



Weather Forecast

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

Trump-Zelensky clash in Oval Office sparks global uproar

Trump to Zelensky: "Be thankful, or we stop support."

Vance warns: "Ukraine is prolonging a war it can't win."

Democrats slam Trump, call meeting 'a betrayal of allies.'

Republicans defend Trump's 'America First' stance.

European leaders assure Ukraine of continued support.



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

A tense Oval Office meeting between US President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky took an unexpected turn on Friday, turning into a heated confrontation that sent shockwaves across global political circles.

Originally meant to focus on mineral-sharing agreements and continued US military support for Ukraine, the meeting saw Trump and Vance berating Zelensky for what they claimed was a lack of "thankfulness" and pressuring him to negotiate a peace deal with Russia. Zelensky, visibly uneasy, defended Ukraine's position, arguing that Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly violated ceasefire agreements and illegally occupied Ukrainian territory, including Crimea.

The dramatic encounter has sparked outrage across Washington. Democrats strongly con-

demned Trump's approach, accusing him of aligning with Russian interests. A Massachusetts Democratic leader remarked that Zelensky "flew to Washington but walked into the Kremlin." Senator Chris Van Hollen called the incident a "betrayal of allies," claiming that Trump's actions were an "embarrassment for America." Republicans, however, defended Trump's stance, arguing that Ukraine must recognize the limits of US support. House Speaker Mike Johnson praised the meeting as a necessary shift in American foreign policy, while Secretary of State Marco Rubio lauded Trump for "standing up for America in a way no president has before."

How the clash unfolded

Tensions were already high before the meeting, given Trump's skepticism about continued US aid to

Ukraine. The discussion initially revolved around mineral trade agreements, but Vice President Vance steered it toward Ukraine's war with Russia. He urged Zelensky to consider negotiations, arguing that the war was unwinnable. Zelensky pushed back, highlighting Russia's past treaty violations, but Vance accused him of being "disrespectful" and failing to appreciate American military assistance. Trump escalated the exchange, raising his voice and warning Zelensky that US support would end if he refused to negotiate a peace deal.

Following the meeting, Zelensky, in an interview with Fox News, expressed hope for repairing US-Ukraine relations. However, he indirectly criticized Vance, remarking, "With all due respect to

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Karnataka Mandates Kannada Labels for All Products

- Govt issues directive making Kannada mandatory on product labels
- Applies to both gov and private sectors in Karnataka
- Strict enforcement under the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, 2022



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has made it mandatory for all industrial and consumer products manufactured in the state to display their names and usage instructions in Kannada alongside other languages. The directive, issued through a circular on February 15, applies to both government and private sectors. The circular emphasizes that all manufacturers must ensure compliance with this rule. "Names and instructions for use must be compulsorily printed in Kannada along with other languages on all industrial and consumer products manufactured in the government and private sectors within the state," it states. Authorities designated under Section 9 of the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, 2022, have been tasked with monitoring the implementation of

this directive to ensure strict compliance. The government underscored that language is a reflection of culture, tradition, and values, and for Kannada to thrive, it must be integrated into production, marketing, and business activities. To support this, the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, 2022, has been in effect since March 12, 2024. According to Section 17(7) of the Act, all industrial and consumer products manufactured and sold within Karnataka must include Kannada labeling along with any other applicable language. The directive aims to enhance the prominence of Kannada in business and daily life while creating better opportunities for Kannadigas.

1.5 lakh people throng Day 1 of Hampi Utsav

TPN Correspondent | Hampi

The grand Hampi Utsav began with Vijayanagara district in-charge minister Zameer Ahmad Khan inaugurating the event in the absence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Kannada and Cultural Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi was also present at



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Karnataka Gears Up for Political Showdown Over Tax Devolution Cuts

- Siddaramaiah slams Centre over proposed cut in states' tax share
- Claims Karnataka lost ₹53,359 crore due to cess and surcharge policies
- Warns of protests if rightful funds are not released



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A major political confrontation is brewing in Karnataka over the Centre's alleged move to reduce states' tax devolution from 41% to 40%. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, preparing to present his 16th budget next week, has fiercely opposed the move, calling it an "unfair and anti-federal" decision that could cripple state finances.

"This is nothing but an outright assault on states' rights," Siddaramaiah said, accusing the NDA government of treating Karnataka like a subordinate. He warned that if the state's appeals are ignored, the Congress government will not hesitate to stage protests.

Reports suggest the Centre is pressuring the Finance Commission to reduce Karnataka's tax share, which Siddaramaiah claims is a deliberate attempt to weaken the Congress government in the state. He pointed out that while Karnataka contributes nearly ₹4 lakh crore annually to the Centre, it receives

only 15 paise per rupee in return. The state has already lost ₹68,775 crore in tax devolution over the past five years, he alleged.

The Karnataka government has raised concerns over significant funding cuts by the Centre, highlighting a ₹1,311 crore reduction in urban local body grants, ₹775 crore cut from Panchayat Raj institutions, ₹826 crore slashed from health sector funds, and ₹340 crore withheld from disaster relief funds. Additionally, ₹3,300 crore in special grants for 2024-25 and 2025-26 remains unpaid, further straining the state's financial resources.

Siddaramaiah further criticized the growing impact of cess and surcharges, which are kept outside the divisible tax pool. He claimed Karnataka has lost ₹53,359 crore between 2017 and 2025 due to these levies, which have risen from 8.1% of total taxes in 2010-11 to 14% today, significantly reducing the state's revenue share.

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Don't Speculate on DK Shivakumar Joining BJP: BY Vijayendra

TPN Correspondent | Hassan

BJP Karnataka president BY Vijayendra on Friday dismissed speculations about Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar joining the BJP after sharing the dais with Union Home Minister Amit Shah during Mahashivaratri celebrations at the Isha Yoga Centre in Coimbatore. He clarified that there is no link between this event and Shivakumar's recent participation in the Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj.

Speaking to reporters in Hassan on his way to Chikkamagaluru, Vijayendra said, "There is no need to read too much into these events. Some people are speculating that Shivakumar might join the BJP, but there is no basis for such assumptions." He also expressed displeasure over a



section of BJP leaders holding separate meetings, warning that discussing party affairs in this manner is against the party's interests. Vijayendra assured

that the party high command will take the right decisions to strengthen the BJP in Karnataka. He also revealed that the list of district BJP presidents has been finalized and sent for central approval. Predicting major political developments and polarization in Karnataka, Vijayendra urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to present a budget focused on the common man and development. He also pressed for financial grants to first-time MLAs and emphasized the need for the government to prioritize development projects, warning that MLAs could struggle to face the public in rural areas if they fail to deliver on promises.

Former MLA Preetam J Gowda and district BJP president Siddesh Nagendra were present during the interaction.

D K Shivakumar's visit to Sadhguru's event divides Congress

- Ministers question Shivakumar's presence at Sadhguru's Mahashivaratri event.
- Some Congress leaders defend his attendance, saying he informed the party.
- Debate intensifies over his sharing the stage with Amit Shah.



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Congress finds itself divided over Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's visit to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Yoga Centre in Tamil Nadu for Mahashivaratri celebrations.

While some leaders questioned his presence at the event, others defended him, stating that he had informed the party in advance.

Cooperation Minister K N Rajanna criticized Shivakumar for sharing the stage with those who have been critical of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. "Sadhguru himself said he does not know Rahul Gandhi. How justified is it to share a stage with such people?" Rajanna asked.

However, Shivakumar's brother and former MP D K Suresh backed him, stating that the Deputy CM had kept the party informed. "Whenever he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he informed the high command.

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Trump-Zelensky clash in Oval Office sparks global uproar

the vice president, he has his own interviews.”

Global reactions

The Oval Office confrontation prompted strong reactions from European allies. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk assured Ukraine, saying, “You are not alone.” British Prime Minister Keir Starmer reaffirmed “unwavering support” for Ukraine. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called for an urgent summit with US and European allies to address the Ukraine conflict. Meanwhile, Russia revealed in the discord, with former President Dmitry Medvedev mocking Zelensky as an “insolent pig” who had been “properly slapped down in the Oval Office.” Ukraine’s military leadership vowed to continue fighting, while Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba praised Zelensky’s “bravery” in standing firm against Trump and Vance.

1.5 lakh people throng Day 1 of Hampi Utsav

the inaugural ceremony.

On the first day, nearly 1.5 lakh visitors gathered to witness the celebrations, with the flower and fish exhibitions drawing significant crowds. The “Hampi By Sky” helicopter ride, offered at a reduced price of ₹3,999, received an overwhelming response as tourists enjoyed aerial views of the historic monuments.

The festival also featured a cattle exhibition and a dog show, while the soaring temperature of 38 degrees Celsius did little to deter attendees. To ensure convenience, free drinking water was arranged at over 50 locations, along with 10 medical camps and water sprinklers to combat the heat. Additional attractions included food and book stalls, water sports, and free bus services from Kampli and Hosapete for easier accessibility.

Karnataka Gears Up for Political Showdown Over Tax Devolution Cuts

“This is financial strangulation. If cess and surcharges are not shared, why should Karnataka continue paying them?” he asked, demanding their abolition or inclusion in tax devolution. With GST compensation withdrawn and special grants unpaid, Siddaramaiah warned the Centre that Karnataka will not remain silent if its rightful funds are not released. “We will take our fight to the streets and rally the people against this injustice,” he declared.

D K Shivakumar’s visit to Sadhguru’s event divides Congress

He did the same before attending this event,” Suresh said.

Shivakumar, who also serves as the Karnataka Congress president, attended the event in Coimbatore on Wednesday, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah was present. Defending his visit, he said, “I was born Hindu and will die Hindu.”

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi suggested that the Congress high command should take note of the controversy, while Minister M B Patil dismissed the criticism, saying Shivakumar had not violated party policy. “What’s wrong in attending Shivaratri celebrations? Didn’t I go to a Shiva temple?” Patil asked, adding that Congress leaders have previously shared stages with BJP leaders. Patil also argued that Sadhguru’s events are grand cultural programs rather than political gatherings, asserting that speculation around Shivakumar’s visit was a “media creation.”

Tribunal constituted to solve Mahadayi issue gets 7th extension

- Centre grants a six-month extension to the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT).
- The tribunal has been extended seven times since its 2018 verdict.
- Environmentalists raise concerns over the Kalasa-Banduri project’s impact on the Western Ghats.

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

The Centre has granted another six-month extension to the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal (MWDT), further delaying the resolution of the long-standing water-sharing dispute between Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. The tribunal, originally constituted in 2010, has now been extended for the seventh time since its final verdict in August 2018.

According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti’s notification, the tribunal’s extension is effective from February 16. Initially, it was mandated to submit its report within three years of its constitution on November 15, 2013. However, after requesting the Centre to consider August 21, 2013, as its effective

start date, the tribunal’s deadline was revised accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Mahadayi PRAWAH is set to meet in Mumbai on March 4 to discuss Goa’s proposal for a joint inspection of the Kalasa-Banduri project site at Kankumbi near the Goa border.

Even as Karnataka seeks the Centre’s final nod for the Kalasa-Banduri project to divert its share of Mahadayi water, environmentalists have raised alarms over its impact on the Western Ghats. Captain Nitin Dhond of Parisarakkagi Navu warned that the diversion could accelerate desertification in North Karnataka, citing the Malaprabha River’s declining water levels as an example of ecological imbalance in the region.



No power cuts in Karnataka this summer: Energy Minister KJ George

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Energy Minister KJ George assured on Friday that Karnataka will not face power cuts this summer, citing sufficient power generation and early procurement measures. He stated that unless unforeseen circumstances arise, the state has adequate resources to meet the demand.

George highlighted that good rainfall last year has ensured sufficient hydro resources to generate power until June 10. The state has also begun early purchases from the Central grid and other states. On February 27, Karnataka’s peak power demand stood at 17,874 MW, compared to 16,214 MW in the same period last year, with the system capable of handling up to 19,500 MW this season.

The minister detailed that Karnataka has a coal stock of 8-10 lakh tonnes, enough for 15 days. On February 27, hydro generation stood at 2,000 MW, peak solar at 6,655 MW, wind at 1,940 MW, and procurement from UPCL at 1,126 MW. Thermal plants at Ballari and Yeramarus generated 654 MW and 1,278 MW, respectively. The state is procuring power from Uttar Pradesh (1,275



MW), Punjab (300 MW), and other sources, including 4,500 MW from central generation stations. Purchases started in January at 100 MW and have been increasing, reaching 1,000 MW for March and April.

George added that efforts are underway to enhance the capacity of transmission lines and transformers.

Government departments owe ₹9,000 crore in

power dues

The Energy Minister revealed that various state government agencies owe the energy department ₹9,000 crore, with the Urban Development Department (UDD) alone accounting for ₹2,329 crore. To manage the financial burden, the government is exploring decentralised power generation through solar panel installations in multiple locations, including the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board and municipal offices.

George also addressed the controversy over high power tariffs linked to the Gruha Jyothi scheme, clarifying that subsidy amounts are released in advance to ESCOMs, and consumers are not being charged. A notice has been issued to Chamundi ESCOM’s Managing Director over the issue.

On the Raichur Thermal Power Plant accident, he stated that a report has been submitted, and efforts are focused on restarting operations rather than engaging in blame games. The old plant has struggled to attract bidders for repairs, but the government aims to restart the closed Unit 4 by March.

Bird flu outbreak confirmed in Ballari, 2,400 chickens die in a week



TPN Correspondent | Ballari

Bird flu (H5N1 avian influenza) has been confirmed at the government poultry farm in Kurekoppa village of Sandur taluk, Ballari district, after more than 2,400 chickens died within a week. Samples sent to a laboratory in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, tested positive for the virus, prompting immediate containment measures by district authorities. Ballari Deputy Commissioner Prashant Kumar Mishra held an emergency meeting with officials and ordered strict vigilance. He announced a quarantine within a 1 km radius of the poultry farm, declaring it a restricted area, while a 10 km radius has been marked as an alert zone.

Mishra stated that between February 21 and 26, over 2,400 chickens perished at the farm. “We received confirmation of bird flu after sending samples for testing. Strict guidelines have been issued to control the spread,” he said. The district administration has also urged poultry farm workers to undergo health screenings as a precaution. Authorities are closely monitoring the situation, especially as neighbouring Andhra Pradesh recently reported cases of avian influenza.

TDR for Palace Grounds Land Only After SC Verdict: Krishna Byre Gowda

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda has made it clear that the Karnataka government will not issue Transferable Development Rights (TDR) worth ₹3,400 crore for acquiring 15 acres and 39 guntas of Bangalore Palace land until the Supreme Court delivers its final verdict on the ownership dispute. The Supreme Court recently directed the Karnataka government to deposit TDR for the land, which is intended for the development of Ballari and Jayamahal Roads. However, Gowda pointed out that in 1996, the state had acquired the palace land through a legislative

act, fixing compensation at ₹11 crore. The erstwhile Mysuru royal family challenged this acquisition in the Karnataka High Court, but the HC upheld the state’s decision, declaring the land as public property.

“Now the Supreme Court is directing us to issue TDR certificates in favor of private individuals. But we have challenged this and asked the court to first determine whether the land belongs to the government or the royal family,” Gowda stated.

He raised concerns about issuing TDR before ownership is settled. “What if they sell the property and

later the SC rules in our favor? How do we reclaim the TDR then?” he questioned. The government has already passed an ordinance reserving its rights over road development in the area.

Additionally, Gowda pointed out the larger issue, questioning whether the government could issue TDR for the entire 460 acres of Bangalore Palace Grounds at the same rate.

Meanwhile, Mysuru-Kodagu MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraaja Wadiyar refrained from commenting on the dispute, stating that the matter is sub judice.



FDA crackdown: 400 medical shops served notices, drug licences suspended



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a sweeping two-month crackdown, the Food Safety and Drug Administration (FDA) has exposed widespread violations across Karnataka, including the sale of substandard medicines, unsafe food practices, and the presence of toxic heavy metals in tattoo inks. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, addressing the media on Friday, stated that the inspections were conducted from December to February and covered thousands of drug and food samples.

Medical shops under scrutiny

The crackdown resulted in the issuance of 400 show cause notices to medical shops, with 231 drug licences suspended and three permanently cancelled. Additionally, substandard medicines worth Rs 17 lakh were recalled. Investigations have also been launched into medical stores selling antibiotics without prescriptions. Rao announced that the government is developing a software system to track medicines from manufacturers to re-

tailers, ensuring efficient recalls of unsafe drugs.

Toxic tattoo inks flagged

A major revelation from the inspections was the presence of 22 toxic heavy metals—including selenium, chromium, platinum, and arsenic—in tattoo inks available in the market. These contaminants pose severe health risks, as they can enter the body through the skin, leading to infections and long-term illnesses. Rao urged the Centre to introduce safety regulations for tattoo inks, which are currently not covered under the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) or the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Unsafe food practices exposed

The crackdown also revealed serious lapses in food safety. In January, of the 3,608 food samples tested, 26 were found unsafe and 28 of poor quality. In February, out of 2,543 samples, eight were deemed unsafe. A special drive also examined 288 samples of bottled drinking water, with results pending. Authorities found that 52 food establishments, including restaurants and

street vendors, were using plastic sheets for steaming idlis, a hazardous practice that can lead to contamination. Notices were issued to violators, with 12 of these outlets located in Bengaluru Urban.

Ringer Lactate solution under investigation

Following maternal deaths in Ballari, the FDA tested Ringer Lactate Solution, a commonly used intravenous fluid. Out of 113 samples tested, several were found to be "Not of Standard Quality." So far, nine prosecutions have been filed, with approval granted for legal action in 25 additional cases.

Chemical dyes in watermelons under probe

The FDA has also launched an investigation into the alleged use of chemical dyes in watermelons. Reports suggest that vendors across Karnataka are injecting artificial colourants to enhance the fruit's red hue, raising concerns over consumer safety.

Authorities have vowed to intensify enforcement measures to ensure public health and food safety in the state.

- FDA issues show cause notices to 400 medical shops across Karnataka.
- 231 drug licences suspended, Rs 17 lakh worth substandard medicines recalled.
- Contaminated tattoo inks, unsafe food, and plastic use in idli preparation flagged.

Tunnel road only solution for Bengaluru's traffic woes



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Energy Minister and former Bengaluru Development Minister KJ George has strongly defended the proposed tunnel road project in Hebbal, stating that it is the only viable solution to ease Bengaluru's traffic congestion. Urging residents not to oppose the plan, he recalled how similar resistance was faced during the now-scrapped steel flyover proposal.

Speaking to the media, George backed the tunnel road idea pushed by Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar. "People face traffic

jams daily in Hebbal. The tunnel road is a practical solution that will bring relief to commuters," he said. Drawing comparisons to previous infrastructure projects, George pointed out that initiatives like the Jayadeva flyover demolition and the double-decker flyover at Silk Board had also faced initial opposition but eventually benefited the public. "When the steel flyover was proposed till Hebbal, people criticized it, but they had no issues with the one at Shivananda Circle," he noted.

However, government sources have raised concerns about the feasibility of a tunnel road, warning that it may not be the right solution. "If flyovers are getting clogged with traffic, tunnels will face the same issue," a senior official stated. Instead, they suggested expanding the Metro network and ensuring better connectivity for large commercial complexes with feeder buses.

Dismissed employees entitled to privilege leave encashment: High Court



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that an employee dismissed from service is still entitled to encashment of privilege leave, asserting that Regulation 67 does not allow an employer to deny this right.

Justice M Nagaprasanna delivered the verdict while allowing a petition by G Linganagouda, a former assistant manager of Pragathi Krishna Gramin Bank, challenging the bank's decision to deny him leave encashment. The court quashed the bank's orders from December 13, 2017, and October 4, 2024, which rejected his request, and ruled that he is entitled to encash 220 days of accumulated privilege leave.

Referring to judgments from the Bombay and Madhya Pradesh High

Courts, the judge emphasized that Regulation 61 grants employees the right to privilege leave, and Regulation 67 does not take away their right to encash it. Citing Article 300A of the Constitution, the court clarified that an employer cannot withhold any part of an employee's terminal benefits, including leave encashment.

Linganagouda was dismissed from service in December 2014 following a disciplinary inquiry into alleged misconduct. After his termination, he sought leave encashment for 220 days of accumulated leave, which the bank denied, arguing that dismissed employees are not entitled to such benefits under Regulation 67. This led him to challenge the decision in court.

Kerala Mass Murderer Killed Lover As "She Would Be Alone Without Him": Cops

TPN Correspondent

| Thiruvananthapuram

In a shocking case, a 23-year-old man, Afan, surrendered to the police after killing five people, including his family members and girlfriend, in Kerala's Venjaramoodu. Investigators revealed that he had accumulated a debt of ₹65 lakh from 14 creditors and had initially planned to die by suicide along with his mother and younger brother.

The murders took place on Monday across three houses in and around Venjaramoodu. Afan killed his grandmother, paternal uncle, aunt, 13-year-old brother, and girlfriend, Farsana. He also attempted to murder his mother, but she survived. After committing the crimes, he walked into the Venjaramoodu police station and turned himself in.

According to officials, Afan was distressed as his family was being harassed by creditors. He was frustrated that his grandmother, uncle, and aunt did not provide financial assistance. When he realized they could not help

repay the debts, he allegedly tried to persuade his mother and brother to die by suicide with him. His mother refused, leading him to attack her before leaving the house, believing she was dead.



Afan then proceeded to his grandmother's house, where he killed her and stole a gold necklace. He later went to his uncle and aunt's home and murdered them as well. Returning home, he killed his younger brother and then strangled his girlfriend,

believing she "would not be able to live without him," according to Superintendent of Police KS Sudarshan.

Authorities have decided to examine Afan's mental state as part of the investigation. "His behavior after surrendering has been unusual. He will be questioned in the presence of mental health experts," SP Sudarshan stated.

Meanwhile, Afan's mother initially denied being attacked by him, claiming she had fallen from her bed. His father, Rahim, who returned from Saudi Arabia after the incident, told the police that he was unaware of the full extent of the family's debts. He believed Afan owed only ₹15 lakh and had sent him ₹60,000 to retrieve a gold necklace he had pawned.

The police are continuing their investigation to determine whether financial distress was the sole motive or if other factors contributed to the gruesome killings.

Bengaluru Lawyer Arrested for Fatally Stabbing Brother in Property Dispute



A family dispute over ancestral property turned deadly in Bengaluru on Friday when a 30-year-old lawyer, Nagendra, allegedly stabbed his elder brother, Srikanta, to death. The incident occurred around 11:30 am at Srikanta's residence in the Bommanahalli area, following a heated argument between the two advocate siblings.

Police reports indicate that the brothers had been locked in a bitter conflict over their inheritance since the death of their father, Thimmappa, two years ago. Thimmappa had converted agricultural land into a residential layout, constructing over 65 houses decades earlier, which became the source of contention between the siblings.

On Friday morning, Nagendra visited Srikanta's home, where the disagreement quickly escalated. In a fit of rage, Nagendra grabbed a knife from the kitchen and stabbed Srikanta multiple times in the chest. Srikanta, a 35-year-old married man with a 5-year-old son, was rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed to his injuries around 1:30 pm, according to police.

Nagendra was arrested shortly after the incident, and authorities have taken him into custody. The tragic event has left the family and local community in shock, underscoring the devastating consequences of unresolved property disputes.

Police have launched an investigation to further examine the circumstances leading to the fatal altercation. The accused is expected to face charges as the case progresses through the legal system.

Vlogger Arrested for Rape Under False Marriage Promise

A vlogger identified as Junaid, a resident of Vazhikadavu in Malappuram, was arrested in Bengaluru on Saturday for allegedly raping a young woman he met through social media. The arrest followed a complaint accusing him of deceiving the victim with a false promise of marriage and sexually exploiting her for nearly two years.

According to police reports, Junaid lured the woman into a relationship and assaulted her repeatedly at various hotels in Malappuram and surrounding areas. He is also accused of taking nude photographs of the victim and using them to blackmail her into silence. The Malappuram police registered a case after the victim came forward with

her complaint. Investigations revealed that Junaid had been attempting to flee the country to evade arrest. Acting swiftly, a police team led by Inspector P Vishnu tracked him down and apprehended him near Bengaluru Airport in the early hours of Saturday.

Following his arrest, Junaid was produced before a local court in Bengaluru, where legal formalities were completed. Authorities have not disclosed further details about the ongoing investigation.

The case has sparked outrage, highlighting concerns over online deception and exploitation. Police urge anyone with similar experiences to come forward as they continue to probe the accused's activities.



BJP MLAs, MPs demand ₹15,000 crore for Bengaluru's development

- **BJP leaders urge ₹15,000 cr allocation in the upcoming budget for Bengaluru's development.**
- **They highlight that the city contributes over 60% of the state's tax revenue.**
- **Key demands include road improvements, parking solutions, and infrastructure upgrades.**



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Ahead of the state budget presentation, BJP MLAs and MPs from Bengaluru, led by party state president BY Vijayendra, met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday, demanding a ₹15,000 crore grant for the city's development. In their memorandum, they also urged the government to allocate ₹150 crore per constituency in Bengaluru. The BJP leaders emphasized that

if the government is serious about building 'Brand Bengaluru,' it must ensure sufficient funds for infrastructure growth. They accused the Congress-led state government of neglecting the city's development since coming to power in 2023. Despite Bengaluru accounting for over 60% of Karnataka's tax revenue, the BJP representatives claimed that the city has not received adequate funding for expansion and maintenance. "The state government released just

₹10 crore per constituency three months ago, which is grossly insufficient," they said. The memorandum demanded that the upcoming budget, set to be presented on March 7, include ₹15,000 crore specifically for addressing traffic congestion, road infrastructure, and airport connectivity issues. Additionally, they stressed the need for proper parking solutions, proposing the identification of at least 100 dedicated parking zones across the city.

'Karnataka Will See an Eknath Shinde Phenomenon,' Claims B Sriramulu

- **BJP leader hints at political turmoil in Karnataka**
- **Suggests DK Shivakumar may join BJP**
- **Compares possible shift to Maharashtra's Eknath Shinde episode**

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Former minister and senior BJP leader B Sriramulu has claimed that Karnataka will witness a political upheaval similar to the Eknath Shinde-led rebellion in Maharashtra. Speaking to the media on Friday, he hinted that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar might switch to the BJP, leading to a major shake-up in the state's politics. Sriramulu emphasized that politics is ever-changing and pointed out past instances where chief ministers, such as Veearendra Patil and D Devaraj Urs, were removed from power. He suggested that similar dramatic shifts could take place again in Karnataka. "Karnataka will also see an Eknath Shinde phenomenon. A Maharashtra-like situation is likely to unfold here too. Let us wait and watch who will be the Shinde of Karnataka," he remarked. He further stated that it would be up to the BJP high command



to decide whether to support such a leader if the situation arises. On the controversial caste census report, Sriramulu alleged that many are unhappy with its findings and described it as a "conspiracy" that would soon be exposed. Regarding reports of internal discord

within the BJP, he denied any factionalism and downplayed the meeting of rebel leaders in Bengaluru. He referred to Basanagouda Patil Yatnal as a respected leader and assured that the BJP high command would resolve any differences to mount a strong challenge against the Congress government.



RLD Slams SP, Congress for Silence on 'Insults' to Hindi

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has strongly criticized the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress for their silence on the ongoing language controversy involving Tamil Nadu's opposition to the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The party accused them of ignoring "insults" directed at the Hindi language by Tamil Nadu's ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

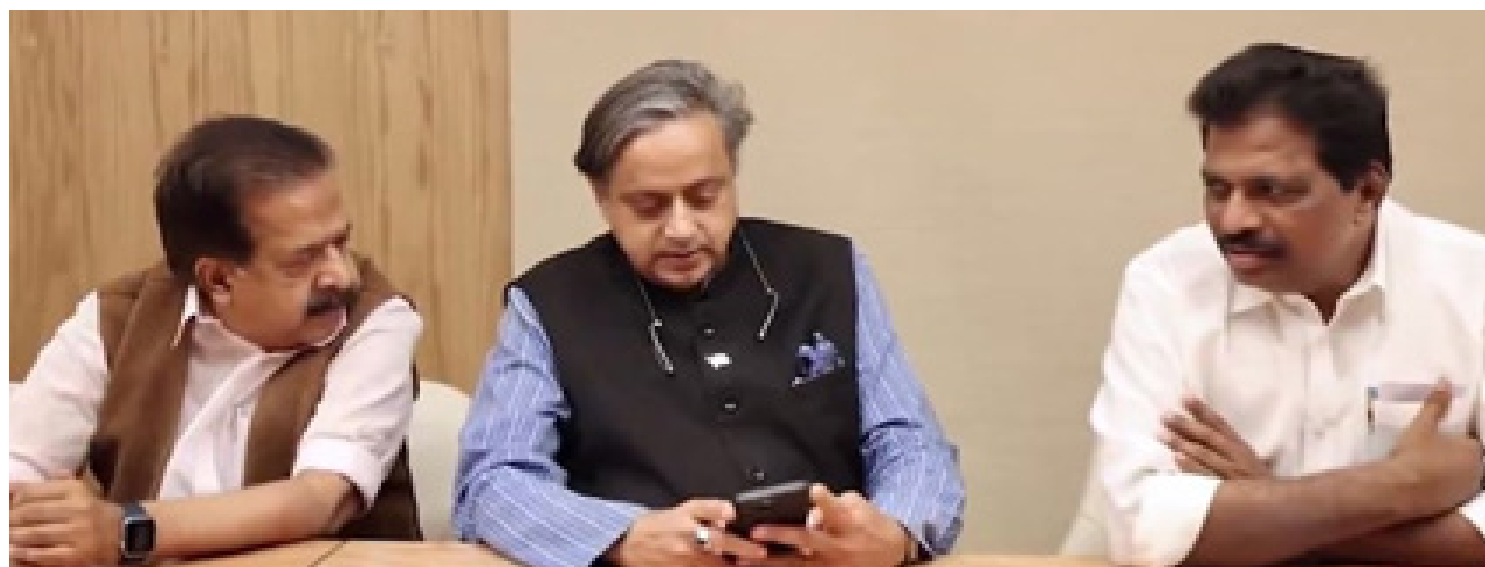
RLD MLAs staged a protest outside the Uttar Pradesh Assembly near Chaudhary Charan Singh's statue, asserting their support for the Hindi language and the NEP. Their demonstration was directed against the DMK's persistent opposition to Hindi and what they called the "mute response" of the SP and Congress to DMK's remarks. RLD leader and cabinet minister Anil Kumar questioned SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi over their silence. "SP's close ally, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, is openly opposing Hindi. Why are Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi not speaking on this issue?" he asked. Bhopender Chaudhary of the RLD stated that the party wants clarity from SP and Congress, as the people of Uttar Pradesh deserve to know their stance. "DMK claims that Hindi is absorbing regional dialects, which is false. Language standardization occurs across all states. Such statements create division in the country, which we feel is harmful to national unity," he said, supporting RLD leader and Union Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary's position on the matter. Tamil Nadu's DMK government has

firmly opposed the three-language policy in NEP 2020, arguing it enables a "backdoor entry" for Hindi in the state. CM Stalin has reiterated his stand against the "imposition" of Hindi, emphasizing that Tamil Nadu will adhere to its two-language formula—Tamil and English—used in state-run schools. The Centre has refuted DMK's claims, clarifying that the three-language formula does not mandate Hindi but allows states to choose any language apart from their primary ones. Stalin further escalated the dispute by claiming that forced adoption of Hindi in other states has led to the loss of 25 native North Indian languages over the past century. The BJP swiftly dismissed his remarks, calling them "silly" and politically motivated. "The push for a 'monolithic Hindi identity' is what kills ancient languages. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were never 'Hindi heartlands'—their real languages are now relics of the past," Stalin had stated. Jayant Singh countered these claims, accusing Tamil Nadu's ruling party of imposing a rigid political narrative. He emphasized that the NEP prioritizes mother tongues and local languages in education. "For those who haven't read NEP 2020 but are alleging imposition of Hindi just to push their narrow political viewpoint, the policy clearly states that the medium of instruction will have a greater emphasis on local and regional languages," Singh said in a social media post. Language politics has long been a sensitive issue in Tamil Nadu, with the DMK spearheading historic anti-Hindi agitations, including self-immolation protests against the language's imposition.

Congress Boss's Kerala Video Features Shashi Tharoor After "No Rift" Claim

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Following a string of electoral setbacks in Lok Sabha, Delhi, Haryana, and Maharashtra, the Congress party in Kerala convened a high-level brainstorming session on Friday to strategize for the 2026 Assembly elections. The meeting, attended by prominent leaders including Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor, aimed to project a united front and dismiss rumors of internal discord, while expressing confidence in defeating "oppressive and communal fronts" in the state. The three-hour session, held in New Delhi, saw the party's top leadership, including Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, former president Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, and Kerala in-charge Deepa Dasmunshi, deliberate on a roadmap to bring the United Democratic Front (UDF) back to power. The Kerala unit of the Congress took to X to share highlights, stating, "Change is inevitable in Kerala. Congress has built the development paradigm and welfare



model of Kerala, and we will do everything possible to bring our UDF to power." The presence of Shashi Tharoor drew attention, given recent speculation of a rift with senior leaders following his praise for the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's investment climate in a newspaper article. Further fueling the buzz, a podcast clip

quoted Tharoor saying, "If the Congress doesn't want him, he has other options," though he later clarified the remarks were misinterpreted. His recent selfie with Union Minister Piyush Goyal and Britain's Secretary of State Jonathan Reynolds had also stirred discussion. The party, however, issued a stern warning during the meeting that personal statements

against its interests would face strict action. Senior leader Ramesh Chennithala dismissed any notions of disunity, asserting, "Everybody will be united and will fight for the people of Kerala as the government of Kerala has totally failed on all fronts. We will fight and win back, and a UDF government will be installed in 2026." Deepa Dasmun-

shi echoed this sentiment, countering media narratives: "The media is giving a wrong impression that there is no unity in the Congress party in Kerala, which is untrue. Everyone here has expressed strongly against LDF and BJP. The leaders are strongly united and will speak in a univocal voice." The meeting saw participation from key figures like Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Kerala Congress chief K Sudhakaran, CLP leader V D Satheesan, chief whip K Suresh, former Rajya Sabha deputy chairman P J Kurien, and Kerala Mahila Congress president Jebi Mather. Post-meeting, Tharoor took to X, reinforcing the narrative of solidarity: "A good meeting of Kerala Congress leaders today with Congress president Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, and general secretary Deepa Dasmunshi ended in a strong affirmation of party unity as we head into the election season." As Kerala gears up for a contentious electoral battle, the Congress appears determined to present a cohesive front against both the ruling LDF and the BJP.



Karnataka Begins II PUC Annual Exams with Security and Free Transport for Students



TPN Correspondent | Manipur

The much-awaited first annual examination for second-year Pre-University Course (II PUC) students commenced across Karnataka on March 1, 2025, with exams taking place at 1,171 centres statewide. On the first day, students appeared for exams in Kannada and Arabic languages, with the examination schedule running from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Early on the exam day, students were seen gathering at various centres, revising their notes and making final preparations for the crucial exams. Minister for School Education and Literacy, Madhu Bangarappa, made a visit to the Government PU College examination centre at Malleswaram in Bengaluru, where he greeted students with roses and wished them luck for the exams.

A total of 7,13,862 students have registered for the II PUC exams, which include 3,35,468 boys, 3,78,389 girls, and five transgender candidates. These students represent 5,050 PU colleges spread across the state. The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) is responsible for conducting the examinations. To ensure smooth and fair proceedings, KSEAB has implemented several security measures, including live streaming of the examination process to prevent malpractices. Additionally, the board has deployed tight police security at all exam centres to maintain order and safeguard the integrity of the exams.

Centre of Excellence for Cancer Care in Kancheepuram to Open by May



TPN Correspondent | Chennai

The ambitious project to establish a Centre of Excellence for Cancer Diseases at the Government Arignar Anna Memorial Cancer Hospital in Kancheepuram district is set to be completed by May 2025. This new facility, located in Karapettai, is being upgraded into a premier institution for comprehensive cancer care, aimed at providing state-of-the-art treatment, training, and research opportunities.

The project, which spans over 10 acres of land, involves the construction of a 1,000-bed hospital that will cater to patients across Tamil Nadu and neighboring states. The Public Works Department (PWD) has made significant progress, with nearly 95% of the construction completed at an estimated cost of Rs. 218.46 crore. The five-storey hospital will cover 6.35 lakh square feet and is designed in a pentagon shape with 10 blocks. Originally planned as a two-storey structure in 2020, the project was later expanded to include three additional floors to accommodate research facilities. The hospital will feature several specialized departments, such as palliative care, radiation oncology, medical oncology, genetics, and modular operation theatres. Other essential facilities will include a blood bank, occupational therapy unit, interventional pain management clinic, and a yoga hall.

A key aspect of the design is the incorporation of atriums and a central courtyard with a tensile roof, which aims to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the building while ensuring proper ventilation. The building will also house a molecular research lab and a bone marrow transplant unit.

Uttarakhand avalanche: Four dead, 50 workers rescued, search on for five labourers

- Avalanche hits BRO camp in Uttarakhand's Mana
- 50 workers rescued; 4 confirmed dead, 5 still trapped
- Army, IAF helicopters lead urgent rescue efforts.



TPN Correspondent | Uttarakhand

Rescue operations in the high-altitude Mana village of Uttarakhand's Chamoli district are ongoing after an avalanche struck a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp on February 28. As of Saturday, March 1, 2025, fifty workers have been rescued, but tragically, four of them have been confirmed dead. Efforts are still underway to rescue the remaining five workers trapped under the snow.

The avalanche, which occurred between 5:30 a.m. and 6 a.m. on Friday, hit the BRO camp situated between Mana and Badrinath. The impact buried 55 workers inside eight containers and a shed. By Friday night, 33 workers had been rescued, and the search continued with urgency on Saturday.

A massive multi-agency rescue operation is

currently underway, involving six helicopters, including three from the Indian Army Aviation, two from the Indian Air Force (IAF), and one civil helicopter hired by the Army. These helicopters are being used to transport the injured and assist in the ongoing search for the remaining trapped workers.

A spokesperson for the Indian Army confirmed that 50 labourers have been rescued, but four of the injured workers succumbed to their injuries. The remaining five workers are still trapped, and rescuers are racing against

time to locate them. The search and rescue teams have prioritised the evacuation of the injured.

The avalanche severely affected road access to the area, with snow blocking the Badrinath-Joshimath highway at 15-20 locations, making ground-based rescue efforts impossible. Lieutenant General Anindya Sengupta of the Central Command and Lieutenant General D.G. Mishra of the Uttar Bharat area have both arrived at the site to oversee the operations.

Karnataka Implements Mass Culling as Bird Flu Cases Emerge in Three Districts



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Authorities in Karnataka have launched an extensive culling operation in three districts following confirmed cases of bird

flu. The state government is intensifying its surveillance efforts, especially in districts bordering Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, to curb the spread of the disease.

The detected cases of Avian Influenza, commonly known as bird flu, have been reported in Manvi taluk of Raichur, Chikkaballapur taluk of Chikkaballapur, and Sandur taluk of Ballari districts. These districts are now witnessing mass culling of poultry to prevent further contamination. While the disease primarily affects birds, it can occasionally spread to mammals, including humans, although no human cases have been reported in Karnataka at this time.

Avian influenza, caused by the H5N1 virus, is highly contagious among birds and poses a significant risk to the poultry industry. The state government has acted swiftly following confirmation of the H5N1 strain in samples

from poultry at the Regional Poultry Breeding and Training Centres in Kurekoppa (Ballari District) and Chikkaballapur District. The test results, which came back from the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) Lab in Bhopal on February 25, confirmed the presence of the virus.

In response, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Health and Family Welfare quickly issued a notification, designating a 3-kilometer radius around the affected sites as an "Infected Area" and implementing containment measures. Surveillance has been ramped up in these regions to monitor the situation and prevent the spread of the virus to nearby areas.

Centre of Excellence for Cancer Care in Kancheepuram to Open by May



TPN Correspondent | Kerala

At the fifth edition of the Dubai Pooram, held at the Etisalat Academy Ground in Dubai on December 2, 2024, four majestic elephants paraded in all their festive glory. Gently swaying, flapping their ears, and swishing their tails, these elephants were a sight to behold. However, these weren't real elephants but meticulously crafted mechanical ones, created by two Kerala-based companies.

In Kerala, elephants have long been a central figure in religious and cultural processions, especially during temple festivals. Their grand appearances in such events have been

a matter of great pride. Unfortunately, recent incidents involving captive elephants have raised concerns. In the early months of 2025, attacks by captive elephants resulted in five tragic deaths in Kerala. These attacks have sparked protests, yet elephants continue to be paraded in stressful environments filled with fireworks, loudspeakers, large crowds, and mistreatment, all of which can trigger these violent incidents. Amid these concerns, some temples in Kerala have voluntarily shifted to using mechanical elephants, partly due to the increasing regulations on the use of live elephants in parades.

One company leading the charge in creating these lifelike mechanical elephants is Chalakudy-based Four He Arts Creations. This company is known for its intricate and realistic models, and three of their mechanical elephants made an appearance at the Dubai Pooram.

The story of Four He Arts Creations began over 15 years ago, when four childhood friends—Prashant Prakasan, Santo Jose, Jinesh KM, and Robin MR—decided to create their first mechanical elephant, Kuttappayi. Standing at six-and-a-half feet tall, Kuttappayi was a labor of love, taking six months to build. The friends debuted their creation at Santo's sister's wedding, where Kuttappayi unexpectedly became the star of the event. The attention and demand for the elephant quickly grew, with people wanting to rent Kuttappayi for various functions, exhibitions, and inaugurations.

Bangladeshi Smuggler Killed In Retaliatory Firing By Border Force In Tripura

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A Bangladeshi national was shot dead by Border Security Force (BSF) personnel in Tripura's Sepahijala district after a group of smugglers attacked the border guards. The incident took place on Friday evening when a group of 20 to 25 Bangladeshi smugglers crossed the international boundary into India at Putia, under the jurisdiction of the Kalamchoura police station. The group reportedly met with Indian accomplices on the Indian side.

Upon noticing the intrusion, BSF personnel confronted the smugglers, which led to a violent clash. The smugglers reportedly attacked the BSF guards, injuring one of them during the confrontation. According to the BSF statement, the smugglers attempted to snatch weapons from the border guards, prompting one BSF jawan to open fire in self-defense using a pump-action gun. One of the smugglers was hit and subsequently taken to Bishalgarh hospital



for treatment. However, the injured Bangladeshi smuggler later succumbed to his wounds. His body is now kept at the morgue of the hospital.

Meanwhile, the BSF jawan who was injured in the attack is also receiving treatment at the same hospital. The situation has raised concerns regarding the growing smuggling activities along the India-Bangladesh border, which often lead to violent encounters between the border forces and illegal elements operating across the boundary.

The BSF has reiterated its commitment to protecting India's borders and ensuring the safety of its personnel, while also maintaining peace and security along the international frontier. Further investigations into the attack and the smuggling operations are underway.

Communist Confusion Mock Hindu Idols, Worship decaying Lenin body



Hindu Worship



Communist worship

The preservation of Lenin's decaying body in Red Square serves as a powerful symbol for many Communists, representing not just a historical figure but the ideals and aspirations of the Communist movement. For them, maintaining Lenin's body is an act of faith, respect, and commitment to the revolutionary principles he espoused. It signifies dedication to socialism and the ongoing struggle for a classless society. More than a relic, Lenin's embalmed body is a political statement, reinforcing the permanence of his ideology and serving as a source of inspiration for future generations.

However, this veneration presents an ideological paradox. Many Communists, particularly those adhering to Marxist principles, often criticize religious practices—such as Hindu idol worship—as superstitious and regressive. They argue that the worship of deities diverts attention from material struggles, fostering a “false consciousness” that prevents the working class from recognizing and challenging their economic oppression. According to this perspective, religious symbols reinforce existing power structures rather than dismantling them, making Hindu deity veneration a barrier to social progress.

Yet, the juxtaposition of Lenin's embalmed body and Hindu idols raises an important question: Why is one form of veneration seen as legitimate while the other is dismissed as irrational? Both involve the preservation of a physical representation—whether a revolutionary leader or a deity—imbued with profound ideological and emotional significance. This contradiction suggests an underlying cognitive dissonance within communist thought, wherein devotion to Lenin mirrors the very religious practices many Communists seek to dismantle.

Historically, Communism has positioned itself in opposition to organized religion, viewing it as an opiate that dulls the masses' revolutionary potential. Karl Marx's famous dictum that “religion is the opium of the people” underscores this belief. Commu-



Dr Buragadda Srinadh

nist regimes, from the Soviet Union to China, have often sought to suppress religious practices, replacing them with state-sanctioned ideology. Yet, paradoxically, these same regimes have built elaborate cults of personality around their leaders, elevating figures like Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to almost divine status.

In Lenin's case, his body has been preserved for a century, displayed in a glass sarcophagus under constant surveillance and maintenance. This effort, requiring state resources and scientific expertise, is reminiscent of religious relic preservation. The Mausoleum itself functions like a shrine, drawing visitors who view Lenin with a sense of reverence akin to pilgrims visiting a sacred site.

Similarly, in North Korea, the embalmed bodies of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are enshrined in the Kumsan Palace of the Sun. In China, Mao Zedong's body lies in state in Tiananmen Square, despite his earlier opposition to such practices. These leaders, once vehemently opposed to religious rituals, have ironically become the subjects of quasi-religious adoration themselves. The selective rejection of religious symbols while embracing revolutionary iconography reveals a deeper truth: human beings, regardless of ideology, seek symbols to ral-

ly around. Whether it is a deity in a temple or a revolutionary leader in a mausoleum, these figures provide a tangible focal point for faith, identity, and collective aspirations.

This raises the question: If Lenin's body can be preserved as an enduring symbol of socialism, why should Hindu idols be dismissed outright as irrational? If a Hindu devotee finds meaning in an image of Krishna or Shiva, is that fundamentally different from a communist drawing inspiration from Lenin's preserved remains? Both function as conduits for ideological and spiritual fulfillment.

The contradiction highlights the broader challenge faced by rigid ideological frameworks—they often struggle to account for the emotional and symbolic dimensions of human belief. Cognitive dissonance arises when people hold conflicting values, and in this case, communists must reconcile their reverence for Lenin with their critique of religious devotion. This tension invites a deeper reflection on the role of symbols in shaping political movements, cultural traditions, and personal identities.

Ultimately, the preservation of Lenin's body and the critique of Hindu idol worship underscore the complexities of belief systems and the ways cultural practices are interpreted through ideological lenses. They reveal that, despite opposing religion, communist movements have adopted their own sacred symbols—transforming political leaders into objects of reverence.

This paradox invites a broader discussion on the universality of symbolism in human societies. Whether through religious imagery, revolutionary relics, or nationalistic monuments, people across cultures seek tangible representations of their values and aspirations. Rather than dismissing one form of veneration while embracing another, it may be worth acknowledging that all societies, regardless of ideology, create symbols to inspire, unify, and sustain their beliefs.

Cultural Transformation: The Key to India's Path to 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047

The goal of a “Viksit Bharat” (Developed India) by 2047 is ambitious, but its realization hinges on fulfilling critical prerequisites. One of the most vital of these is cultural transformation.

No nation has reached developed status without undergoing a cultural shift that aligns people toward a common purpose, vision, and identity. A unified culture promotes shared values, behaviors, and practices, which are essential for social cohesion. This collective spirit fosters change, creativity, and understanding across different societal groups. It also explains why countries like China have made remarkable technological strides—such as developing DeepSeekAI—while others, like India, have yet to follow suit.

Cultural transformation creates an environment conducive to innovation, which is a key driver of long-term growth and productivity. Without innovation, economic progress



becomes unsustainable. Nations with robust manufacturing sectors, such as China, Singapore, Germany, and the Netherlands, benefit from consistent trade surpluses, which result from their strong cultural emphasis on manufacturing and innovation.

The process of cultural transformation involves aligning vision, mission, and core values to build a national consensus around crucial issues. As

Peter Drucker aptly stated, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast,” underscoring the importance of culture in achieving strategic objectives.

So, what exactly constitutes cultural transformation? It's about embedding desired behaviors into processes, procedures, and systems. Education, discipline, and organization are fundamental to nation-building and cultural change. Education helps foster open-mindedness, critical thinking, and the understanding of due processes. Due process ensures that people accept unfavorable outcomes when the process is fair and transparent.

Discipline, which is voluntary and not enforced, is the cornerstone of a law-abiding society. It promotes productivity, enhances decision-making, clarifies goals, and builds trust among people, ultimately improving professional relationships and accountability.

Pakistan Faces Dual Crises: Cricket's Collapse and Rising Terrorism Threats



Pakistan's recent exit from the 2025 Champions Trophy without securing a single victory has left the nation reeling. A critical editorial in *The Daily Times* titled ‘Abandoned!’ describes the exit as “disgraceful,” emphasizing the disappointment felt by fans. The editorial notes that Pakistan's cricket team failed to live up to expectations, plagued by mismanagement and underperformance. It states, “Watching the matches felt less like cheering for a national team and more like witnessing a tragic farce unfold on the global stage.” It also questions the lack of planning and strategy in both batting and countering aggressive bowling attacks, issues that have haunted the team for years.

In *Dawn's* editorial, the deep connection between cricket and politics in Pakistan is underlined. Cricket has long been a source of national pride, but it has also been heavily politicized, with a structure that is, according to the editorial, “in shambles.” The editorial criticizes the influence of former cricketers and the patronage politics that have undermined the sport, calling for an inquest into how these dynamics have stunted Pakistan's cricketing progress. The editorial concludes that this inquest must be swift to ensure that the sport's future can be restored to its former glory.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is also grappling with a growing security crisis. A recent suicide bombing at Darul Uloom Haqqania in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has raised alarms over the rise of a faction of the Islamic State (IS) in the region. *Dawn* reports that the bombing marks a departure from the usual pattern of attacks targeting security personnel and government officials, pointing to a potentially escalating threat from IS in the area. The editorial calls this a “fresh security challenge” and highlights the ongoing instability in parts of Balochistan and KP, where militant activity remains rampant. It suggests that this attack could prompt Pakistan and Afghanistan to work together to combat the growing IS threat.

In *The Nation's* editorial, the assassination of Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani, a key figure in peace negotiations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, is mourned as a serious setback. Haqqani, who was killed in the suicide bombing, had played a pivotal role in fostering dialogue between the two nations. The editorial raises questions about the motives behind the attack—whether it was an attempt to derail peace talks or the result of a factional dispute. It also speculates that the assassination could be part of a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining diplomatic efforts.



The New Era of Governance: IAS officers must not fear demands of digital age

Imagine a world where policies are debated, shaped, and implemented in real time—where governance evolves as quickly as a trending hashtag. This isn't a future vision; it's already happening.

Public institutions, once the steady backbone of governance, now find themselves in an era of rapid change. With the rise of social media, instant communication, and shifting public expectations, governments are transforming the way they interact with citizens. Decisions that used to take time and careful planning now unfold in an environment where public sentiment can change overnight.

For civil servants and policymakers, this new landscape offers both opportunities and challenges. While increased public engagement fosters transparency and participation, it also shortens the time frame in which institutions must act. The challenge today is not just implementing policies efficiently but balancing speed with substance and adaptability with structure.

Historically, governance followed a deliberate and structured path. Political leaders set broad directions, and public institutions ensured continuity, expertise, and regulatory safeguards. Decision-making

was driven by data, expert advice, and long-term vision. Then came the digital revolution, reshaping the process. Social media now plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and policy agendas. A 2024 Pew Research study revealed that 54% of Americans rely on social media for news, a shift that has made governance more transparent and participatory than ever before.

However, greater access to information has heightened expectations, placing pressure on public institutions to respond quickly. No longer insulated from the pulse of public opinion, institutions must navigate an environment where policy debates happen in real time. The question is: How can institutions maintain stability while adapting to this fast-paced world?

The key is not resisting change but strategically adapting. Governments worldwide are using digital platforms to improve services and engage citizens. India's Digital India initiative, for instance, has enhanced public service delivery through online platforms, while Singapore's Smart Nation program leverages data to improve governance. These examples show how technology can make institutions more effective and accessible.

India now emerging as factory of world: PM Modi

- India rises as manufacturing hub
- Vocal for Local" boosts exports
- PM Modi: India is a world force

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the success of his "vocal for local" initiative on Saturday, noting that Indian products are gaining international recognition and making their mark globally. Speaking at the NXT conclave during the launch of the 'NewsX World' channel, Modi proudly asserted that India is no longer seen merely as a back office for the world, but is emerging as a global manufacturing powerhouse.

The prime minister highlighted the transformation India is undergoing, with a shift from being a provider of cheap labor to becoming a significant player on the world stage. "For decades, the

world viewed India as its back office, but now, India is moving beyond that role and becoming the factory of the world," Modi stated. He underscored that this transformation is a result of the government's focus on encouraging local industries and the "vocal for local" movement, which has been instrumental in boosting domestic manufacturing and innovation.

India's growing global presence is being driven by a surge in the export of Indian-made products, which are now competing on the world market. Modi emphasized that Indian industries are not only creating jobs but are also contributing to the country's economic growth and reinforcing India's standing as a key player



in the global economy. "India is no longer just a workforce; it is a world force," he added.

The prime minister's remarks were a strong endorsement of the ongoing efforts to strengthen India's manufacturing sector, improve infrastructure, and promote indigenous brands internationally. He also lauded the role

of technology and innovation in helping Indian companies expand their reach globally. The shift from being merely a service provider to a manufacturing hub marks a significant milestone in India's economic journey and highlights the impact of government initiatives in fostering self-reliance and global competitiveness.



If anyone has the capacity to make PoJK part of India, it is Modi: Union minister

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Union Minister Jitendra Singh described Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) as a "miscarriage of history, justice, and Indian foreign policy" and expressed confidence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the leader who can make it a part of India. Speaking at an event organized by the Jammu and Kashmir People's Forum and Mirpur Balidan Samiti, Singh emphasized Modi's leadership, stating, "If anyone has the capacity to do it, it is Modi... Modi hai to Mumkin hai" (It is possible, if there is Modi).

Singh, who is both a lawmaker from Jammu and Kashmir and a minister in the Prime Minister's Office, was addressing the 25th anniversary of a resolution passed by the Indian Parliament on February 22, 1994. The resolution reaffirmed Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India and emphasized that any attempts to separate it from India would be resisted by all means necessary. The resolution also called for the vacating of territories occupied by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir through aggression.

In his remarks, Singh blamed India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, for allowing Pakistan to occupy a portion of Jammu and Kashmir, attributing the creation of PoJK to the "blunder" of the 1947 Partition. He asserted that PoJK is not just a result of partition but rather a fallout of it, further criticizing Nehru's handling of the situation during the early years of India's independence.

Singh's comments highlighted the ongoing political discourse over the status of PoJK, with the Indian government maintaining that the region belongs to India. As tensions continue to simmer over Jammu and Kashmir, Singh's remarks reiterate India's stance on the territorial dispute, reflecting the broader sentiment of reclaiming the region from Pakistan's control.

Omar Abdullah Ensures Smooth Arrangements for Ramadan in Jammu and Kashmir



TPN Correspondent | Srinagar

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a high-level meeting on Saturday to review the arrangements for the holy month of Ramadan, which begins on Sunday. During the meeting, he directed the Power Department to ensure there are no electricity outages during Sehri and Iftar times, ensuring a smooth and comfortable experience for the people observing the fast.

Abdullah emphasized that during Ramadan, the public expects the government to provide essential services without inconvenience. He stressed the importance of delivering services effectively, particularly in the power sector. "People want, and we must strive, to ensure that there are no power outages during Sehri and Iftar time," he said. Any required shutdowns, he instructed, should be planned and implemented during the day, allowing for maintenance work at more convenient times.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of addressing any issues with the electrical system and faulty distribution transformers (DTS) immediately to prevent disruptions during Ramadan. On the water supply front, Abdullah noted that the recent spell of snow and rain had improved the situation, but still emphasized the need to maintain a steady supply of clean drinking water to households.

In addition to the power and water supply concerns, Abdullah directed officials to ensure cleanliness around mosques and shrines, optimize traffic management, and bolster security arrangements. Both the inspectors general of police for Jammu and Kashmir have already addressed security measures, ensuring that public safety is a top priority.

Occurrence of crimes against women in Kerala is concerning: CM Vijayan

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday highlighted that while crimes against women in the state have decreased due to government interventions, the ongoing occurrence of such incidents in a progressive society like Kerala remains a matter of serious concern.

In his address at the International Women's Day celebrations organized by the Kerala Women's Commission (KWC), the Chief Minister acknowledged the state's significant strides in empowering women but stressed that more work needs to be done to ensure women can live free from fear of violence. "While the numbers have come down, the fact that crimes against women still take place is a serious issue," Vijayan said, urging every-



one to join forces in eliminating such crimes from society.

The CM pointed out that despite Kerala's rich history of promoting women's rights, many women still feel hesitant to step out into public spaces. "As a result, they are unable to fully utilize the various opportu-

nities available to them today. This situation needs to change," he emphasized.

Vijayan also praised the Kerala Women's Commission for the significant role it has played in advancing women's empowerment over the past three decades. He

expressed hope that the Commission's continued efforts would contribute further to improving the status of women in the state. "The KWC has brought about notable changes in society with respect to women's rights, and I believe this progress will continue," he said.

The Chief Minister highlighted Kerala's pioneering role as the first state in India to implement gender budgeting, a move that earned international recognition from the United Nations. He also mentioned the government's aim to allocate 25 percent of the state's project funds toward women empowerment initiatives, reinforcing the state's commitment to gender equality. Through these initiatives, the state hopes to foster an environment where women can feel safe, confident, and fully empowered to participate in all aspects of society.

Bullet Train Project: First Make In India Steel Bridge To Be Launched In Gujarat

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The first span of a 200-meter-long steel bridge, part of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor, is set to be launched this month in Nadiad, Gujarat. This bridge, an essential component of the ambitious bullet train project, is located along National Highway-48, which connects major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai. The bridge is slated to be completed by August 2025.

Weighing approximately 1,500 metric tonnes, the bridge is 14.3 meters wide and 14.6 meters high. Fabricated at the Salasar workshop near Hapur in Uttar Pradesh, the steel bridge parts have been coated with a pioneering C-5 system, which provides an advanced protective coating. The steel components have been joined using Tor Shear Type High Strength Bolts (TTHSB), designed to ensure the bridge has a lifespan of 100 years.

Typically, steel bridges have spans of 40 to 45 meters, making them ideal for facilitating highway, expressway, and railway crossings. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project will feature a total of



28 steel bridges, with 11 being constructed in Maharashtra and 17 in Gujarat, as part of the infrastructure development for the high-speed train network.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw recently inspected the Ahmedabad Railway Station Redevelopment Project and provided updates on the bullet train project's progress. Vaishnaw shared

that 360 kilometers of the total 508-kilometer route of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train have been completed, with the Maharashtra section showing significant progress. Notably, nearly 2 kilometers of the undersea tunnel in Maharashtra are already finished.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project, developed in collaboration with Japan, aims to rev-

olutionize regional connectivity. The high-speed rail network will link major business hubs such as Mumbai, Surat, Vadodara, and Ahmedabad, stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in Gujarat and Maharashtra. With a total sanctioned cost of Rs 1,08,000 crore, the project is expected to significantly enhance transportation infrastructure in India.



Texas Schoolgirl Who Killed Self Had Flagged Sexual Abuse By Family

TPN Correspondent | Texas

The Gainesville Independent School District has confirmed that 11-year-old Jocelynn Rojo Carranza, who allegedly died by suicide last month, was sexually abused by a family member, contradicting claims by her mother, Marbella Carranza. The revelation came after students reported the abuse to school officials, prompting an investigation that also uncovered reports of bullying related to the girl's immigration status.

Jocelynn, a student at a local school, was found unresponsive at her home on February 4 and passed away on February 8, devastating her family and community. Initially, Ms. Carranza attributed her daughter's death to relentless bullying by classmates over the family's immigration status, claiming the harassment drove Jocelynn to take her own life. She alleged that students on a school bus threatened to report the family to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), targeting Hispanic children, including Jocelynn, who overheard the comments. The bus driver confirmed the incident, though he noted Jocelynn was not directly part of the conversation but was nearby.

However, the school district's investigation revealed a more complex and troubling picture. Multiple students reported that Jocelynn had confided in them about being inappropriately touched by a family member, requesting they keep it secret to avoid getting them in trouble. Superintendent DesMontes Stewart stated, "Multiple students reported that [Jocelynn] told them she had been inappropriately touched by a family member and wished to keep this a secret to avoid getting them in trouble." The district also learned that Jocelynn had previously expressed suicidal intentions to a cousin, raising concerns about missed opportunities for intervention.

Ms. Carranza has vehemently denied the allegations of sexual abuse, stating, "Nothing about that is true." She emphasized that she had repeatedly discussed the topic of sexual abuse with her daughter, instructing her that no one should touch her body. Ms. Carranza, who has retained a lawyer, is awaiting a response from the district and has accused the school of negligence for failing to inform her about her daughter's therapy or the severity of her struggles.

India to remain fastest-growing economy with 6.5% GDP growth in FY26: IMF

- IMF projects India's GDP growth at 6.5% in 2025-26.
- Strong private investment and macroeconomic stability to drive growth.

TPN Correspondent | New York

India will maintain its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy, with a projected GDP growth of 6.5% in 2025-26, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The multilateral financial agency attributed this growth to robust private investment and continued macroeconomic stability.

The IMF's latest assessment, released after its Article IV consultations with India, emphasized that the country's strong economic performance presents an opportunity to implement critical structural reforms aimed at achieving its goal of becoming an advanced economy by 2047.

"Real GDP is expected to grow at 6.5% in both 2024-25 and 2025-26, supported by sustained macroeconomic and financial stability, along with strong pri-



ivate consumption," the IMF report stated. It also noted that headline inflation is expected to stabilize as food price shocks subside.

The agency highlighted the importance of structural reforms to sustain long-term economic growth, create high-quality jobs, and attract greater private

investment. Key recommendations include labor market reforms, improvements in human capital, and measures to enhance women's participation in the workforce.

Boosting foreign direct investment (FDI) and private sector involvement will require a stable policy environment, en-

hanced ease of doing business, governance reforms, and deeper trade integration through tariff and non-tariff reductions, the IMF added.

Despite a slight moderation in recent quarters, India's economic growth remains strong. GDP grew 6% year-on-year in the first half of 2024-25, while inflation remained within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) tolerance band of 2-6%, though food price fluctuations caused some volatility. The financial sector remains resilient, with non-performing loans at multi-year lows. Fiscal consolidation efforts continue, and the current account deficit remains under control, supported by strong growth in service exports. With the IMF reaffirming India's robust economic outlook, the focus now shifts to policy measures that can sustain this momentum and drive long-term development.

Russia reacts to Trump-Zelensky clash at White House

TPN Correspondent | Moscow

Russia has responded with satisfaction to the fiery exchange between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House. The tense meeting, which saw Trump sharply criticize Zelensky over the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, ended with the Ukrainian leader abruptly cutting his visit short.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova praised Trump for his "restraint" in handling Zelensky. "How Trump and Vance held back from hitting that scumbag is a miracle of restraint," she wrote on Telegram, accusing the Ukrainian president of "biting the hand that feeds him."

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council and former Russian president, was even harsher in his remarks.



He called Zelensky an "insolent pig" who received "a proper slap down in the Oval Office." Medvedev claimed Trump had finally confronted Zelensky with the truth, warning that Kyiv was "playing with the third world war."

Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Rus-

sian Direct Investment Fund, described the confrontation as "historic" and a sign of shifting US policy. Meanwhile, Yevgeny Primakov, head of Russia's Agency for International Humanitarian Cooperation, accused Zelensky of planning "provocations" to gain sympathy.

Russian state media celebrated the incident, with RT posting on X (formerly Twitter): "Zelensky sits with hands between legs as US President and VP hammer him."

While several European leaders expressed support for Zelensky, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a long-time ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, sided with Trump. "Strong men make peace, weak men make war," Orban wrote on X, praising Trump for his efforts to broker a ceasefire.

Before the meeting, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated Russia's willingness to engage in dialogue with the US but emphasized the need for mutual respect. "We want to build dialogue not only with the U.S. but with all countries from a position of mutual respect and mutual benefit," Peskov told Russian media.

US stocks, Bitcoin struggle in Trump's first weeks in office

- Nasdaq down over 1% as inflation concerns rise.
- Bitcoin plunges 16% after peaking at \$1,06,000.
- Walmart's warning fuels fears of economic slowdown.

TPN Correspondent | Washington

US stock markets and Bitcoin have struggled since President Donald Trump took office on January 20, 2025, defying initial optimism about his business and crypto-friendly policies. All major US stock indexes are in the red, with the Nasdaq dropping over 1% so far this year.

A key factor behind the market slump is rising inflation concerns. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index saw its sharpest monthly decline since August 2021, raising fears of economic uncertainty. Additionally, a recent consumer confidence survey pushed the Fear & Greed Index into the "extreme fear" zone for the first time since December 2024.

Bitcoin, which soared to \$1,06,000 during Trump's inauguration, has fallen nearly 16% over the past month, now trading around \$88,000. Investors, wary of market volatility, are shifting towards safer assets like government bonds.



Adding to the concerns, retail giant Walmart issued a warning about slower sales growth in 2025, fueling fears of a broader economic downturn.

In contrast, global markets are showing resilience. Europe's STOXX 600 Index has gained nearly 10% in 2025, while Chinese stocks have outperformed their US counterparts. Analysts from Goldman Sachs noted that China's tech sector, particularly

after the launch of DeepSeek's LLM, is seeing significant growth. European tech stocks are also performing well, boosted by ongoing geopolitical developments.

Technology stocks, which have driven market growth in recent years, are now showing weakness. Companies like Nvidia, Palantir, and Tesla have suffered heavy losses, with Tesla's market value dropping below \$1 trillion after an 8.4% decline.

China To Send Pak Astronaut As 1st Foreign Guest To Its Space Station

TPN Correspondent | Beijing/Islamabad

China has announced plans to send an astronaut from Pakistan to its space station Tiangong, making Pakistan the first foreign country to have its astronaut aboard the Chinese orbital facility.

The agreement was signed between the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) and Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) on Friday. The deal, signed in Islamabad in the presence of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, includes collaboration in selecting and training Pakistani astronauts before they are sent to Tiangong, which orbits 400 km above the Earth, state-run China Daily reported.

China has already been assisting Pakistan's space program by launching satellites for its close ally over the past few years. Now, this step marks a new level of space cooperation between the two nations.

Tiangong, China's independently built space station, was developed after Beijing was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) due to concerns over military involvement in its space program. The Chinese station is seen as a rival to the Russian-built Mir space station and a potential com-

petitor to Western space initiatives. China's expanding space program has raised international concerns, particularly regarding the station's robotic arms, which have the capability to grab objects, including satellites, in orbit. This feature has led to speculation about the station's potential military



applications. In addition to sending a Pakistani astronaut to space, China has set ambitious goals for its space exploration program. Deputy Director of CMSA Lin Xiqiang recently announced that China plans to land astronauts on the moon before 2030, aligning with global space ambitions. Meanwhile, the US has scheduled its lunar return for 2025.

With this latest development, China has further strengthened its space diplomacy, positioning itself as a key player in global space exploration while deepening its strategic partnership with Pakistan.

India's GST collection rises 9.1% to ₹1.84 lakh crore in February 2025

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections have surged by 9.1% in February 2025, totaling approximately ₹1.84 lakh crore, according to official data released on Saturday. This growth marks a significant uptick, driven by a notable increase in both domestic and import-related revenues.

The GST revenue breakdown reveals a 10.2% increase in domestic revenues, reaching ₹1.42 lakh crore. Additionally, revenues from imports saw a 5.4% rise, amounting to ₹41,702 crore during February. This demonstrates the continued strength of the domestic economy, while import-related activity remains resilient.

Further details show that the Central GST (CGST) generated ₹35,204 crore, while the State GST (SGST) accounted for ₹43,704 crore. The Integrated GST (IGST) contributed ₹90,870 crore, and the compensation cess collected stood at ₹13,868 crore. The total refunds issued for the month amounted to ₹20,889 crore, reflecting a 17.3% increase compared to the previous year.

Net GST collections, after refunds, also saw a healthy growth of 8.1%, reaching approximately ₹1.63 lakh crore. This marks an increase from the ₹1.50 lakh crore recorded in February 2024. Gross GST revenues in February 2024 were ₹1.68 lakh crore, with net



collections at ₹1.50 lakh crore. Vivek Jalan, Partner at Tax Connect Advisory Services LLP, commented on the figures, stating that the GST collections are aligning closely with targets. This positive trend contributes to the projected fiscal deficit for FY24-25, estimated at 4.8%, which is below the budgeted 4.9%.

Jalan also noted a key observation in the data: the growth rate for GST on imports is 7.2%, compared to a 10.1% rise in domestic GST collections. This suggests that India is becoming more self-reliant, as domestic

consumption and production are outpacing imports. Furthermore, the 15.8% increase in refunds, including those related to exports, signals that India is making strides in global manufacturing, positioning itself as a key player in international trade.

Amidst global geopolitical uncertainties, India's performance in managing its GST collections reflects the strength of its economic fundamentals, providing a positive outlook for the country's fiscal health and economic resilience.

LPG Cylinder Price Hike in March Commercial Gas Rates Increased by ₹6

In March 2025, oil marketing companies (OMCs) have raised the price of commercial Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders by ₹6 across various cities in India. Following this price hike, the cost of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder has increased from ₹1,797 to ₹1,803.

The price increase comes after a slight reduction of ₹7 in February 2025, offering some relief to businesses such as hotels and restaurants. However, this new hike is expected to negate those benefits. It is important to note that the price hike follows a significant increase of ₹352 in March 2023 for commercial LPG cylinders. Domestic LPG cylinder prices, on the other hand, have remained stable for several months.

Commercial LPG cylinders are primarily used for business purposes, including in hotels, restaurants, and other commercial establishments. The recent hike in prices for commercial cylinders is seen as a setback for these businesses, which were expecting continued relief following the previous month's price reduction.

While the price increase in March is marginal, it may still have an impact on businesses that rely on LPG for cooking and heating. The hike is unlikely to cause widespread disruption, as it is relatively small and comes on the heels of a reduction. However, local variations in prices, such as local taxes and transport costs, could lead to differences in the LPG prices across various cities. Business owners are advised to check with local gas operators to confirm the exact price in their area.

Despite the increase in commercial LPG cylinder rates, the cost of domestic LPG cylinders has remained unchanged since August 2024, providing some stability for households.



India's Fiscal Deficit Reaches 74.5% of Revised Target by January



India's central government fiscal deficit surged to 74.5% of the revised annual target by January, a significant increase from 63.6% at the same time last year. The rise in the fiscal gap is attributed to higher capital expenditure and a double tranche of devolution payments made to states in January, according to official data released on Friday.

Despite this increase, analysts remain optimistic that the fiscal deficit will stay within the government's target of 4.8% of GDP for the financial year 2024-25 (FY25). The government's fiscal policy is aimed at balancing the need for increased spending, particularly in infrastructure and welfare programs, with maintaining macroeconomic stability.

The fiscal deficit is the difference between the government's total expenditure and its total revenue, and a higher deficit often reflects a need for borrowing. The recent spike in capital expenditure has been part of the government's effort to boost economic growth, particularly through infrastructure investments. Additionally, the advanced devolution of funds to states in January, while supporting state-level development, also contributed to the widening fiscal gap.

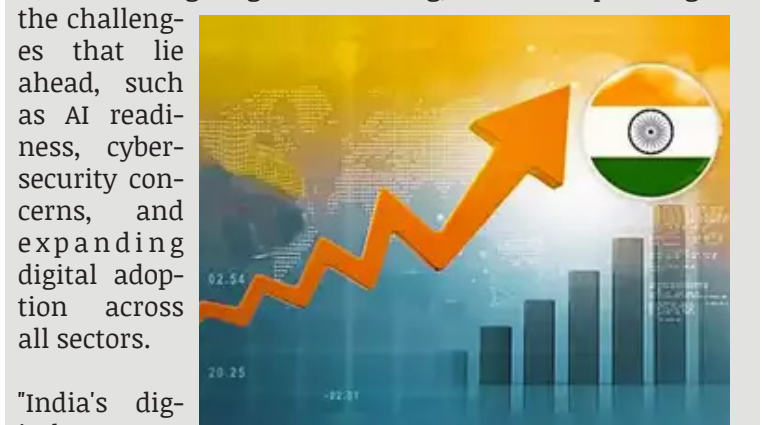
In response to these challenges, the government is expected to continue managing its finances carefully over the remainder of the fiscal year. Analysts predict that while the deficit may temporarily overshoot the target in the short term, it will be brought back on track through disciplined revenue collection, strategic fiscal policies, and a potential reduction in spending during the latter part of the year.

As India strives to achieve its fiscal deficit target, it will also need to navigate a complex economic landscape, balancing growth with fiscal responsibility. The government's ability to manage these competing priorities will be critical in ensuring continued economic stability in the coming years.

India's Digital Economy Set to Reach One-Fifth of GDP by 2029

India's digital economy is expanding at twice the rate of the overall economy and is projected to contribute one-fifth of the nation's GDP by 2029, according to a report by Dutch investment firm Prosus and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

The "State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) 2025" report highlights India's growing prominence in the digital world, ranking as the third most digitized nation globally, after the United States and China. The report outlines how India's digital transformation is reshaping the economy and bolstering its global standing, while also pointing to the challenges that lie ahead, such as AI readiness, cybersecurity concerns, and expanding digital adoption across all sectors.



"India's digital transformation is rapidly redefining its economy and global position. The SIDE 2025 report offers valuable insights into how India can harness its digital strengths while addressing key challenges," said Sehraj Singh, Managing Director at Prosus.

The country's ability to capitalize on technology is largely attributed to its large, youthful population that is enthusiastic about adopting new technologies. In addition, India has seen a significant rise in mobile internet penetration and the successful implementation of key digital public infrastructures, such as Aadhaar (the biometric identification system), the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and Digilocker, a digital locker system for storing documents securely. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in driving digital engagement and economic transformation.

As India continues to evolve digitally, the growth of its digital economy is expected to not only enhance its global competitiveness but also create new opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation. However, addressing the remaining challenges will be essential to sustaining this growth and ensuring that the benefits of digitalization reach all segments of society.

Mahindra & Mahindra Reports 15% Growth in February Auto Sales

Mahindra & Mahindra reported strong growth in its overall auto sales for February, with total sales reaching 83,702 vehicles, marking a 15% increase compared to the previous year. This growth includes both domestic sales and exports.

In the 'Utility Vehicles' segment, Mahindra saw a significant rise in its SUV sales, selling 50,420 units domestically, which represents a 19% growth. Overall, including exports, the company sold 52,386 utility vehicles. The domestic sales for Commercial Vehicles were also robust, with 23,826 units sold.

Veejay Nakra, President of the Automotive Division at Mahindra & Mahindra, attributed this strong performance to the continued positive momentum for the company's SUV portfolio. "In February, we clocked SUV sales of 50,420, a growth of 19 percent and 83,702 total vehicles, a growth of 15 percent. This reflects the ongoing success of our offerings in the market," Nakra stated.

Meanwhile, Mahindra's Farm Equipment Sector (FES) also reported positive sales growth. In February, the company sold 23,880 tractors in the domestic market, a 19% increase compared to February 2024, when 20,121 units were sold. Total tractor sales, including exports, stood at 25,527 units, compared to 21,672 units last year. Exports accounted for 1,647 units in February.

Hemant Sikka, President of Mahindra's Farm Equipment Sector,

attributed the growth to favorable weather conditions for the Rabi crop and continued government support for the agricultural sector. He added, "The increase in Agri credit limits, ongoing government efforts to boost farmer incomes, and a strong Rabi harvest will further contribute to rising tractor demand." Exports also saw a healthy growth of 6% year-on-year.

Mahindra & Mahindra remains one of the largest multinational federations, with a workforce of 260,000 employees operating in over 100 countries. The company's strong performance in both the automotive and farm equipment sectors is reflective of its successful strategy and market demand.



Shin-chan Makes His Debut in India with New Movie; Fans Eager for the Release



Shin-chan, the beloved mischievous cartoon character, is making his first appearance in India with a brand-new movie titled *Eiga Crayon Shin-chan Cho Karei! Shakunetsu no Kasukabe Dancers* ("Crayon Shin-chan the Movie: Super Magnificent! Scorching Kasukabe Dancers"). The movie's newly released trailer has already sparked excitement among fans, as it promises a fun-filled adventure through iconic Indian landmarks.

In the trailer, Shin-chan and his friends are shown traveling to India for the first time. The gang is seen in awe as they explore vibrant cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Jaipur, with famous landmarks making an appearance. The excitement builds as Shin-chan and his friends enthusiastically dance, embracing the lively atmosphere of India. This dance-themed movie marks an exciting new chapter for the *Crayon Shin-chan* franchise and brings a fresh, energetic vibe to the much-loved series. The film's trailer has raised fans' anticipation, with many eager to see how their favor-

ite characters will interact with India's rich culture and landmarks. Shin-chan's energetic antics and dance moves are sure to add to the thrill of the movie, set in the heart of India. The movie, releasing in the summer of 2025, marks the return of screenwriter Kimiko Ueno and director Masakazu Hashimoto. Fans can expect even more details in the coming months as the movie's release date draws closer.

The *Crayon Shin-chan* series, created by Yoshito Usui, has been a fan favorite since its debut as a comic in 1990, thanks to its unique humor and relatable characters. Even after Usui's passing in 2009, his team continued the legacy under the banner Yoshito Usui & UY Studio, ensuring the beloved series continued to thrive.

After more than 30 years of airing and expanding into movies, TV specials, and more, *Crayon Shin-chan* continues to captivate audiences worldwide, and this new movie is sure to add to its growing popularity. Fans are eagerly waiting for Shin-chan's Indian adventure!

"Just Amazing" - Viral Video Shows Intricate Designs Made With Melted Sugar In China

A viral video showcasing a unique "edible" art form in China has captivated audiences on Instagram. The video features the traditional Chinese art of "sugar painting," where molten sugar is used to create intricate, edible masterpieces. In the clip, an artist skillfully crafts two stunning designs in front of a mesmerized audience.



For the first piece, the artist dips a ladle into a pot of molten sugar and begins to pour it onto a metallic surface. With deft movements, they shape the sugar into the outline of a butterfly, adding fine details like whorls and stripes. Once the sugar hardens, the butterfly design is carefully lifted off the surface and presented to an onlooker.

The second creation features a cartoon girl, based on a photo the artist has been given. Using molten sugar, the artist meticulously forms the girl's face, hair, and upper body, even including delicate features like her eyes, nose, and mouth. A thin stick is placed at the center of the design, allowing the

artist to later lift the piece. The video is captioned, "Sugar painting is a traditional Chinese folk art where artists use molten sugar to create intricate, edible designs like butterflies and dragons. In Nantong, this craft is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage, with artisans creating these sweet works to delight both the eyes and taste buds." The video has struck a chord with viewers, with many impressed by the artist's remarkable talent and attention to

detail. Comments on Instagram include, "So talented," "Beautiful and impressive," and "Mind-blowing art!! The detailing is phenomenal." Sugar painting dates back to the Ming Dynasty, where it was originally used for religious rituals. Today, it remains a cherished form of folk art, celebrated for its intricate craftsmanship and cultural significance. The art has even earned recognition as an intangible cultural heritage, highlighting its enduring legacy.

Unusual Ocean Events: Are They Signs of a Changing Environment?



Something strange is unfolding in the oceans, with unusual sightings and behaviors among marine life raising alarms. Deep-sea creatures are surfacing more frequently, and marine animals are exhibiting unpredictable actions. From the rare appearance of the so-called "doomsday fish" to baffling whale strandings, these events have left experts pondering whether they are signs of a changing environment or a warning of something even larger to come.

One of the most discussed mysteries is the sudden appearance of the oarfish, a long, serpent-like creature that has become the subject of various disaster myths.

Recently, one of these elusive fish washed ashore in Lanzarote, sparking renewed fears that their appearance could be linked to natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tsunamis. In Japanese folklore, oarfish are considered "Messengers of the Sea God" and are believed to surface before major seismic events, adding to their mystical reputation. While such sightings have long been tied to legends, scientists are investigating whether the oarfish's unusual behavior could indicate changes in the ocean's ecosystem or broader environmental shifts. Some experts speculate that the rise in sightings could be linked to disruptions in the ocean's

conditions, such as rising temperatures or increased seismic activity, which might drive these deep-sea creatures closer to the surface. In addition to the oarfish, unexplained whale strandings are adding to the growing sense of unease. Although strandings have been observed for centuries, the frequency of these events seems to be increasing, with no clear explanation as to why. Some researchers suggest that the disruptions in marine environments, such as noise pollution from ships or changes in water temperature, might be disorienting these animals, leading them to strand themselves. With these events unfolding in real time, many are left wondering if they are isolated incidents or signs of a broader environmental shift. As scientists continue to monitor these phenomena, the possibility of a significant ecological or geological change remains an open question.

Woman Rides Helmetless With Parrot, Video Goes Viral in Bengaluru

Bengaluru, a city famous for its tech scene, has become a hot spot for quirky and sometimes risky traffic videos, and a new incident is adding to the city's colorful reputation. A video recently went viral showing a woman riding a two-wheeler without a helmet while carrying a vibrant parrot on her shoulder. Captured by an onlooker and shared on X (formerly Twitter) by Rahul Jadhav, the clip quickly caught the attention of social media users, with many calling it a perfect example of Bengaluru's unpredictable daily life.

The video, titled "Never a dull moment in Bangalore," showcases yet another bizarre moment on the city's busy streets. In the footage, the woman calmly rides the motorcycle, completely helmetless, while a colorful parrot perches on her shoulder. The combination of reckless driving and the unusual companion has sparked a range of reactions online. This incident is just one in a series of unusual traffic behaviors observed in Bengaluru. The city has gained attention for incidents like a woman working on a laptop while driving through heavy traffic or a rider seen without a helmet, with a passenger sitting



in an unsafe, forward-facing position. Such occurrences are becoming more frequent, highlighting the city's unique, and often dangerous, traffic culture. Social media users have had mixed reactions to the viral video, with one commenting, "This is clearly a peak moment." The city, known for its chaotic traffic and frequent violations, is often the subject of viral content that underscores the ongoing challenges around public safety and responsible

driving practices. Despite repeated warnings and traffic regulations, these kinds of reckless behaviors continue to be a concern. Whether it's ignoring basic safety gear like helmets or engaging in distractions while riding, the need for improved traffic discipline in Bengaluru is more pressing than ever. The viral video has once again brought the spotlight on the city's traffic issues, prompting calls for greater awareness and enforcement of safety norms.

Consumers Sue Apple Over False "Carbon Neutral" Claim on Watches

Apple is facing a lawsuit from consumers who allege that the company's claim of three versions of its Apple Watches being "carbon neutral" is false and misleading. The lawsuit, filed on Wednesday in the federal court in San Jose, California, accuses Apple of making deceptive environmental claims regarding the Apple Watch Series 9, SE, and Ultra 2 models. Seven customers, who purchased these watches labeled with a "green" carbon-neutral tag, argue that they would not have bought the products or would have paid less if they had known the truth about the environmental impact. The plaintiffs claim that the watches, advertised as "car-

bon neutral," may not meet the criteria, misleading them about the actual environmental benefits of their purchases. Apple introduced the carbon-neutral Apple Watches in September 2023, proudly stating that the watches would achieve carbon neutrality through a combination of reduced emissions and the purchase of carbon offsets. The company promoted these models as environmentally friendly, aligning with its broader efforts to address climate change and reduce its carbon footprint across various product lines. However, the plaintiffs contend that the claims made by Apple were not ac-

curate, challenging the validity of the company's environmental assertions. According to the lawsuit, Apple failed to adequately disclose the full scope of emissions associated with manufacturing and the potential limitations of its carbon offset strategy. This legal action highlights growing concerns about corporate environmental claims, particularly in the tech industry, where companies like Apple often face scrutiny over their sustainability efforts. The outcome of this lawsuit could set a precedent for how companies market their environmental initiatives and the level of transparency required when claiming carbon neutrality.



Karun Nair's Unbeaten 132 Puts Vidarbha in Command in Ranji Trophy Final

Karun Nair's brilliant, unbeaten 132 powered Vidarbha to a commanding position in the Ranji Trophy final against Kerala. Nair's 280-ball knock, including 10 fours and 2 sixes, extended Vidarbha's lead to 286 runs at the end of Day Four. The highlight of Nair's innings came when he was dropped on 31 by Kerala's Akshay Chandran off a regulation catch at first slip. Nair made the most of the reprieve, scoring his fourth century of the season and signaling his nine centuries this season across two competitions with a special gesture.



Vidarbha, who began Day Four with a 37-run lead, were in early trouble at 7/2, but Nair and Danish Malewar (73) steadied the ship with a 182-run stand. Vidarbha now have the title within reach with one day remaining.

10-Year-Old Atiqah Mir Becomes First Indian to Join F1 Academy Driver Program

10-year-old karting prodigy Atiqah Mir has made history by becoming the first Indian and Asian racer to be signed by Formula 1 Academy for its prestigious driver program. The female-only racing series, owned by Formula 1, chose Atiqah for its Discover Your Drive (DYD) program after closely monitoring her impressive karting performances. Atiqah, hailing from Jammu and Kashmir, is one of only three drivers worldwide in the mini category (ages 8-11) to be selected for the program. She will compete in the Champions of the Future Academy Program Championship, with races scheduled in Europe and the Middle East, starting this weekend.



F1 Academy will provide her with financial and technical support, covering her fitness, driving, and mental preparation, marking a major milestone in her burgeoning racing career. Atiqah expressed her excitement, saying, "Being chosen by Formula 1 Academy is a huge honor. I will work hard to repay the faith in me and represent India with pride."



Champions Trophy: South Africa Dominates England to Qualify for Semi-finals

South Africa stormed into the Champions Trophy semi-finals with a dominant seven-wicket victory over England in the final Group B match. After dismissing England for a paltry 179, South Africa comfortably chased down the target in just 29.1 overs, securing the win with 20.5 overs to spare. England, already eliminated from the semifinal race, struggled from the outset, with Marco Jansen (3/39), Wiaan Mulder (3/25), and Ke-

shav Maharaj (2/35) putting in an outstanding bowling performance. The Proteas dismissed England for the lowest total of this edition in 38.2 overs. In the chase, Heinrich Klaasen (64) and Rassie van der Dussen (72*), who shared a 127-run partnership, steered South Africa to victory. This win sent the Proteas to the semi-finals, where they will face Australia after topping the group.

Armand Duplantis Breaks His Own Pole Vault World Record with 6.27m Leap



Swedish Olympic champion Armand Duplantis once again rewrote history by breaking his own world pole vault record at the All Star Pole Vault event in Clermont-Ferrand, France. After securing victory with a 6.07m jump, Duplantis raised the bar to 6.27m and cleared it on his first attempt.

"It's always special, like a feeling of euphoria," said Duplantis after the jump. This marks the 11th time he has improved his world record, having first set it in 2020 with a leap of 6.16m. Duplantis, 25, also celebrated the moment with his song "Bop," which was

playing during the jump. The record-breaking feat came just months after his Olympic gold in Paris and a previous record of 6.26m in August 2024. Duplantis will continue his journey with future competitions in Sweden and China.

Prague Masters: R Praggnanandhaa Wins First Round, Aravindh Chithambaram Takes Sole Lead



Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa secured his first win in the Prague Masters with a dominant victory over Nguyen Thai Dai Van of the Czech Republic. The Indian chess prodigy comfortably navigated the complexities of the Nimzo-Indian defense, capitalizing on a decisive advantage early in the game to win a rook for a minor piece. After two draws in earlier rounds, Praggnanandhaa's commanding win placed him in a strong position, sharing second place with Germany's Vincent Keymer. Meanwhile, Aravindh Chithambaram emerged as the sole leader after defeating top seed Wei Yi of China. Aravindh's deep understanding of the Ragozin opening and brilliant calculation led to a 44-move win, taking him to 2.5 points from 3 rounds. Aravindh's performance also saw him break into the world's top 20 in live ratings for the first time.

Uttar Pradesh CM Wishes UP Warriorz Ahead of WPL Home Leg

Ahead of their home leg at the Women's Premier League (WPL), UP Warriorz captain Deepti Sharma and Capri Sports' Director Jinisha Sharma met Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. They invited him to attend the team's games at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium. Owner Jinisha Sharma expressed gratitude for the CM's support, stating, "His good wishes inspire our team to give our best. We hope to make him and Uttar Pradesh proud." Captain Deepti Sharma also shared her honor in meeting the CM and appreciated his support. The UP Warriorz, led by Deepti Sharma, are gearing up for their home leg, starting with a match against Gujarat Giants on March 3. They will also face Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru on March 6 and 8, respectively.



Punjab Warriors Storm into InBL Pro U25 Final with Dominant Win Over Hyderabad Falcons

Punjab Warriors secured a dominant 98-72 victory over Hyderabad Falcons at the Indra Gandhi Indoor Stadium on Friday, advancing to the InBL Pro U25 final. The Warriors put on a blistering performance, especially in the third quarter, where they extended their lead to 23 points. Stokley Chaffee led the charge with a double-double, registering 15 points and 14 rebounds, while Thomas Garrett and Gurbaz Sandhu contributed 16 points each, including key

three-pointers. Punjab set the tone early, leading by 12 points in the first quarter, and continued to build on that advantage throughout the game. Despite a brief surge from Hyderabad's Harsh Dagar and Jack Purchase, the Warriors' offensive depth and strong defense kept the Falcons at bay. The Warriors now await their final opponent, having outclassed the Falcons in every aspect of the game.



Ready to Begin Second Innings in Cinema



Rambha, a celebrated actress of the 90s, is all set to make her comeback in the film industry. Known for her charm and acting skills, she ruled Tollywood alongside top heroes, and also made her mark in Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and even Bollywood. After her marriage, she took a break from the industry, but she has remained a favorite among fans. Now, Rambha believes the time is right for her to return to acting. She expressed that cinema has always been her first love and that she is eager to take on challenging roles. Rambha aims to connect with audiences through meaningful, performance-driven characters and feels that this is the perfect time to make her second innings in the film industry. Fans eagerly await her return!

Shreya Ghoshal Alerts Fans After Her X Account Gets Hacked



Shreya Ghoshal has informed her fans that her X (formerly Twitter) account has been hacked since February 13, 2025. The singer took to Instagram to alert her followers, stating that despite her efforts, she has not been able to regain control of the account. She urged fans not to click on any links or believe any messages from the compromised account, calling them spam and phishing attempts. Sharing a photo, Shreya wrote, "I have tried everything to reach out to the X team, but have received only automated responses. I can't even log in to delete my account. I will update you personally if the account is recovered." In other news, Shreya recently supported Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Anti-Obesity campaign, encouraging a healthier lifestyle and nutritious food for a fitter India.

'Kannappa' Teaser Released: Manchu Vishnu's Powerful Avatar as a Warrior



The teaser for Manchu Vishnu's upcoming film *Kannappa* has been released, giving a glimpse of the actor's intense performance. The movie, set to release on April 25, is based on the story of 'Tinnadu,' a great devotee of Lord Shiva, who is ready to sacrifice his two eyes for the deity. In the teaser, we see the character of Kannappa in a warrior-like avatar, filled with valor and devotion. The teaser showcases scenes

of tribal communities, internal conflicts, and Kannappa's transformation from a staunch atheist to a devoted follower of Lord Shiva, which astonishes Goddess Parvati. The film features an ensemble cast, including Akshay Kumar, Mohan Babu, Prabhas, Kajal, and others. The film portrays Kannappa as a heroic figure, moving from physical strength to spiritual devotion. Fans are eagerly awaiting the film's release.

Oscars 2025: Box Office Performance of Best Picture Nominees

The box office performance of the 2025 Oscar nominees for Best Picture has shown a mixed bag of commercial success, with some films performing exceptionally well while others struggle. *Dune: Part Two* has emerged as a major hit, grossing \$283 million domestically and \$715 million worldwide, thanks to its star-studded cast and visually captivating storyline. Similarly, *Wicked*, starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, has earned \$466 million domestically and \$710 million globally, showcasing its broad appeal. However, not all nominees have fared equally well. *The Brutalist*, despite securing 10 Oscar nominations, has earned only \$6 million do-

mestically, while *Emilia Perez* garnered 13 nominations but made a modest \$15.4 million domestically and \$30.7 million worldwide. Films like *I'm Still Here* and *Nickel Boys* have had disappointing box office returns, grossing just \$162,000 and \$1.1 million domestically, respectively. Despite these underwhelming earnings, both films secured nominations, highlighting the Academy's focus on quality over commercial performance. While some films, like *A Complete Unknown* and *Conclave*, have found moderate success, the overall trend shows that box office performance doesn't always correlate with Oscar recognition, as the Academy prioritizes cinematic artistry.



What's Streaming

Dabba Cartel – Netflix



This gripping series follows five middle-class women whose small-time dabba business spirals out of control when they get entangled with a drug syndicate. The action-packed drama explores their secret lives and the lengths they'll go to for survival. The cast includes Jyothika, Lillete Dubey, Shabana Azmi, and Gajraj Rao.

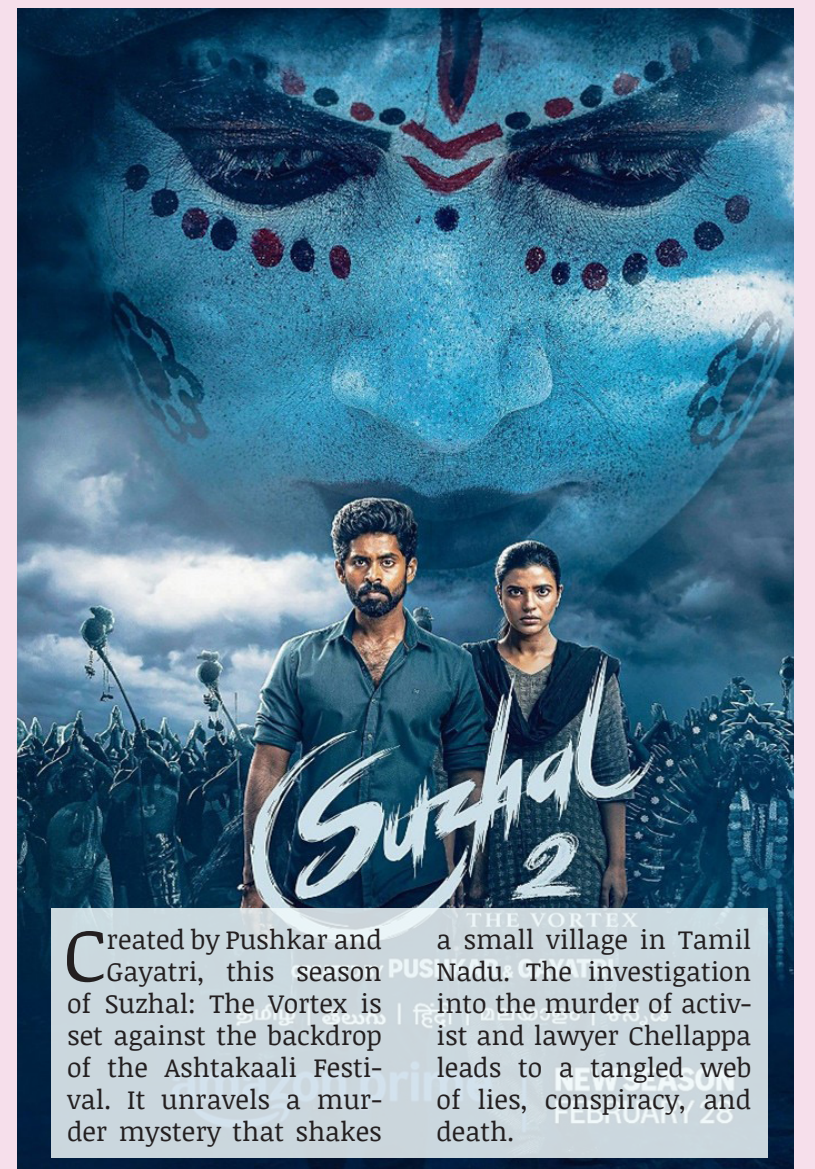
House of David – Prime Video



This American historical drama, directed by Jon Erwin, tells the Biblical story of how David (Michael Iskander), a shepherd boy and musician in King Saul's court (Ali Suliman), defeats Goliath (Martyn Ford) and becomes the king of Israel, anointed by the prophet Samuel (Stephen Lang).



Suzhal: The Vortex Season 2 – Prime Video



Created by Pushkar and Gayatri, this season of *Suzhal: The Vortex* is set against the backdrop of the Ashtakaali Festival. It unravels a murder mystery that shakes a small village in Tamil Nadu. The investigation into the murder of activist and lawyer Chellappa leads to a tangled web of lies, conspiracy, and death.

Running Point – Netflix

Isla Gordon is appointed president of the Los Angeles Waves, a prestigious basketball franchise, after a scandal forces her brother to resign. In the unpredictable, male-dominated world of sports, Isla must prove she's the right choice for the job while navigating family dynamics.