students so far have been male, with only a few foreign female students. She aspires to see more Indian girls embrace the instrument and make their mark in the field of music.

Karnataka Government Announces Hike in Nandini Milk and Curd Prices by ₹4 per Litre

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Consumers in Karnataka will have to pay more for their daily milk supply as the State government has approved a price hike for the Karnataka Milk Federation's (KMF) Nandini brand of milk and curd. Effective from April 1, the cost will increase by ₹4 per litre. The decision was taken by the Karnataka Cabinet on March 27, following demands from dairy farmers citing rising production costs. The cost of fodder and cattle feed has surged by 35% to 40%, leading to financial strain on dairy farmers. To support them, the government sanctioned the price revision, ensuring that farmers receive better compensation for their produce. This is not the first time the KMF has adjusted milk prices. In 2024, the Fed-

eration had raised the price by ₹2 per packet while simultaneously increasing the quantity per packet by 50 ml. However, with the latest hike, milk and curd prices are expected to rise across the state, impacting households, tea vendors, and the food industry. KMF, the apex dairy cooperative in Karnataka, supplies milk under the widely consumed Nandini brand. The organization plays a crucial role in the state's dairy sector, benefiting lakhs of dairy farmers. The government's move to increase prices aims to balance the interests of consumers and farmers while addressing the challenges posed by inflation in the dairy industry. The price revision comes at a time when the cost of living has been steadily rising. While the decision is expected to ease financial pressure on dairy farmers,

it is likely to burden consumers who rely on Nandini milk and curd for their daily needs. The hike may also influence prices in allied sectors, including bakery products, tea stalls, and restaurants that depend on dairy products. Despite the price increase, KMF officials have assured that the quality and supply of milk will remain unaffected. They emphasized that the hike is necessary to sustain the dairy industry and ensure fair earnings for farmers. With the revised pricing set to take effect from April 1, Karnataka's residents will need to adjust their budgets accordingly. The government has urged consumers to understand the necessity of the price hike and support the state's dairy sector in its efforts to remain sustainable amid rising production costs.



Detained Punjab farmer leaders Pandher, Kohar released

TPN Correspondent | Chandigarh

Farmer leaders Sarwan Singh Pandher, Abhimanyu Kohar, and Kaka Singh Kotra, who were detained during a police crackdown following a meeting with a central delegation, were released on Friday, March 28, 2025.

Pandher, a leader of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, was freed from Muktsar Jail, while Kohar, Kotra, and other farmer leaders were released from Patiala Central Jail. The release came after a significant crackdown by the Punjab Police on March 19, which followed a meeting between farmer leaders and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Chandigarh.

In a video message, Pandher condemned the Punjab Police's actions against the protesting farmers who had been camped at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points for over a year. Their primary demand remains a legal guarantee for a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops. Pandher criticized the government's decision to remove protestors and dis-



mantle temporary structures set up at the border points.

The clash began when farmer leaders were detained while returning from the meeting, which aimed to address their ongoing demands. As they entered Mohali, they encountered heavy barricading, leading to their detention. This move was met with widespread condemnation from protesting farmers, who felt the government was disregarding their concerns.

The police action also involved evicting farmers and reopening major highways, including the Shambhu-Ambala

and Sangrur-Jind routes, that had been blocked as part of the farmers' protest. These measures have deepened the divide between farmer groups and the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, with protestors accusing both the AAP and BJP of favoring corporate interests over the welfare of farmers.

Despite the crackdown, the farmer leaders, still determined, have vowed to continue their struggle for the MSP guarantee and other demands. The situation remains tense, with protests likely to persist across the region as farmers refuse to back down.

Actor Prabhu moves Madras HC

To lift attachment of late father Sivaji Ganesan's bungalow

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Actor G. Prabhu, the younger son of legendary thespian 'Sivaji' Ganesan, has filed an application before the Madras High Court requesting the lifting of an order that attached part of his family property, a bungalow named 'Annai Illam' in T. Nagar, Chennai. The attachment order was issued on February 10, 2025, in connection with a financial dispute involving his elder brother, G. Ramkumar, and the latter's son, R.G. Dushshyanth.

Prabhu's plea, which is scheduled for hearing on April 3, 2025, is expected to be represented by senior counsel P.R. Raman, assisted by advocate Sandesh Saravanan. The actor asserts that he is the sole owner of the property following a mutual agreement with his siblings. He claims the attachment order is unjustified, as his elder brother, Ramkumar, has no stake in the property.

The property dispute arose during a case involv-



ing a finance company, which claimed that Ramkumar had a one-fourth share in the bungalow. However, Prabhu clarified in his application that the bungalow was purchased by his father, Sivaji Ganesan, in 1959. Following the actor's death in 2001, Ganesan's unregistered will from 1999 specifically bequeathed the property to G. Prabhu.

After the passing of Prabhu's mother, Kamala Ganesan, in 2007, disputes surfaced among the family over the division of properties, leading to a partition suit filed by his sisters in 2021. However, a joint com-

promise memorandum was signed by the siblings in November 2023, granting Prabhu ownership of 'Annai Illam.' As part of the agreement, Prabhu and his brother paid ₹25 lakh each to their sisters, fulfilling the obligations by April 2024.

Prabhu argues that since the release deed was executed in his favor in July 2024, making him the absolute owner of the property, the attachment order should be lifted. He also requested the court to communicate the change to the Sub Registrar to update the property's encumbrance certificate accordingly.

Three Nepalese Killed, Four Injured in SUV Accident in UP's Balrampur

TPN Correspondent | Balrampur (UP)

Balrampur (UP), March 28, 2025: A tragic road accident in Balrampur has claimed the lives of three Nepalese citizens and left four others critically injured. The accident occurred late Thursday evening when an SUV, en route to Varanasi, overturned while attempting to avoid a cyclist. The incident took place in the Jarwa police station area of Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh.

According to local authorities, the vehicle, carrying a total of 10 people, including the driver, was traveling from Dang district in Nepal.

The driver reportedly lost control of the SUV while trying to avoid a cyclist near Nagai Basaidih village. The vehicle veered off the road and flipped over, resulting in the immediate death of 70-year-old Praveer Khatri.

In addition to Khatri's death, two other passengers—Yuvraj, aged 38, and Dhanbali, aged 80—succumbed to their injuries while receiving treatment



at a nearby hospital. Four other passengers sustained serious injuries and are in critical condition. They have been rushed to Bahraich District Hospital for urgent medical care.

Tulsipur Circle Officer Brij Nandan Rai confirmed the details of the accident and stated that the injured are currently under medical supervision. The police have taken the necessary steps, including sending the bodies for post-mortem and launching an investigation into the cause of the accident.

Local authorities are working to gather more information regarding the incident, including the condition of the cyclist involved, who is believed to have been the catalyst for the driver's attempt to swerve and avoid a collision.

This tragic incident has shocked both the local community and the Nepalese citizens involved, with many expressing their condolences for the victims. The authorities have promised a thorough investigation to ensure justice is served.

HIV Cases Rise in Kerala's Malappuram Due to Shared Syringes Among Drug Users

TPN Correspondent | Malappuram

Health officials in Kerala's Malappuram district have reported a concerning rise in HIV cases, with ten people testing positive in the past two months. Authorities attribute the outbreak to the sharing of syringes among drug users, raising fears of further spread.

The cases were detected during routine inspections as part of the Kerala government's ongoing anti-drug campaign. The Kerala AIDS Control Society's (KACS) screenings of high-risk groups, including drug users and sex workers, uncovered the alarming trend. Officials revealed that some of those infected are migrant workers, highlighting the potential for wider transmission.

Malappuram District Medical Officer, Dr. R Renuka, warned of a possible surge in cases due to the increased vulnerability of drug users. "As part of high-risk category checks, we tested an injectable drug user who was found to be



HIV-positive. We then traced and tested others with whom he had shared needles, leading to the identification of ten HIV-positive cases in the last two months," she explained.

Health authorities are intensifying efforts to curb the spread of the virus by increasing awareness and promoting harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange programs and safe injection practices. They also urge drug users to seek medical assistance and participate in HIV screening programs to prevent further transmission.

Officials stress the impor-

tance of early detection and treatment to control the epidemic.

Public health campaigns are being strengthened to educate communities about the risks of sharing syringes and the importance of preventive measures.

With fears of more undetected cases, the Kerala health department continues to monitor high-risk groups closely, urging individuals to get tested and seek timely medical intervention. Authorities call for collective action to prevent further spread and protect public health in the region.

From Asking for Urdu Preference to Mocking Telugu



TPN | G Avinash

Hyderabad, March 29: The hypocrisy of AIMIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi is once again on full display. Known for his provocative speeches and controversial remarks, Owaisi has now turned to mocking Telangana Minister Seethakka for speaking in her mother tongue, Telugu. His recent comments questioning her lack of Urdu and English proficiency show not only his arrogance but also his disregard for the very state he operates in.

For decades, Owaisi and his party have demanded preferential treatment for Urdu, lobbying successive governments to accommodate their language preferences. Yet, despite his family's long political presence in Hyderabad, Owaisi himself has failed to embrace Telugu—the language of the land. His inability (or refusal) to learn Telugu, while expecting others to conform to his linguistic preferences, exposes his political opportunism.

There is nothing wrong with Seethakka speaking in Telugu. As an elected leader in Telangana, she naturally communicates in her native language. The real question is—why hasn't Owaisi bothered to learn Telugu despite being in Hyderabad for generations? The answer is clear: political appeasement by successive governments has allowed him to continue with his Urdu-centric approach without any accountability.

This is not the first time Owaisi has stirred controversy with his statements. His past speeches have been infamous for their communal undertones and inflammatory rhetoric. Time and again, he has played divisive politics, using religion and language as tools to polarize the electorate. His latest jibe at a Telugu-speaking minister further cements his double standards—demanding Urdu preference on one hand while mocking those who speak Telugu in a Telugu-speaking state.

If Owaisi truly believes in representing Telangana, he should have learned Telugu by now. His deliberate ignorance of the state's language, coupled with his mockery of those who embrace it, speaks volumes about his priorities. Leaders like him, who thrive on divisive politics, should be questioned for their hypocrisy rather than entertained with continued political indulgence.

India's \$2.7 Billion Electronics Boost

A Step Towards Self-Reliance or a Long Road Ahead?

THE POINT DESK

The Indian government's latest approval of a \$2.7 billion (₹22,919 crore) incentive plan to boost local manufacturing of electronic components marks another ambitious step toward self-reliance in the tech sector. With a vision to attract \$7 billion in investments and create over 91,600 jobs in six years, this move is part of India's broader goal of establishing a \$500 billion electronics economy by 2030. While the plan has been welcomed by industry leaders, the real challenge lies in its execution and ensuring that India can move beyond assembly to high-value manufacturing.

Breaking Dependency

For years, India has remained dependent on imports for key electronic components such as semiconductor chips, display modules, and lithium-ion battery cells. While the country has made significant progress in assembling smartphones and electronic gadgets, the lack of a strong component ecosystem has limited value addition within the domestic market.

Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw acknowledged this gap, stating that India has achieved only 20% value addition in electronics manufacturing over the past decade. The new scheme, aimed at manufacturing both active and passive components, is expected to double this value in the next five years. The government's push aligns with its broader semiconductor mission, which aims to strengthen local production of high-end electronic components.

Key Features of the Incentive Plan

The scheme will provide subsidies of up to 50% for domestic and foreign companies setting up local component manufacturing facilities. The primary focus areas include:

- **Sub-assembly of display and camera modules**
- **Printed circuit boards (PCBs)**
- **Lithium-ion battery cells**
- **Enclosures for mobile and electronics hardware**

Additionally, incentives will also cover the localization of capital goods and other components used in the manufacturing process. However, a senior government official clarified that the



support for these will be below 50% of the company's capital expenditure. The government is also working on reforms in labor laws, customs policies, and taxation to create a more conducive environment for electronic manufacturers.

A Positive Move for Growth

Industry leaders have responded positively to the initiative. Josh Foulger, president of electronics at Zetwerk, emphasized the importance of building a strong component ecosystem in India, stating that his company is actively seeking partnerships to contribute to this effort.

Ajai Chowdhry, co-founder of HCL Technologies and chairman of Epic Foundation, noted that this move will enable "higher value addition in the country" and attract more investment in system products. He also highlighted the need for a "Design in India" scheme for chips and systems, which would further strengthen India's position in the global electronics industry.

Can India Compete with China and Taiwan?

While the approval of this incentive plan is a significant move, it is only the first step in a long journey. China and Taiwan dominate the global electronics supply chain, having spent decades developing their manufacturing ecosystems. Simply offering incentives may not be enough to attract global players unless India can provide a seamless and competitive environment.

Some key challenges that India will need to address include:

- **High Cost of Production – De-**

- spite incentives, manufacturing costs in India remain higher than in China due to infrastructure gaps and expensive logistics.**
- **Lack of Skilled Workforce – The electronics sector requires highly specialized skills, and India will need a focused strategy to train and develop a skilled workforce.**
- **Delayed Implementation of Previous Schemes – India's first semiconductor incentive scheme saw multiple delays, raising concerns about how efficiently the new scheme will be executed.**
- **Uncertain Global Demand – The global electronics market is facing fluctuations, and India must ensure steady demand to sustain long-term investment in the sector.**

Will This Move Help India Achieve Self-Sufficiency?

The government's larger vision of a \$500 billion electronics economy by 2030 depends on how well India can implement its incentive schemes and attract major investments. The country already manufactures \$120 billion worth of electronics, but to scale up, it will require a strong policy framework, industry collaboration, and consistent government support.

If implemented effectively, this initiative could position India as a key player in the global electronics supply chain, reducing dependency on imports and creating a robust domestic manufacturing ecosystem. However, it will take sustained efforts and strong execution to turn this vision into reality.

Is US-Canada Friendship Damaged Beyond Repair?

THE POINT DESK

The long-standing partnership between the United States and Canada is facing an unprecedented crisis. With US President Donald Trump's recent decision to impose a 25% tariff on imported vehicles and auto parts, tensions have escalated between the two North American allies. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's response has made it clear: the "old relationship" with the US is over. As economic and military ties between the two nations deteriorate, a critical question arises—has the US-Canada relationship been damaged beyond repair?

Trump's Trade War Sparks Outrage

On March 27, President Trump announced steep tariffs on imported automobiles and parts, set to take effect from April 3, 2025. The move has sparked outrage among key US trading partners, including Canada, Germany, the European Union, and Japan, all of whom are now considering retaliatory measures.

Trump has even warned that if the EU and Canada cooperate in opposing these tariffs, the US could impose "far larger" economic actions against them.

For Canada, this is not just another trade dispute. The auto industry is a critical part of the Canadian economy, employing thousands of workers. By imposing tariffs, Trump has directly challenged Canada's economic stability.



In response, PM Mark Carney called the tariffs a "direct attack" on Canadian workers and pledged immediate retaliation through trade measures designed to hurt the US while minimizing damage to Canada.

Mark Carney Declares the 'Old Relationship' is Over

In a sharp departure from the usual diplomatic tone between Canada and the US, PM Mark Carney did not hold back in his criticism of the Trump administration. His statement—"It is clear that the United States is no longer a reliable partner"—marked a turning point in how Canada views its long-time ally.

Carney made it clear that Canada could no longer depend on the US as it once

did. He emphasized the need to "dramatically reduce reliance on the United States" and seek new trade relationships. This marks a significant shift from Canada's traditional approach, which has long been rooted in deep economic and security cooperation with its southern neighbor.

Carney also took issue with Trump's past rhetoric about Canada. During his 2024 re-election campaign, Trump repeatedly referred to then-PM Justin Trudeau as "Governor Trudeau" and even entertained speculation about annexing Canada as the "51st state" of the US. Such remarks were dismissed as campaign rhetoric at the time, but in light of the tariff war and diplomatic tensions, they have taken on a more serious tone.

Is the US-Canada Relationship Truly Beyond Repair?

While Mark Carney has declared that there is "no turning back," he has not entirely ruled out restoring some level of trust with the US. However, he made it clear that any future partnership would be vastly different from the past. The days of deep economic integration and unquestioned military cooperation between the two countries appear to be over.

Carney also emphasized that his government will fight back with "retaliatory trade actions of our own that will have maximum impact in the United States and minimum impacts here in Canada." This signals a more aggressive stance than previous Canadian administrations, which have often sought to negotiate rather than retaliate against US trade actions.

How Americans View Canada Amid Rising Tensions

The strained relationship between the two nations is also reflected in shifting public opinion. According to a recent Associated Press-NORC poll conducted between March 20-24, 2025, fewer Americans now see Canada as a close ally compared to previous years.

Before Trump's second term, 70% of Democrats viewed Canada as a close ally. Now, that number has dropped to just 50%. Across all political groups, only 50% of Americans still consider Canada

a close ally, compared to 60% in 2023. Instead, three in 10 respondents now view Canada as merely "friendly but not a close ally," while two in 10 describe the relationship as "not friendly but not enemies."

These shifts highlight a significant deterioration in the US-Canada friendship. While most Americans do not see Canada as an outright adversary, the perception of the once-strong alliance is weakening.

What's Next for US-Canada Relations?

The coming months will be crucial in determining the future of US-Canada relations. Mark Carney has vowed to hold direct talks with President Trump in an attempt to address the crisis. However, given Trump's hardline stance on trade and national interests, it remains unclear whether diplomacy will be enough to mend the fractured relationship.

If Canada moves forward with its plans to pivot trade relationships away from the US, the long-term consequences could be profound. A weakened North American trade bloc could give economic competitors like China and the EU an advantage.

For now, what is certain is that the trust between the US and Canada has been severely damaged. Whether it can be fully restored—or whether this marks the beginning of a permanent separation—remains to be seen.

India Ready to Assist Myanmar & Thailand After Devastating Earthquake

- India offers assistance to Myanmar & Thailand
- PM Modi expresses deep concern
- 7.7 magnitude earthquake strikes Myanmar
- Tremors felt in Indian cities
- Skyscraper collapses, workers trapped

India has extended its support to Myanmar and Thailand following a powerful earthquake that struck both countries, leaving dozens dead and causing severe destruction. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep concern over the situation and assured that India is ready to provide all possible assistance to the affected nations. Taking to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), PM Modi conveyed his sympathies and pledged India's support in the aftermath of the disaster. "Concerned by the situation in the wake of the earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand. Praying for the safety and well-being of everyone. India stands ready to offer all possible assistance. In this regard, I have asked our authorities to be on standby. Also asked the MEA to remain in touch with the Governments of Myanmar and Thailand," he posted.



The earthquake, measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale, struck central Myanmar at approximately 12:50 PM local time on Friday. The epicenter was located 16 kilometers northwest of Sagaing at a depth of 10 kilometers, according to the United States Geological

Survey (USGS). The quake was followed by a significant aftershock of 6.8 magnitude. The tremors were strong enough to be felt in various parts of India, including Kolkata and Imphal, triggering concerns among residents. While reports of casualties continue to emerge, no tsunami warning has

been issued so far. Rescue and relief operations are currently underway in the affected regions as authorities assess the full extent of the damage. One of the most shocking visuals from the disaster was a viral video showing an under-construction skyscraper in Bangkok's Chatuchak neighborhood collapsing due to the tremors. Reports indicate that at least 43 workers are trapped under the debris, with rescue teams racing against time to locate survivors. India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has been directed to stay in close contact with both Myanmar and Thailand to coordinate relief efforts. Indian disaster response teams and humanitarian aid are expected to be mobilized as needed to assist in rescue and recovery operations. The earthquake serves as a grim reminder of the region's vulnerability to seismic activity. As affected communities grapple with the devastation, international support and swift response efforts remain crucial in mitigating the crisis. India's proactive stance underscores its commitment to aiding its neighbors in times of need.



"Jaishankar Slams Pakistan for Minority Persecution"

- India tracks minority treatment closely.
- Jaishankar highlights Pakistan's human rights abuses.
- February saw multiple Hindu persecution cases.
- Sikh community also faced threats.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the Lok Sabha on Friday, highlighting the "crimes and atrocities against minorities" in Pakistan. He emphasized that India closely monitors the treatment of minorities in the neighboring country and consistently raises concerns on international platforms, including the United Nations. Jaishankar reaffirmed India's stance at the UN, where Pakistan has been criticized for its human rights violations and persecution of minorities. He stated that India remains vigilant and continues to bring attention to these issues at global forums. Citing specific incidents, the minister detailed several cases of atrocities that took place in February. "We follow very closely and track the treatment of minorities in Pakistan. In February alone, there were ten cases of atrocities against the Hindu community—seven involving abduction and forced conversion, two related to abduction, and one incident where police took action against students celebrating Holi," Jaishankar informed the Parliament. The minister also highlighted attacks against the Sikh community in Pakistan. "There were three incidents related to the Sikh community. In one case, a Sikh family was attacked. In another, a Sikh family was threatened over the reopening of an old Gurudwara. Additionally, there was an abduction and forced conversion case involving a Sikh girl," he said. Jaishankar's remarks reinforced India's commitment to advocating for the rights of persecuted minorities in Pakistan. He stressed that India would continue to raise these concerns at the highest levels to ensure that such human rights violations do not go unnoticed. The minister's statement comes amid ongoing diplomatic tensions between the two nations, with India frequently calling out Pakistan on international platforms for its record on minority rights and religious freedom. As global attention remains on human rights, Jaishankar's address in Parliament signals India's firm stance on holding Pakistan accountable for its treatment of religious minorities. India's consistent efforts to highlight these issues at the UN and other international bodies underscore its commitment to protecting human rights and ensuring that the concerns of persecuted communities are addressed on the global stage.

Electoral Battle in 2026 Tamil Nadu Elections Will Be Between TVK and DMK

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president and actor Vijay has declared that the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections will be a direct contest between his party and the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Speaking at TVK's first general council meeting at Thiruvanniyur in Chennai on Friday, Vijay expressed confidence in his party's ability to emerge as a strong political force in the State. Vijay alleged that the ruling DMK government has been creating obstacles for TVK over the past year, making it difficult to organize conferences, meetings, and outreach programs. He claimed that such disruptions were deliberate attempts to hinder TVK's growth and prevent it from reaching the masses. Despite these challenges, he assured his supporters that his party remained committed to its mission and would not succumb to political pressure. Addressing thousands of party members gathered at the event, Vijay reiterated that TVK represents a new era of politics in Tamil Nadu. He



positioned the party as a viable alternative to traditional political forces, stating that the people of the State are looking for change. Vijay emphasized that TVK is not centered around any one individual but is a collective movement driven by the aspirations of the people. He urged party workers to stay united and work tirelessly at the grassroots level to strengthen

TVK's presence across Tamil Nadu. Highlighting the party's focus on governance, development, and welfare, Vijay assured that if TVK is elected to power, his government would prioritize key issues such as education, employment, social justice, and economic growth. He also dismissed claims that TVK was a temporary political experiment, stating that

it was founded on principles of transparency, equality, and justice. Concluding his speech, Vijay called upon the people of Tamil Nadu to support TVK in its political journey. He asserted that the 2026 elections would mark the beginning of a new chapter in the State's politics, with TVK leading the way towards a progressive and inclusive future.

J&K Seeks Extension for Special Cells



The Jammu and Kashmir government has urged the National Commission for Women (NCW) to extend funding for its special cells supporting domestic violence victims for at least another year. These special cells, established in police stations across J&K under the initiative Violence-Free Home – A Woman's Right, were launched in 2021 to provide crucial psycho-social-legal support to women facing domestic violence. The initiative is a joint effort involving the NCW, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the J&K Police, and the Social Welfare Department. However, the project was initially set up for a limited period, with funding scheduled to end on March 31, 2025, unless an extension is granted. The J&K Social Welfare Minister, Sakina

Itoo, confirmed that the government has formally requested NCW to extend the project, emphasizing the positive impact these cells have had on women's well-being. "We have written to NCW, requesting them to extend the project by one more year as it would further improve the condition of women. However, even if the project is discontinued, the UT has staff centers operating in every district, which will continue to provide support," said Itoo. Since its establishment in 2021, the initiative has assisted nearly 10,000 women, with each special cell comprising two trained social workers to provide necessary guidance and intervention. The cells have been instrumental in offering women a safe space to seek help against domestic abuse and legal guidance to navigate their challenges. Despite the government's plea, sources within NCW claim that the J&K administration has been reluctant to take over the cells, even though they were aware that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was valid only until March 31. The original plan was for NCW to initiate and support the project before the J&K government assumed responsibility.

Centre Approves 2% Hike in Dearness Allowance for Government Employees

The Union Cabinet has approved a 2% increase in the dearness allowance (DA) for central government employees, bringing it up from 53% to 55% of basic pay. This move aims to provide relief against inflation and comes ahead of the 8th Pay Commission's implementation. In the last revision, DA was raised by 3% in October 2024, increasing it to 53% of basic pay. The new hike will further enhance government employees' salaries, helping them manage rising costs. DA is a critical component of salary adjustments for government staff, designed to counteract the impact of inflation. The Centre approved the 8th Pay Commission in January 2025 to revise wages and allowances for central government employees. The commission's formal constitution, including the appointment of a chairman and at least two members, is expected soon. While



DA and Dearness Relief (DR) are revised biannually, this is likely the final revision before the commission starts consultations with various stakeholders. Employee forums have advocated merging DA and DR with the basic salary before the next Pay Commission report is implemented. Historically, the 5th Pay Commission man-

dated merging DA with basic pay once it exceeded 50%. However, while the government integrated DA with basic pay in 2004, this practice was discontinued under the 6th and 7th Pay Commissions. The 8th Pay Commission is expected to introduce significant changes in salary structures, benefits, and allowances for government employees. The latest DA hike ensures financial relief for employees while they await broader salary reforms under the new pay commission. The upcoming deliberations will determine how future revisions and pay structures are formulated to benefit employees. With the rising cost of living, these adjustments play a vital role in maintaining the financial well-being of government workers. The DA increase reflects the government's commitment to supporting its employees in managing economic challenges effectively.

Trump Hosts Iftar Dinner At White House, Thanks Muslims For Support



TPN Correspondent | New York

US President Donald Trump hosted the annual Iftar dinner at the White House on Thursday, marking a significant moment during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. In his remarks, Trump emphasized his administration's ongoing commitment to the Muslim community and its efforts to foster peace in the Middle East.

During the event, attended by Muslim leaders, diplomats, and government officials, Trump began by extending a warm "Ramadan Mubarak" to Muslim attendees. He expressed gratitude to the Muslim-American community for their support in the 2024 presidential election, saying, "The Muslim community was there for us in November — and while I'm president, I'm going to be there for you."

Trump went on to highlight the administration's diplomatic efforts, particularly in relation to the Middle East, underscoring the importance of the Abraham Accords. These agreements, which were brokered during his presidency, aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and several Arab nations. "My administration is engaged in relentless diplomacy to forge a lasting peace in the Middle East, building on the historic Abraham Accords," Trump said, adding that while the agreements had been signed, his administration would work to "fill them out" and continue building on their success. He criticized the Biden administration, claiming that little had been done to further the agreements.

Trump also remarked on the ongoing conflict in Gaza, where violence continues between Israel and Hamas. He expressed a desire for peace for all nations and reiterated the sacred nature of Ramadan for Muslims, who fast and pray during the month. In a final reflection, Trump reaffirmed the importance of peace and cooperation, stressing that his administration remains committed to fulfilling its promises to the Muslim community, both in the US and abroad. The Iftar dinner at the White House has become an annual tradition for Trump, having first hosted such an event in 2018.

China's Door Will 'Open Wider And Wider', Xi Tells Foreign Executives



TPN Correspondent | Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping reaffirmed China's commitment to opening its doors wider to foreign businesses, emphasizing that the country is focused on advancing reform and economic openness. Speaking at a meeting with international executives in Beijing, including hedge fund tycoon Ray Dalio and Samsung Electronics chief Lee Jae-yong, Xi assured attendees that China would continue to push forward with its economic opening. "China is firmly committed to advancing reform and opening up. The door of opening up will only open wider and wider," Xi told the group of executives. His remarks come as China seeks to bolster foreign investments amid growing tensions with the United States, which has imposed significant tariffs on Chinese goods as part of an ongoing trade war.

Xi highlighted the country's focus on "high-quality development" while accelerating green, digital, and intelligent transformations. He emphasized China's strong industrial support capacity, which he believes will benefit foreign enterprises looking to tap into the growing Chinese market. "Foreign enterprises in China can develop their advantages and capabilities and gain an advantage in global competition," Xi said, signaling that China is open to foreign investment and innovation in sectors like technology and manufacturing.

PM Modi to Attend BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, Followed by Sri Lanka Visit



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the 6th BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) summit in Bangkok on April 3-4, 2025, as announced by the Ministry of Exter-

- **Key focus on security, trade, investment, and connectivity.**
- **PM to visit Sri Lanka from April 4-6 for bilateral talks.**
- **Visit aligns with India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies.**

nal Affairs on Friday. This summit will be the first in-person meeting of BIMSTEC leaders post-pandemic and the first since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, which has plunged the country into internal conflict.

The summit, hosted by Thailand, will see Prime Minister Modi's third visit to the country. BIMSTEC, comprising India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan, is expected to discuss strategies to enhance cooperation in sectors like security, trade, investment, and connectivity. Discussions will also focus on institutional and capacity-building measures to strengthen regional collaboration within the BIMSTEC framework.

Following the Bangkok summit, PM Modi will travel to Sri Lanka for a state visit from April 4 to 6. During his visit, he will meet with top Sri Lankan leadership, including President Anura Kumara Disanayaka, to review the progress made in areas of bilateral cooperation outlined in the joint vision for fostering

partnerships between the two nations.

The Prime Minister's visit to Thailand and Sri Lanka highlights India's commitment to its 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies, along with the newly introduced 'MAHASAGAR' vision—Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. This vision aims to strengthen India's ties with the Global South, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

PM Modi's agenda also includes a meeting with Thai Prime Minister on April 3 to discuss strengthening the partnership between India and Thailand, two maritime neighbors with shared cultural, linguistic, and religious ties. Additionally, during his Sri Lanka visit, the Prime Minister will inaugurate development projects funded by India in Anuradhapura, further reinforcing bilateral cooperation.

The tour underscores India's dedication to regional cooperation and its leadership role in fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

7.7 Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Myanmar, Tremors Felt Across Southeast Asia

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

A powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck near the city of Sagaing, Myanmar, on Friday afternoon, causing widespread devastation and leaving at least 20 people dead, including 10 who died when a mosque collapsed in Mandalay during prayers. The earthquake's epicenter was approximately 260km from the capital Naypyidaw, where a 1000-bed hospital is feared to be a "mass casualty area," according to AFP. Though the number of fatalities at the hospital remains unconfirmed, scenes outside the building showed injured individuals receiving treatment on the streets, with family members offering comfort.

The quake also caused significant damage in other parts of Myanmar, including the destruction of residential buildings in Mandalay, the collapse of an old bridge over the Irrawaddy River, and the demolition of a monastery near the Thai border. In Mandalay, tremors led to further casualties, and reports suggest that more people may be trapped under the rubble.

The tremors were felt as far as northern Thailand, where buildings swayed, and metro services in Bangkok were temporarily suspended. Videos posted on social me-



dia showed people fleeing buildings in panic, and Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra declared a state of emergency in the capital. Additionally, in Bangkok's Chatuchak district, a 30-floor under-construction building collapsed, trapping 43 people. The building, intended for government offices, was reduced to rubble, and two deaths have been reported so far.

China's Yunnan province also felt the tremors, with the China Earthquake Networks

Center reporting a magnitude of 7.9. Mild tremors were also recorded in Kolkata, parts of Manipur, and Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Residents of Chiang Mai in Thailand recounted their experiences, with one person saying they had to flee their home in their pyjamas as the earthquake shook the city. The extensive damage and aftershocks have left authorities in Southeast Asia scrambling to assess the full extent of the destruction.

Bangladesh Welcomes Chinese Participation in Teesta River Project Signs Agreements During Yunus' China Visit

TPN Correspondent | NEW DELHI

Bangladesh has welcomed China's participation in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project, marking a significant step in their growing bilateral relations. This development was announced during the ongoing visit of Chief Advisor Prof. Mohammed Yunus to China. The two countries also signed an agreement for the exchange of hydrological data on the Yarlung Zangbo-Jamuna (Brahmaputra) river, as part of a broader push to strengthen cooperation in various sectors.

In a joint statement issued at the end of the official discussions, both nations agreed to begin discussions for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) "at an early date," aiming to further bolster economic ties. The statement highlighted the commitment to promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, fostering international collaboration on industrial and supply chains, and working toward modernization in both countries.

The two sides also reaffirmed their support for each other's core issues, with Bangla-



desh reiterating its support for China's "One China Policy," underscoring its position that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. Prof. Yunus, who also participated in the Boao Forum annual meeting in Hainan, met President Xi Jinping in Beijing and held high-level discussions with Chinese traders

and investors.

Additionally, Bangladesh expressed appreciation for China's efforts in facilitating medical treatment for Bangladeshi citizens in the Yunnan province, reflecting the deepening people-to-people ties between the two nations.

On the economic front, Bangladesh welcomed Chinese companies to invest in the Mongla Port Facilities Modernisation and Expansion Project and confirmed its interest in further developing the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone (CEIZ) in Chittagong. Both countries agreed to continue discussions on optimizing the China-Bangladesh Investment Agreement.

Looking to the future, the two countries resolved to deepen exchanges in culture, tourism, media, education, healthcare, and youth initiatives, marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Both sides also agreed to intensify cooperation in the blue economy and maritime sectors, including the establishment of a new round of Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation at an appropriate time.

Markets End in Red Amid Volatility; Nifty & Sensex Face Resistance

Domestic stock markets were in a tight spot today. They ended with moderate losses on Friday. They tested the patience of investors by rising and falling for a while. The indices, which started flat in the morning, reached their lows due to mixed signals from Trump tariffs, the US economy, inflation data and global markets. They recovered slightly in the afternoon and returned to their initial levels. European markets collapsed as soon as they opened. Nifty faced resistance at 23,600 and Sensex at 77,600 twice. FMCG, finance and bank shares gained.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 77,606 in the previous session, opened at 77,690 on Friday. It touched an intraday low at 77,185. It reached an intraday high at 77,766. It ended at 77,414, down 191 points. The NSE Nifty, which



opened at 23,600, touched a low of 23,450 and a high of 23,450. It closed

down 72 points at 23,519. The Nifty Bank fell 11 points to settle at 51,564.

In the Nifty50, 21 companies gained while 27 lost. FMCG and finance stocks gained. Media, IT, realty, auto, metal, pharma, commodities, PSU bank, consumption, health-care and energy stocks rose. Tata Consumer, Kotak Bank, Apollo Hospitals, ONGC and Tata Motors were the top gainers. Wipro, IndusInd, Shriram Finance, Cipla, M&M were the biggest losers.

Market breadth on NSE today completely shifted in favour of sellers. Out of 2976 stocks traded, 1807 lost. 1099 gained. 36 shares touched 52-week highs and 312 shares touched 52-week lows. The upper circuit reached 98 and the lower circuit reached 132.



Analysts expect the RBI to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points in the April monetary policy meeting. The Union Cabinet approved the manufacturing PLI scheme worth Rs 25,000 crore. The rupee strengthened by 32 paise to settle at 85.46 against the dollar today. KPI Green Engineering has received an order worth Rs 756 crore. IRCON gets letter of agreement from RVNL for Rs 872 crore project. HSBC gives buy rating to Glenmark Pharma with target price of Rs 1785. Goldman Sachs maintains buy rating on Reliance Industries at Rs 1640 crore. Asian Paints approves Rs 690 crore capital expenditure. SEBI approves Blackstone-backed Ask Group to start mutual fund business. Hudco is looking at raising Rs 65,000 crore through debt.

SBI's C S Setty Elected Chairman of Indian Banks' Association



C S Setty, the Chairman of State Bank of India (SBI), was elected as the new chairman of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) on Friday. Setty's appointment was confirmed during the managing committee meeting of the association, and he will hold the position until the next Annual General Meeting (AGM), according to an official statement.

Alongside Setty, several prominent bankers were elected as deputy chairmen of the association. These include A Manimekhalai, Managing Director and CEO of Union Bank of India, Swarup Kumar Saha, Managing Director and CEO of Punjab and Sind Bank, and Madhav Nair, Country Head and CEO of Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait in India. These leaders will play a crucial role in steering

the association's strategic direction. In addition, B Ramesh Babu, Managing Director and CEO of private sector lender Karur Vyasya Bank, was appointed as the honorary secretary of the IBA. His role will involve managing the day-to-day operations of the association and supporting its initiatives.

The announcement comes shortly after the last AGM of the IBA, which was held earlier this month in Mumbai, the financial capital of India. The AGM was attended by M Nagaraju, the Secretary of the Department of Financial Services, underscoring the importance of the event in shaping the banking sector's future in India.

Setty's election as chairman marks a significant leadership change for the Indian Banks' Association, which represents major public and private sector banks. His extensive experience at SBI is expected to bring fresh perspectives and vision to the association. The appointment of new deputy chairmen and honorary secretary indicates the association's continued focus on strengthening leadership at the helm of India's banking industry.

This leadership transition will likely play a pivotal role in addressing key banking sector challenges and fostering collaboration among financial institutions in India.

Airtel Brings 2Africa Pearls Subsea Cable to India, Expanding Connectivity to Africa and Europe

Telecom giant Bharti Airtel has successfully brought the 2Africa Pearls subsea cable system to Indian shores, enhancing the country's connectivity with Africa, Europe, and West Asia. This strategic move marks a significant step in Airtel's ongoing efforts to expand and diversify its global network infrastructure.



The 2Africa Pearls cable is part of the larger 2Africa project, which, upon completion, will become the world's longest subsea cable system, stretching over 45,000 kilometers. This ambitious system will link Asia, Africa, and Europe through West Asia, providing robust international bandwidth and improving global connectivity.

According to Airtel, the 2Africa Pearls system will deliver over 100 terabits per second (tbps) of international

capacity to India. This boost in capacity will enhance the country's communication network, enabling faster and more reliable broadband services for users and businesses alike.

Sharat Sinha, Director and CEO of Airtel Business, expressed excitement about the new addition to Airtel's network, stating, "We are thrilled to bring the 2Africa Pearls cable to India, adding to our network resilience. We are aggressively

diversifying our global network and recently landed the SEA-WE-ME-6 cable in Chennai and Mumbai. We will continue investing in global cable systems to future-proof our network and deliver high uptime, reliability, and superior quality services to our customers."

Submarine cables are essential infrastructure that connect countries worldwide, facilitating broadband and communication services. With around 650 submarine cable systems globally, approximately 570 are operational, reflecting the crucial role these cables play in global connectivity.

This expansion is part of Airtel's broader strategy to strengthen its international network, ensuring high-quality services and enhanced connectivity between key global regions.

SEBI Proposes New Expiry Day Restrictions for Equity Derivatives Products



The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed a significant change to the settlement schedule of equity derivatives products offered by stock exchanges. The regulatory body has suggested that the final settlement day or expiry day for these products be restricted to either Tuesday or Thursday. This proposal aims to provide greater predictability and stability for market participants regarding expiry days.

Currently, equity derivatives contracts such as futures and options

(F&O) have varying expiry days, which can often lead to uncertainties and market volatility. By limiting expiry days to just two specific days, SEBI intends to streamline the process, reducing the potential for market disruptions while enhancing transparency. This change will help market participants better plan their trading strategies, as they will know exactly when to expect the settlement of their derivative contracts.

The move follows concerns about the current system's complexity

and its impact on market liquidity. With multiple expiry dates across the week, traders and investors can sometimes face challenges in managing their portfolios and adjusting positions. A more standardized expiry schedule is expected to improve the efficiency of the equity derivatives market, making it easier for participants to engage in trading without the added uncertainty of fluctuating expiry days.

If implemented, this new restriction would bring Indian equity derivatives products in line with international markets, where more consistent expiry schedules are commonly followed. SEBI's initiative is also likely to enhance the attractiveness of Indian markets to foreign investors, offering a more predictable trading environment.

This proposal is currently under consultation, with SEBI seeking feedback from market participants and other stakeholders before finalizing the decision. If accepted, it could lead to significant changes in the way equity derivatives are traded in India, with potential benefits in terms of both market efficiency and participant confidence.

India's core sector growth slows to 2.9% in February

India's core infrastructure sectors, which contribute to about 40% of the country's industrial output, showed a slowdown in February 2025, growing by just 2.9%. This marks the slowest monthly growth in five months, compared to 7.1% growth in the same month the previous year.

The latest data, released by the Union commerce ministry on Friday, revealed that only three out of the eight core sectors experienced a rise in production, with cement and fertilizers standing out with higher output compared to the previous year. However, the overall output of these core sectors was weaker than the previous month, as five out of eight indicators, including coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery, and cement output, showed a decline.

In February, cement production grew by 10.5%, and fertilizers output rose by 10.2%, marking a positive year-on-year performance. However, cement production growth slowed down on a monthly basis. Coal output showed a modest rise of 1.7%, its slowest in six months, while refinery output increased by 0.8%. In contrast, the output of crude oil and

natural gas contracted by 5.2% and 6%, respectively. Steel production grew by 5.6%, and electricity output rose by 2.8%, both showing an improvement compared to January. On the other hand, the overall growth of the core sector has moderated, with a significant slowdown seen in coal, crude oil, and natural gas, which contributed to the decline.

This slowdown in core sector output comes as India's manufacturing sector also faced a dip, with manufacturing growth falling to a 14-month low in February, according to the HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The moderation in core sector growth is likely to impact the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), with predictions suggesting a dip to 3-3.5% growth for February 2025, down from 5% in January.

As per Aditi Nayar, chief economist at Icria Ltd., the slower growth was partly due to the high base effect of the leap year. Despite this, the sluggish performance in key sectors raises concerns about the sustainability of India's industrial momentum in the coming months.

YouTube Tests Notification Reduction System



Google has announced that YouTube is testing a new system designed to reduce notifications from subscribed channels that users no longer watch frequently. This experiment aims to strike a balance between keeping users informed and preventing unwanted alerts without requiring them to unsubscribe. Currently, YouTube users can set notifications to “All,” ensuring they receive updates from their favorite channels via push notifications. However, this can become frustrating when users continue receiving alerts from channels they no longer engage with. The only existing solution is to unsubscribe, which can be tedious if the user follows many channels. The new system aims to resolve this issue by automatically limiting notifications from infrequently watched channels. YouTube’s New Notification System According to Google, this system will ensure that users who haven’t interacted with a channel recently will stop receiving push notifications from it. However,

these notifications will still be available in the YouTube app’s notification inbox. This change does not impact channels that upload infrequently or those with which users actively engage. Rather than adjusting notification settings for each channel individually or disabling all notifications at the app level, this experiment provides a middle ground. By limiting unwanted alerts, YouTube aims to enhance the user experience without affecting creators’ reach significantly. However, since this feature is still in the testing phase, only a small group of users currently has access to it. In addition to this notification experiment, YouTube recently introduced another test concerning monetization. Earlier this month, the platform began automatically submitting videos with a “Limited or no ads” rating for an additional review. This process ensures that even newly uploaded private videos undergo a monetization assessment, which may take up to 24 hours.

UK Man Finds Forgotten Lottery Ticket, Wins Over ₹10 Crore



Darren Burfitt, a 44-year-old greenkeeper from Swansea, recently discovered he had won £1 million (over ₹11 crore) in the lottery after checking an old ticket that had been sitting in his car for four months. According to The Metro, Burfitt unknowingly held a winning ticket but had forgotten about it. He often stored his lottery tickets in the central console of his car for safekeeping but never got around to checking them. His unexpected windfall came when his four-year-old son asked for a snack. Instead of opening a new bag of crisps, Burfitt went to fetch an unfinished packet from the car. While doing so, he remembered the tickets and decided to

scan them using the National Lottery app. To his amazement, one of the tickets turned out to be a jackpot winner. He recalled hearing about a public appeal to find a missing lottery winner but never imagined it could be him. “When my son asked for a packet of crisps, I thought of the one in my car. I went out to get it and grabbed my National Lottery tickets at the same time. When I scanned them on the app, I was stunned,” Burfitt shared. This stroke of luck turned an ordinary moment into a life-changing one. While it remains unclear how he plans to use his winnings, the fortunate find has undoubtedly changed his future.

Google Introduces New AI-Powered Travel Planning Features

Google has announced the rollout of several new features across its platforms to simplify travel planning. These updates, some powered by AI, will enhance Google Search, Maps, and Lens, making it easier for users to organize vacations. One of the key upgrades is the introduction of AI Overviews in Google Search, which will now provide trip ideas for cities, regions, and countries. Users can search for customized itineraries, such as “create an itinerary for Costa Rica with a focus on nature,” and receive AI-generated recommendations, photos, and user reviews. An expandable map feature will help users visualize their destinations, and trip details can be exported via Google Docs, Gmail, or saved in Maps. This feature is currently available in English in the US on mobile and desktop.

Google Maps is also receiving an upgrade that allows users to identify locations from screenshots stored on their devices. By adding these images to Maps, Gemini AI will recognize the places and highlight them on the map, enabling users to plan routes or explore nearby attractions. This update is rolling out to iOS users in the US, with Android support coming soon. Additionally, Google is introducing a hotel price-tracking feature. Users can activate a toggle below search filters to monitor price changes for hotels on their selected dates. If prices drop significantly, Google will send an automatic email alert. This feature is now available globally on mobile and desktop browsers. These updates aim to provide a seamless trip-planning experience by leveraging AI and enhancing user-friendly tools across Google’s ecosystem.



Ghibli AI Trend Takes Over Celebrities and Brands

OpenAI’s latest feature in ChatGPT-4, Image Generation, has sparked a massive trend on social media, allowing users to transform their photos into the enchanting animation style of Studio Ghibli films. People have been sharing adorable, wide-eyed selfies and creatively reimagining their pets, friends, and family in the signature style of Hayao Miyazaki’s beloved movies. The trend has now caught the attention of celebrities and brands. Renowned personalities like Sachin Tendulkar, Devendra Fadnavis, and Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma have shared their Ghibli-inspired portraits. Major brands such as Airbus and India Post

have also embraced the trend, showcasing unique and artistic adaptations of their visuals. Karan Johar’s Dharma Productions took it a step further by recreating iconic characters from films like Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani, OK Jaanu, Badrinath Ki Dulhania, Shershaah, and Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani in the whimsical Ghibli animation style. With more celebrities and brands joining in, the Ghibli AI trend is proving to be a viral sensation, merging nostalgia with cutting-edge AI technology.



“Chaitra Navratri 2025: Kalash Sthapana Ritual”



Chaitra Navratri 2025 is set to begin on March 30 (Sunday) and will continue until April 7 (Monday), marking nine days of devotion to Goddess Durga. This Hindu festival is widely celebrated across India and by devotees around the world. The festival begins with Ghatasthapana, also known as Kalash Sthapana, a sacred ritual that symbolizes the invocation of divine energy. This ritual is considered one of the most significant aspects of Navratri, as it marks the establishment of a holy space dedicated to the goddess. Kalash Sthapana is performed with great devotion, signifying the presence of Goddess Durga and inviting her blessings for prosperity, health, and spiritual growth. Before performing the

ritual, the designated space is thoroughly cleaned and purified to ensure a sacred connection with the divine. Devotees believe that conducting this ritual with sincerity and faith brings positive energy and success throughout Navratri. Observing the Shubh Muhurat (auspicious time) for Kalash Sthapana is considered crucial for ensuring the ritual’s effectiveness. Priests and devotees follow specific guidelines to perform the ceremony correctly, ensuring that the divine energy is invoked in the most favorable manner. With the festival set to begin soon, temples and households across the country are preparing for the grand celebrations, filled with prayers, fasting, and devotion to Goddess Durga.



Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) secured a historic 50-run win over Chennai Super Kings (CSK) on Friday, breaking a 17-year jinx of never winning a match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. This victory marked RCB's second-ever win at the venue, with their first coming back in the inaugural season of the IPL in 2008. Invited to bat first, RCB posted a competitive total of 196/7 in their 20 overs. Rajat Patidar was the star with the bat, scoring a well-crafted 51 runs off 32 balls. His knock anchored RCB's innings, and he was well-supported by Phil Salt (32 off 16) and Devdutt Padikkal (27 off 14),

who played vital cameos at the top. Tim David also contributed with a late flourish, scoring an explosive 22 not out off just 8 balls, which included three consecutive sixes in a single over, providing much-needed momentum for the team. For CSK, Noor Ahmad was the standout bowler, taking 3 wickets for 36 runs. Despite his efforts, CSK's bowlers struggled to contain RCB's batting onslaught, with the total being too high for them to chase down. Chasing a challenging total, CSK never really seemed in contention as RCB's bowlers kept up the pressure throughout the innings. Josh Hazlewood was exceptional, finishing with figures of

3/21, effectively dismantling CSK's top order. Yash Dayal and Liam Livingstone also made significant contributions, each picking up two wickets and further tightening the screws on CSK's chase. CSK's batting fell short despite a few individual contributions, and they were ultimately bowled out for 146 runs. RCB's disciplined bowling attack and well-timed batting proved too much for the home side, giving them a much-needed win at a venue where they had struggled for nearly two decades. This victory boosts RCB's confidence as they continue their IPL campaign, looking to push further in the tournament.

Alexandra Eala's Dream Run Ends at Miami Open, Jessica Pegula Advances to Final

Alexandra Eala's incredible run at the Miami Open came to a heartbreaking end on Thursday as she lost to American fourth seed Jessica Pegula in a thrilling three-set semi-final. After 2 hours and 24 minutes of intense play, Pegula emerged victorious with a 7-6 (7/3), 5-7, 6-3 win, securing her place in Saturday's final against world number one Aryna Sabalenka. Eala, ranked 140th in the world, had already made history by defeating three Grand Slam champions — Jelena Ostapenko, Madison Keys, and Iga Swiatek — to reach the semi-finals. The 19-year-old was the lowest-ranked player to make it this far in the tournament's history and was determined to continue her dream run against Pegula.

The match was a rollercoaster, with Pegula gaining the upper hand in the second set by breaking Eala's serve to go 3-1 up. However, Eala fought back fiercely, breaking Pegula three times in the set and eventually serving to level the match at 6-5. Despite the resilient fight, Eala's forehand faltered in the decider, allowing Pegula to break and serve out the match. After the match, Eala expressed her disappointment but remained positive, acknowledging the incredible week she had. "I gave everything I had, I'm half tape, I'm like a mummy. I did everything and I have no regrets," she said. She also reflected on the alignment of stars that had helped her achieve such a remarkable feat and set her sights on continuing her form.



FA Cup Quarter-Finals: Manchester City, Fulham, and Nottingham Forest Eye Historic Runs

As the FA Cup quarter-finals approach this weekend, Manchester City, Fulham, and Nottingham Forest are all looking to make their mark in the competition, each with their own unique challenges and aspirations. Bournemouth Pose Threat to Manchester City Manchester City, struggling in the Premier League this season, face a crucial clash against Bournemouth in the FA Cup, their last chance of silverware. The Sky Blues are still reeling from a surprising 2-1 defeat to the Cherries in November, which marked their first-ever loss to Bournemouth. Since that setback, Pep Guardiola's side has only won once in their last 11 games across all competitions, leaving them battling to secure a Champions League spot next season. A further loss to Bournemouth, who have never



reached the FA Cup semi-finals, would further tarnish what has been a difficult season for the

Premier League giants. Fulham Aim to End FA Cup Drought Fulham will host Crystal Palace on Saturday, hoping to end their 50-year wait for an FA Cup final appearance. The Cottagers have not made it to the final since 1975 and have not reached the semi-finals since 2002. After an impressive victory over holders Manchester United in the fifth round, Marco Silva's side will be looking to make a deep cup run, despite a recent 2-0 loss to Palace in the league. Palace, who have never won the FA Cup, could welcome back striker Jean-Philippe Mateta after recovering from a head injury sustained in a previous match. Nottingham Forest Without Chris Wood Nottingham Forest, in the midst of a dream season, are targeting a place in the FA Cup semi-fi-

nals for the first time since 1991. However, they will be without star striker Chris Wood, who is sidelined due to a hip injury sustained on international duty with New Zealand. Forest, currently third in the Premier League, are pushing for a Champions League spot and hope to continue their cup run despite Wood's absence. Preston's Historic Ambitions Against Villa Preston, the only Championship team remaining in the FA Cup, will face Aston Villa with an eye on an upset. With two FA Cup wins in their history, Preston has not reached the semi-finals since 1964. Meanwhile, Villa, aiming to make their first semi-final appearance in 10 years, will look to build on their solid form this season, having already made it to the Champions League quarter-finals.

Jaismine Clinches Gold Trophy at Railways retain trophy

At the Elite Women's National Boxing Championships in Greater Noida, Commonwealth Games medallist Jaismine Lamboria and two-time Asian Champion Pooja Rani triumphed in contrasting fashion to secure gold medals. The Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) emerged as the overall champions, clinching the team trophy with nine medals, including five golds. Jaismine, representing the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB), maintained her dominance throughout the tournament, delivering a flawless performance in the featherweight final. From the first bell, the Paris Olympian

displayed a mix of relentless aggression and impeccable technique, overpowering Haryana's Priya. The Birmingham CWG bronze medallist's control over the match was undeniable, and she sealed a unanimous decision victory. Following her stellar performance, Jaismine was awarded the top performer prize, which included a ₹50,000 cash award. Reflecting on her victory,



ry, Jaismine expressed satisfaction with her improvement throughout the tournament. On the other hand, Pooja Rani faced a much tougher challenge in the 80kg final against Lalfakmawi Ralte of the All India Police. Despite a hard-fought contest, the Tokyo Olympian edged out Ralte with a 4-3 decision. Pooja, a former Asian Games medallist, claimed her ninth gold at the Na-

tional Championships. She shared her appreciation for the tough competition she faced and praised her ability to overcome the challenges posed by Ralte's power. Railways' strong performance in the tournament, with five golds and four bronze medals, ensured their place atop the team standings. Haryana followed closely in second with two golds, three silvers, and one bronze, while the Police team secured one gold, four silvers, and two bronzes. Services also had a perfect campaign, with Jaismine and Sakshi leading the charge, ensuring a 100 percent win record for their team.



Novak Djokovic showcased his rising form as he secured a 6-3, 7-6 (7-4) win over American Sebastian Korda in the quarterfinals of the Miami Open on Thursday, March 27, 2025. The match, which was rescheduled from Wednesday night, was a pivotal moment in Djokovic's campaign for his seventh Miami Open title and his 100th professional victory. The 37-year-old Serbian was in fine form, particularly in the second set, where he made an impressive comeback from a 4-1 and 5-2 deficit. Djokovic fought back with determination to win the tiebreaker, ending the match in one hour and 24 minutes. He served an ace on match point and posted an 83% first-serve percentage, a major factor in

his victory. Djokovic credited his serving as the key to his second-set resurgence, calling it his best serving performance in a long time. With this win, Djokovic advances to the semifinals, where he will face Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov. Djokovic holds a 12-1 record against Dimitrov, who reached the Miami Open finals in 2024. Djokovic is aiming for his seventh title at this tournament, having won all six of his previous titles at the event's former venue, Key Biscayne. Meanwhile, in the women's draw, the upcoming final is set between third-seeded Jessica Pegula and top seed Aryna Sabalenka. The two are set for a rematch of the 2024 U.S. Open final, which was won by Sabalenka.



Swapna & Priyanka Dutt’s Monumental Feat



The inaugural Women in Entertainment Power List by The Hollywood Reporter India highlights some of the most influential women reshaping the Indian entertainment industry. The March cover features five trailblazing women: the dynamic sister duo Swapna Dutt and Priyanka Dutt, alongside Zoya Akhtar, Alia Bhatt, and Nayanthara. In this special edition, they open up about their journeys, early struggles, and the challenges of balancing personal and professional boundaries while redefining excellence in showbiz.

Telugu producers Swapna Dutt and Priyanka Dutt have left an undeniable mark on the industry through their production houses, Swapna Cinema and Vyjayanthi Movies, delivering consistent blockbusters. Their inclusion in The Hollywood Reporter India is a historic achievement, as no Telugu filmmaker has previously received this recognition. Their success further solidifies the growing impact of women in Indian cinema, proving that talent and determination can break barriers and set new industry benchmarks.

Hrithik Roshan To Make Directorial Debut With Krrish 4



Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan is all set to step into the director's chair with the highly anticipated superhero film Krrish 4. The project was officially announced earlier today, marking a significant milestone in Hrithik's career. While it is yet to be confirmed whether he will reprise his iconic superhero role or introduce a new lead, fans are eagerly awaiting further details.

Hrithik began his journey in the industry as an assistant director on his father Rakesh Roshan's films Khudgarzi and Karan Arjun. Rakesh had previously helmed the Krrish franchise, including Koi Mil Gaya, Krrish, and Krrish 3. Now, Krrish 4 will be jointly produced by Rakesh Roshan and Bollywood's leading filmmaker Aditya Chopra under Yash Raj Films.

Announcing the news, Rakesh Roshan shared a heartfelt post on Instagram with Hrithik. "Duggu, 25 years ago I launched you as an actor, and today, along with Aditya Chopra, I launch you as a director for our most ambitious film, Krrish 4," he wrote. Hrithik's girlfriend, actor Saba Azad, reacted with heart emojis, celebrating his new journey.



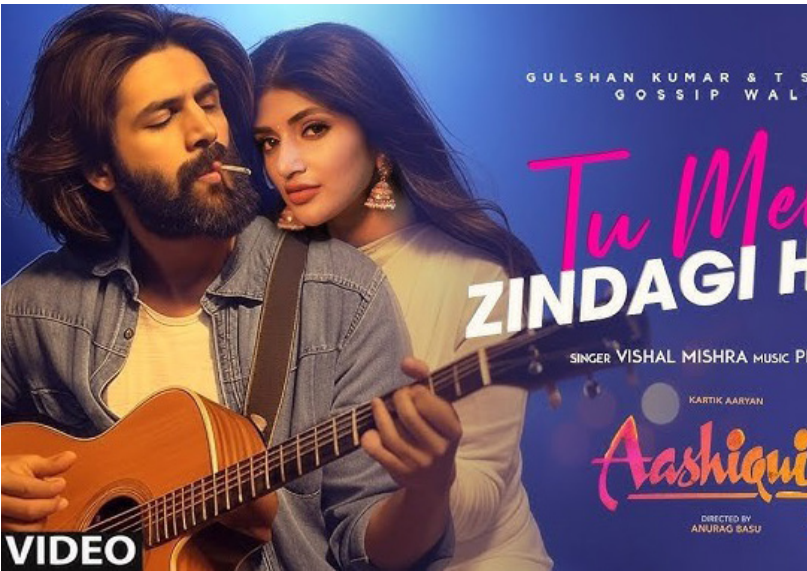
Ram (Nithiin), an orphan, grows up witnessing the hardships of fellow orphans suffering from hunger. Determined to help, he devises intelligent schemes to steal from the wealthy and distribute the money to the needy. Meanwhile, a ruthless villain (Devadatta Nage) sets out to

expand his international marijuana business and targets Rudrakonda village, known for its high-demand special variety of marijuana. Reena Vasudev (Sreeleela), the daughter of AV Pharma's Australian head, Abhinav Vasudev (Siju), visits Rudrakonda, setting off a series of in-

triguing events. How are Ram, the villain, and AV Pharma interconnected? Why does Ram accompany Reena? How does the international drug mafia kingpin David (David Warner) play a role in this conflict? The answers unfold on the big screen in this action-packed heist drama.

Kartik Aaryan & Sreeleela's BTS Sparks Excitement

Bollywood star Kartik Aaryan has shared an exclusive behind-the-scenes (BTS) glimpse from his upcoming untitled film, directed by Anurag Basu. This project is highly anticipated as it marks the Bollywood debut of South Indian actress Sreeleela. In the newly released image, Kartik is seen gazing at Sreeleela as they sit amidst a stunning tea garden, with his rugged new look—long hair and a thick beard—stealing the spotlight. Adding a hint of romance, Kartik holds two cups of tea, suggesting a heartfelt scene. The duo is currently filming in North Bengal's scenic tea gardens, with several BTS pictures surfacing online since Wednesday. One standout image features Kartik riding a bike with Sreeleela behind him, his bandaged hand hinting at intense action sequences.



Rakul Preet Singh Reveals She Rejected Puri Jagannadh's Offer



MAD Square follows Laddu (Vishnu Oi), who ends up in Tihar Central Jail, striking fear among inmates. Curious about his past, they ask how he got there. Laddu reveals how his friends—Manoj (Ram Nithin), Ashok (Narne Nithin), and Damodhar (Sangeeth Sobhan)—turned his wedding into chaos, triggering unexpected events that landed him in jail. The film thrives on its humor, with

Sangeeth Sobhan, Narne Nithin, and Ram Nithin delivering energetic performances. Vishnu Oi shines, and Muralidhar Goud adds to the fun with his impeccable comedic timing. While comedy is the focus, some jokes feel forced, and the second half lacks the energy of the first. Sunil's character, Bhai, and supporting roles are underutilized. Despite minor flaws, MAD Square remains an enjoyable entertainer.

Actress Rakul Preet Singh recently shared insights about her film journey. She revealed that she entered modeling during college and had little knowledge of South Indian cinema. Her debut opportunity came from the Kannada film Gilli after her father spoke with the filmmakers. She fell in love with acting and decided to pursue it full-time. Rakul disclosed that after her debut, director Puri Ja-

gannadh offered her a film, requesting 70 days of her dates. However, due to her lack of industry awareness, she declined the offer and missed several good opportunities. Speaking about her marriage, she said she and Jacky Bhagnani shared similar values, leading to their union with family blessings. She also confirmed that marriage hasn't affected her acting career, as she continues to take on new projects.

