



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 condemned 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 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 reveled 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.



Rahul Gandhi Meets Porters 'Thanked Them For Saving Lives During Delhi Stampede

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, visited the New Delhi Railway Station to meet with the porters who displayed extraordinary courage during the tragic stampede that occurred on February 15, which resulted in the loss of 18 lives.

In a heartfelt gesture, Gandhi expressed his gratitude towards the porters, acknowledging their heroic actions during the stampede. Sharing photos of the meeting on X, he wrote, "Often it is in the darkest times that the light of humanity shines the brightest." He went on to praise the porters for their remarkable efforts, stating, "During the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station, the Porter brothers set an example of humanity and saved the lives of many passengers." Gandhi's remarks highlight the selfless actions of the porters, who, despite the chaos and panic caused by the stampede, managed to help many passengers to safety. Their quick thinking and bravery in such a dire situation have been lauded as a beacon of humanity amidst the tragedy.

The stampede at New Delhi Railway Station had occurred on February 15, when a large crowd gathered at the station during peak hours, leading to overcrowding and the unfortunate incident. While the exact cause of the stampede

remains under investigation, the porters who were present on the ground played a pivotal role in preventing further casualties. Their ability to navigate through the crowd and pull people out of harm's way was instrumental in reducing the severity of the incident.

In addition to recognizing the bravery of the porters, Rahul Gandhi also emphasized the need for the government to learn from such incidents and take necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of passengers in the future. He urged the authorities to focus on implementing safety measures at railway stations and other public places where large crowds gather, to prevent such tragedies from happening again.

The Congress leader's visit to the station and his meeting with the porters is part of his ongoing efforts to highlight important issues and ensure that those who contribute positively to society are acknowledged. Gandhi's call for increased safety measures at public transport hubs underscores the importance of proactive action in safeguarding citizens and preventing future disasters.

As the investigation into the stampede continues, the bravery of the porters remains a symbol of hope and humanity in the wake of a tragedy that could have been far worse had it not been for their timely intervention.

Delhi Govt Bans Fuel for Vehicles Over 15 Years Old to Curb Pollution

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

In a significant move to tackle air pollution in Delhi, the newly formed BJP government has announced a ban on fuel supply to vehicles older than 15 years. Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa, who assumed office on Monday, revealed this decision during a meeting with officials to discuss strategies for improving air quality in the city.

Sirsa explained that a special team will be formed to identify vehicles that exceed the 15-year age limit. To enforce the rule, gadgets will be installed at petrol pumps to detect such vehicles, preventing them from being refueled. "We are installing gadgets at petrol pumps which will identify vehicles older than 15 years and no fuel will be provided to them," he stated.

This step aligns with an existing policy in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), which prohibits the operation of diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles over 15 years old on the roads. Additionally, an order issued in 2021 mandates the impounding and scrapping of these vehicles if found on the roads after January 1, 2022. The BJP government's new initiative expands the focus on fuel accessibility



for older vehicles as part of a larger effort to reduce pollution.

In addition to this, Sirsa emphasized the government's initial focus on curbing pollution from heavy vehicles entering the city. A dedicated team will inspect whether the rules regarding vehicle age are being followed and take appropriate action.

Furthermore, the government is addressing pollution from large organizations in Delhi by instructing them to

Adityanath Sets Deadline for Land Acquisition and Compensation Distribution in UP

TPN Correspondent | UP

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a review meeting on March 1, 2025, where he emphasized the urgency of completing pending land acquisition and compensation distribution for ongoing development projects across the state. The Chief Minister has set a strict deadline of March 15 for the completion of these processes, stressing the importance of timely action for the progress of crucial public initiatives.



The meeting, attended by senior government officials and District Magistrates from various districts via video conferencing, focused on the importance of adhering to timelines for development projects. The Chief Minister highlighted that these projects are vital not only for improving the lives of ordinary citizens but also for generating employment opportunities throughout the state.

Adityanath specifically directed that all land acquisition and compensation processes for both Central and State Government development projects be concluded by March 15. The completion of these tasks is essential to avoid

delays in the execution of various infrastructure and welfare initiatives. The Chief Minister further instructed district administrations to conduct regular reviews to ensure the smooth and transparent distribution of compensation, particularly to farmers and families affected by the acquisition of their land.

In addition to the deadlines, Adityanath called for enhanced communication with the affected parties, ensuring they are kept informed about the progress of the projects. He stressed that District Magistrates should conduct weekly reviews of the land acquisition and compensation

India is nowhere in international commercial arbitration: Vice President Jagdeep

- VP Dhankhar calls for stronger arbitration credibility
- Urges shift from narrow adjudication view to global practices
- Legal reforms needed to align with international standards



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday emphasized that India had a long way to go in the field of international commercial arbitration. Speaking at a colloquium organized by the India International Arbitration Centre, he shared his perspective, stressing the need for India to not just regain credibility but to actively establish itself as a leader in arbitration practices.

Dhankhar, who has had experience at the International Court of Arbitration for around three years, highlighted that India's approach to arbitration has often been narrow, viewing it solely as a form of adjudication. "Un-

fortunately, we have taken in this country a very myopic view of arbitration, as if it is just adjudication. But it is much more than that," Dhankhar remarked, pointing out that arbitration is not simply conventional adjudication but an advanced global practice with broader implications.

He called for a paradigm shift in how arbitration is perceived and practiced in India, emphasizing that the nation must broaden its understanding and adoption of arbitration mechanisms. Dhankhar's comments came at a time

when India's role and influence in international commercial arbitration are still evolving. The Vice President stressed that India's legal framework for arbitration needs to be strengthened and modernized to align with global standards.

The colloquium brought together legal experts and practitioners from across the world to discuss and explore solutions to the challenges facing arbitration in India and globally. Dhankhar's speech underscored the importance of international commercial arbitration in enhancing India's role in the global economy and improving its attractiveness as a destination for global business and investment.

As India seeks to enhance its reputation in the international legal community, Vice President Dhankhar's comments serve as a reminder that there is a long road ahead in terms of refining and expanding the country's arbitration practices to match global standards.

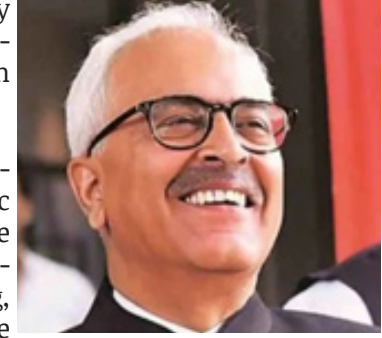
Manipur Governor Extends Deadline for Voluntary Weapon Surrender to March 6

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A day after the initial seven-day deadline for the voluntary surrender of looted and illegal weapons expired, Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla announced an extension until March 6, 2025. The decision came after numerous requests from both hill and valley residents for additional time to comply with the surrender order.

Governor Bhalla acknowledged the public demand for more time and made the extension official, stating, "Upon expiry of the seven-day deadline for voluntary surrender of looted and illegal arms, there has been demand from both valley and hill areas to extend the period. I have considered the request and decided to extend the deadline to 4 pm of March 6, 2025." He further urged all individuals still in possession of such weapons to voluntarily surrender them to the nearest police station, outpost, or security forces camp by the new deadline.

The Governor reassured the public that during this extended period, no punitive action would be taken against those who choose to surrender their weapons. However, he made it clear that after the deadline, any person found in possession of illegal or looted arms would face legal consequences. Bhalla emphasized



that the police and security forces would carry out extensive operations to enforce this directive once the deadline passes.

This extension follows ongoing efforts by the government to bring peace and stability to Manipur, where ethnic violence and illegal weapons have been significant issues. The voluntary surrender initiative aims to reduce violence and promote cooperation from local communities, offering an opportunity for individuals to return arms without fear of immediate punishment. However, with the new deadline in place, the government has made it clear that the situation will soon turn more stringent for those who fail to comply.

Assam Set to Become Key Green Manufacturing Hub, Says CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Assam is on track to establish itself as a major manufacturing hub driven by green energy, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Friday while unveiling the state's industrial roadmap under the Advantage Assam 2.0 initiative. Sarma emphasized the state's vast natural resources, which he believes will play a crucial role in attracting significant investments and fostering industrial growth.

Drawing comparisons to Gujarat's economic rise, Sarma highlighted that Assam is un-

dergoing a similar transition. Initially driven by Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), the state is now paving the way for greater involvement from the private sector. "We are seeing increasing interest from companies like Tata, which is considering launching major projects in Assam. If Tata's flagship project takes off, it will set the stage for further industrial development," he stated.

Sarma also revealed that Assam has signed nine Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with prominent companies, including Toyota and Electron, signaling a surge in industri-



al activity. In addition, talks with the Japanese ambassador have opened doors for Japanese firms to explore investment opportunities in Assam. "We have already made significant progress, and discussions are moving to the next level," he said.

Beyond manufacturing, Assam is becoming a hub for technology and business outsourcing. Infosys, a leading Indian IT firm, has set up its first technical centre in the state, along with a new 500-seat BPO, marking a shift of data centres and business operations from Tier-1 cities to Assam. Sarma remarked, "Earlier, we had to in-

vite companies like Infosys, but now they are coming on their own, reflecting Assam's rapid transformation and growing industrial appeal."

The Chief Minister outlined a long-term economic vision for Assam, aiming for a balanced economy with equal contributions from agriculture, services, industry, and mining. He assured that industrial growth would not encroach on vital agricultural land, ensuring sustainable development. With its focus on green manufacturing and technology, Assam is poised to become a prominent economic hub in eastern India.

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Delhi Govt Bans Fuel for Vehicles Over 15 Years Old to Curb Pollution

install anti-pollution devices. As part of this initiative, all high-rise buildings, commercial complexes, and hotels will be required to install anti-smog guns to reduce air contaminants.

The BJP government is also planning a year-round plantation drive and will encourage university students to participate in it. Additionally, efforts to create new forests on vacant lands across the city will be prioritized to help mitigate pollution. Sirsa also mentioned that the government will explore cloud seeding techniques to further combat air pollution.

In response to criticism from the

previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, which pointed to external factors such as stubble burning in neighboring states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh as contributors to Delhi's pollution, Sirsa made it clear that the government's primary focus would be addressing pollution from within Delhi itself. He asserted, "The one who is causing pollution will also provide the solution," underlining the need for internal efforts before addressing cross-border issues.

Through these initiatives, the BJP government aims to significantly reduce pollution levels in the capital and improve the city's air quality for its residents.

Adityanath Sets Deadline for Land Acquisition and Compensation Distribution in UP

distribution processes, while the respective Commissioners should provide a progress report every 15 days to senior officials in the Chief Minister's Office, the Chief Secretary's Office, and the concerned departments.

During the review, the Chief Minister also gave directions for the timely construction of key healthcare facilities. He focused on the development of a 350-bed hospital by the Employees' State Insurance Corporation in Greater Noida and a 100-bed hospital in Gorakhpur,

urging officials to ensure progress within the stipulated timeframes. Adityanath further instructed authorities to identify any individuals or groups obstructing development projects and take strict action against them to avoid any delays.

With this directive, the Uttar Pradesh government is committed to accelerating the completion of critical infrastructure projects, which are essential for the state's growth and the well-being of its residents.

Delhi High Court Highlights Ongoing Safety Issues for Women in Public Spaces

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a significant verdict delivered on Friday, the Delhi High Court drew attention to the persistent safety challenges women face in public spaces, particularly public transport, despite decades of independence and the presence of stringent laws intended to protect women. The court's remarks were made in connection with a 2015 case in which a man was convicted for outraging a woman's modesty.

The case dates back to October 2015, when a woman boarded a bus traveling from Najafgarh's Khaira Mor to the District Centre in Janakpuri. She accused the man of making inappropriate gestures by winking at her when she entered the bus and later forcibly kissing her as she was about to alight



from the bus. In response to her complaint, the woman filed an FIR, and after a legal battle, the Metropolitan Magistrate convicted the accused in November 2019, a verdict that was upheld by an additional sessions judge in April 2024.

In its ruling, the Delhi High Court expressed deep concern over the alarm-

ing reality that women continue to face harassment in public spaces, including public transport, where they should feel safe. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, who delivered the verdict, stated that even though laws are in place to safeguard women's dignity and personal autonomy, incidents like these reveal that offenders believe they can act with impunity.

The judge further highlighted that despite the country's progress, the safety of women remains an issue, with many still vulnerable to harassment in spaces where they should feel secure. This ruling serves as a stark reminder of the need for ongoing efforts to ensure that women are protected from such violations and can move freely without fear of assault or harassment in public places.

Pune bus rape: Facts will be out after detailed probe: Maharashtra Dy CM Ajit Pawar

TPN Correspondent | Maharashtra

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar revealed on Saturday that the Pune rape accused, Dattatray Ramdas Gade, was hiding in a sugarcane farm and was apprehended with the help of a drone. He assured that a thorough investigation is underway to ensure justice for the survivor and that stringent action will be taken against any attempts to destroy public property during the ongoing investigation.

The rape incident occurred on Tuesday when the survivor, a working woman, was waiting for a bus in Pune to return to her home in Phaltan, located approximately 100 kilometers away. After the incident, Gade, the accused, went into



hiding, prompting widespread public concern over his arrest.

Ajit Pawar addressed these concerns, acknowledging the public's frustration with the delay in the accused's arrest. "Till the day before yesterday, people were raising questions about why he was not arrested. He was hiding in a sugarcane farm. We used a drone to catch

him. His situation was such that he even tried to take his own life," Pawar stated. The Deputy CM also emphasized that the authorities are committed to ensuring the case is thoroughly investigated, urging that facts should be revealed after a detailed probe. He further assured the public that strict actions will be taken against those involved in vandalizing public property during the ongoing investigations.

Pawar reiterated that such heinous incidents should not occur anywhere and emphasized the state's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of women. The investigation into the case is expected to continue as authorities work to bring justice to the victim and hold the accused accountable for his actions.

Ensure free movement of people on all roads in Manipur from March 8: Shah



- Free movement in Manipur from March 8
- Crackdown on roadblocks, border fencing sped up
- Arms surrender deadline extended to March 6

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a high-level meeting in Delhi on Saturday to review the security situation in Manipur. During the meeting, Shah emphasized that the government is fully committed to restoring peace in the northeastern state and directed officials to ensure free movement for people on all roads starting from March 8, 2025.

This meeting marks the first such session since the imposition of President's rule in Manipur on February 13, following the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh. The state has been embroiled in ethnic violence since May 2023, with more than 250 lives lost.

In his remarks, Shah instructed officials to take strict action against anyone attempting to create road obstructions and emphasized the need for prompt completion of fencing work at designated entry points along Manipur's international border. The fencing project is expected to bolster security and prevent cross-border tensions. Additionally, Shah called for a concerted effort to dismantle the entire drug network in Manipur, reiterating the government's commitment to making the state drug-free.

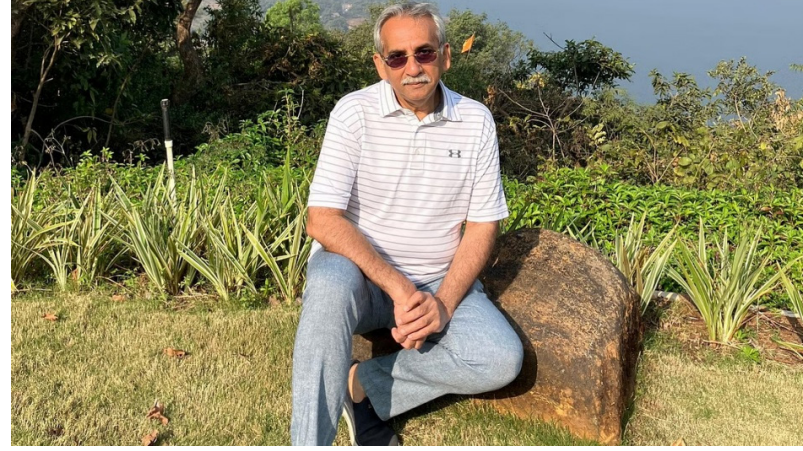
The meeting was attended by a host of high-ranking officials, including the Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Union Home Secretary, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, senior officers from the Army,

Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

In related news, Governor Bhalla had previously set a deadline for the surrender of illegal and looted arms in the state. As of February 20, over 300 firearms were surrendered, including 246 by the Meitei radical group Arambai Tenggol. Due to requests for more time from both hill and valley communities, the governor extended the deadline for arms surrender until 4 pm on March 6.

The ongoing efforts by the government and security forces are aimed at restoring law and order and ensuring a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the state.

Amin Patel appointed as Congress's deputy leader in Maharashtra assembly



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Congress party has made several key appointments within its Maharashtra legislative assembly group, appointing four-time MLA Amin Patel as the party's deputy leader. Patel, who is a prominent leader of Mumbai Congress, has represented the Mumbai West constituency in four consecutive terms. Alongside Patel, the party has appointed Amit Deshmukh as the chief whip of the legislative assembly.

In addition to these appointments, the Congress has named Vishwanath Kadam as the secretary of the party's assembly group. Shirish Naik and Sanjay Meshram will serve as whips, strengthening the party's legislative operations in the assembly.

Despite facing a challenging situation in the state with just 16 legislators, which marks its worst-ever tally in the Maharashtra legislative assembly, the Congress leadership is

focused on consolidating its position and enhancing party coordination. The Congress has also appointed Satej Patil as the group leader in the Maharashtra legislative council, with Abhijit Vanjari taking on the role of chief whip, and Rajesh Rathod being named a whip. The party currently has eight members in the legislative council.

Vijay Wadettiwar has already been designated as the legislative party leader, adding another layer to the leadership team in the state. These appointments are seen as part of the Congress's strategy to strengthen its legislative presence and prepare for the upcoming budget session, which is set to begin in March.

The Congress aims to solidify its organizational structure in Maharashtra despite its reduced numbers, focusing on strategic leadership and maintaining a strong voice in the legislative proceedings.

JP Nadda Meets Odisha BJP Leaders Amid Speculation Over New State Party Chief

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Minister and BJP National President J.P. Nadda visited Odisha on Friday to meet with senior leaders of the state BJP, amid growing speculation regarding the appointment of a new president for the party's state unit. The closed-door meetings were held with key figures including Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, BJP's state in-charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, and organizational secretary Manas Mohanty.

The meetings, which were focused on strengthening the party's organizational structure in Odisha, are seen as a strategic move as the BJP seeks to consolidate its presence in the state. Nadda also met with Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati at Raj Bhavan, in the presence of the chief minister, before concluding his visit to the state.

BJP leaders in Odisha have been eagerly awaiting clarity regarding the new state party president. Biranchi Narayan



Tripathy, vice-president of the Odisha BJP, stated that the election process for the new state president will be conducted according to proper procedures. He assured the media that the new leader would be announced soon, fueling further anticipation within the party ranks and supporters.

In addition to his political meetings, Nadda took time to visit the Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri, reflecting the party's outreach efforts in a state that holds significant religious and cultural importance for the BJP.

The speculation over the ap-

pointment of a new state party president comes at a time when the BJP is aiming to strengthen its organizational base in Odisha ahead of future elections. With political developments intensifying in Karnataka and other states, the BJP is keen to ensure its leadership in Odisha remains aligned with its national strategies and objectives.

The announcement of the new state party president is expected to provide more direction for the BJP's future endeavors in Odisha, as it looks to solidify its foothold in a region where it has faced tough competition from regional parties.

Congress Meeting In Delhi Asks Kerala Leaders To Stay United



TPN Correspondent | THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The central leadership of the Congress party held a crucial meeting with its Kerala leaders on Friday, urging them to maintain unity in the lead-up to the upcoming elections. The call for solidarity came amid recent controversies and conflicting voices within the party, including a podcast interview by Shashi Tharoor, Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, that sparked debates.

AICC General Secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal stated that the message of unity conveyed during the meeting was well-received by all attendees. He expressed confidence that the leaders in Kerala would collaborate and work towards

the party's victory in the forthcoming elections. Despite internal disagreements, the party leadership emphasized putting past issues behind and focusing on collective strength.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, both called for restraint among state leaders. They advised against public statements, media briefings, or social media posts that might demoralize party workers. Rahul Gandhi also praised the competence of Kerala's Congress leadership but highlighted the need to capitalize on the growing anti-incumbency sentiment against the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government.

The meeting, which focused on collective leadership, did not delve into any discussions about a leadership change in Kerala. Despite speculation about the health of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President K. Sudhakaran, the issue was not raised. Sources indicated that Sudhakaran provided an update on the progress made in strengthening the party's grassroots network and dismissed reports of any differences with Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan. Both leaders reportedly criticized certain media narratives that aimed to create division within the party, which could benefit the LDF.

Rahul Gandhi also emphasized the importance of unity, advising leaders to avoid personal declarations about potential chief ministership. "The people want Congress to return to power; we should not disrespect them by fighting each other," he told the gathering. Kharge, for his part, urged leaders to avoid making positive remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi or the government in Kerala, as it could send the wrong message to party workers.

Tejashwi Yadav Calls for Change in Bihar's 20-Year-Old NDA Government



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday took a jibe at the BJP-led NDA government in Bihar, comparing its 20-year rule to old, polluting vehicles that are banned in the state. He argued that just as the state prohibits vehicles older than 15 years due to their contribution to pollution, the time has come for a change in the state's government, which he believes has become a burden on the people of Bihar.

Yadav, the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the NDA government has grown ineffective and outdated, much like a "rickety vehicle" that no longer serves its purpose. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), he pointed out that the state government, having been in power for two decades, is now harming the state's progress and well-being.

"The 20-year-old NDA government in Bihar, headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, has now turned into a rickety vehicle. There is a ban on vehicles more than 15 years old

across Bihar as they emit too much smoke, increase pollution, and are harmful to the public. Therefore, why should the 20-year-old rickety NDA government be allowed to operate in the state? This government has become a burden on the people of Bihar... it must be changed," Yadav remarked.

His comments come amidst ongoing political discussions regarding the future of the NDA coalition in the state and Bihar's governance. Yadav's call for a change suggests growing dissatisfaction with the current administration and indicates his party's push for an alternative to the long-standing political structure.

Delhi court Allows Withdrawal of Sedition Case Against Shehla Rashid Shora



- LG withdrew sanction, citing committee advice
- Case linked to 2019 tweets, now closed

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

A Delhi court has granted permission to the Delhi Police to withdraw a 2019 sedition case against former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) vice president Shehla Rashid Shora. The decision was made on February 27, 2025, after the Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG), V. K. Saxena, withdrew the sanction to prosecute Shora, based on a recommendation from a Screening Committee.

The case against Shora, filed in 2019, involved charges including sedition, promoting enmity between different groups based on religion, language, race, or place of birth, and inciting riots. These charges carried a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. The FIR was registered at the Special Cell police station in New Delhi, following a complaint from one Alakh Alok Srivastava.

In the application presented by the prosecution, it was stated that the LG had approved the recommendation of the Screening Committee to withdraw the prosecu-

tion sanction. The approval was granted on December 23, 2024. Based on this, the prosecution requested the court to allow the case to be dropped.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Anuj Kumar Singh, after considering the application, allowed the withdrawal of the case. Shora, a former leader of JNUSU, had been accused of using her tweets to incite divisions among different groups and engaging in activities prejudicial to public harmony.

The case had sparked significant controversy, with critics arguing that the sedition charge was politically motivated. Shora had been under scrutiny for her social media posts, which were perceived by some as critical of the Indian Army.

Following the court's decision, the case against Shora will now be formally dropped, marking the end of a significant legal battle. The withdrawal also highlights the evolving stance on sedition laws in India, particularly concerning the use of social media for political expression.

Heavy Rain Brings Relief to Delhi Amid Warm February



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Delhi experienced heavy rainfall on Saturday, providing much-needed relief from the unusually warm temperatures that dominated the capital in February. Parts of Haryana also saw heavy rain, which helped cool the region. According to weather data, Delhi recorded an average maximum temperature of 26.7°C in February, significantly warmer than usual.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had forecast light to moderate rainfall along with thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds for the Delhi-NCR region. The forecast mentioned rainfall in areas such as Loni Dehat, Ghaziabad, Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad, and several others in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

On Friday, the maximum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 27°C, slightly above the seasonal average, while the minimum temperature was 18.4°C, marking the second-highest minimum temperature for the month. Sim-

ilar weather patterns were observed on Thursday, with rain and thunderstorms across the city. The IMD continued to predict similar weather conditions for Friday and Saturday.

February 2025 saw unusually warm conditions, with Delhi's average minimum temperature reaching 11.6°C, the highest in the last six years. This marked a significant shift, with 2017 previously holding the record for the warmest minimum temperature. On February 27, Delhi recorded a historic 19.5°C minimum temperature, the highest February night in 74 years, surpassing all previous records since 1951. That same day, the maximum temperature peaked at 32.4°C, making it the warmest day of the month.

Although the month saw less rainfall than the previous year, with only four rainy days compared to six in 2024, the recent rainfall has brought some relief to the city. Looking ahead, the IMD has warned of warmer-than-usual conditions in March, with several heat wave days expected.

Bomb Threat Received at Tamil Nadu Bhavan in Delhi; Search Operation Underway



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Tamil Nadu Bhavan in Delhi received a bomb threat, prompting an immediate response from the Delhi Police and Delhi Fire Services. According to a report by news agency ANI, authorities launched

a search operation at the premises in response to the alarming threat.

As of now, Delhi Fire Services have not identified any suspicious items during the ongoing search operation. Authorities are continuing their efforts to

ensure the safety of those at the location and to thoroughly investigate the threat.

The bomb threat was reportedly received via email, as per a report from Thanthi TV, cited by news portal DT Next. While the situation is still being assessed, no injuries or damage have been reported thus far.

The Delhi Police and Fire Services are working in coordination to address the threat, and further updates on the situation are expected. This incident adds to the growing concerns over safety and security, especially with regards to public institutions in the capital.

Authorities have urged the public to stay alert and follow safety guidelines while the investigation continues. The search operation remains active, and officials are determined to resolve the situation swiftly.

Delhi to Ban Petrol Supply to Vehicles Over 15 Years Old to Combat Air Pollution

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

In a bid to address the ongoing air pollution crisis, the Delhi government has decided to stop providing petrol to vehicles older than 15 years at fuel stations across the city, effective from March 31, 2025. This decision was announced by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Saturday after a meeting with officials to discuss measures for reducing vehicular emissions.

Sirsa emphasized that this move is part of a series of stringent actions aimed at curbing pollution levels in the national capital. The key policy decisions discussed during the meeting include restrictions on older vehicles, mandatory anti-smog measures, and a shift towards electric public transportation.

"We are installing gadgets at petrol pumps that will identify vehicles older than 15 years, and no fuel will be provided to them," Sirsa stated. He also mentioned that the Delhi government would inform the Union Ministry of Petroleum about this new regulation.

The new measure follows a growing concern about the role of older vehicles in contributing to the city's poor air quality. The Delhi govern-

ment's decision aligns with its broader environmental goals, which include reducing harmful emissions and improving air quality for residents.

In addition to the fuel restrictions, Sirsa announced that all high-rise buildings, hotels, and commercial complexes in Delhi would be required to install anti-smog guns to help mitigate pollution levels. These measures are part of a concerted effort to tackle the city's persistent air pollution problem.

Furthermore, Sirsa revealed that nearly 90% of the public CNG buses operating in Delhi will be phased out by December 2025 and replaced with electric buses as part of the government's commitment to transitioning towards cleaner, more sustainable public transport.

These announcements are a part of the Delhi government's comprehensive strategy to combat air pollution, which has become a serious health concern for the city's residents, particularly during the winter months when pollution levels tend to peak. The government's ongoing efforts reflect the urgency of addressing one of the capital's most pressing environmental challenges.



Fire breaks out at private bank in Delhi's Daryaganj



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A fire broke out at a private bank in the Daryaganj area of Delhi, triggering a swift and effective response from the Delhi Fire Service (DFS). Upon receiving the distress call, firefighters rushed to the scene and are currently working to contain the flames. While the situation is under control, the exact cause of the fire and the full extent of the damage are still under investigation. Fortunately, there have been no immediate reports of casualties, but the incident underscores a broader issue that has been escalating in the city—an increase in fire-related incidents.

The fire in Daryaganj is part of a troubling trend that has emerged in Delhi, where fire incidents have surged due to the unusually warm weather conditions. According to recent data from the Delhi Fire Service, the number of fire-related incidents has significantly increased in February 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. Between February 1 and February 24, DFS responded to 932 fire incidents, which marks a 12% rise compared to the previous year. Of these incidents, 240 involved garbage and rubbish fires. In contrast, the same period in 2024 saw 834 incidents, with 148 being related to waste fires.

The surge in fire incidents can largely be attributed to the rise in temperatures. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) recorded an average maximum temperature of 26.4°C in February 2025, a notable increase from the 24.4°C observed during the same month in 2024. This warming trend has created the perfect conditions for fires to ignite more easily, particularly in areas with excessive waste, dried vegetation, or improperly disposed materials that can catch fire quickly. The high temperatures also contribute to dry conditions, making both urban and rural areas more susceptible to fires.

The human toll of these fires, though fewer than last year, remains concerning. In February 2025, 42 individuals were either injured or rescued from fire-related incidents, with two fatalities. While the number of deaths has decreased significantly compared to February 2024, when 16 people lost their lives in similar incidents, the overall rise in fire incidents is alarming. Earlier in January 2025, the city experienced a similar surge in fires, with 938 incidents recorded. These fires led to six fatalities and 38 injuries, highlighting the growing risks posed by the uptick in fire emergencies.

Stalin turns 72, says opposition to 'Hindi imposition' is his birthday message



- Stalin reaffirms state autonomy
- Opposes Hindi imposition, backs Tamil
- DMK celebrates leader's 72nd birthday

TPN Correspondent | Chennai
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin turned 72 on Saturday, celebrating his birthday with a message of commitment to state autonomy, the two-language policy, and a strong opposition to Hindi imposition. Stalin, the President of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), marked the occasion by cutting a cake with family and party workers at the DMK headquarters, Anna Arivalayam, in Chennai.

During the celebration, Stalin administered an oath to his party cadres, urging them to unite for a single cause: protecting the interests of Tamil

Nadu and opposing the imposition of Hindi. Reiterating the party's resolve, he declared, "Tamil Nadu poradum, Tamil Nadu Vellum" (Tamil Nadu will fight, Tamil Nadu will win), a slogan that was passionately repeated by his supporters.

The event was festive, with DMK office-bearers and supporters turning up in large numbers to greet Stalin. On social media, his followers called him "Dravida Nayagar" (Dravidian Hero) and shared heartfelt birthday wishes for the leader.

In his birthday address, Stalin emphasized his unwavering

principles of state autonomy, reiterating his opposition to Hindi imposition and his commitment to the two-language policy. He expressed his determination to protect the Tamil language and uphold the rights of Tamil Nadu at all times. Drawing a parallel with his past, Stalin recalled his strong opposition to Hindi imposition in 1971 when, at the age of 18, he had already raised his voice against the policy at a party conference.

Stalin's message on his birthday reflects his longstanding stance on these critical issues that continue to shape his political ideology and leadership. His dedication to the cause of Tamil language and culture remains a cornerstone of his political career, which has seen him advocate for the rights of Tamil Nadu on multiple platforms.

Flash Floods and Landslides Disrupt Kullu District Amid Torrential Rain



TPN Correspondent | Dehradun

Kullu district in Himachal Pradesh has been severely affected by flash floods and landslides triggered by relentless torrential rain. Many vehicles were either swept away or trapped in thick sludge left behind by the floods. The region's infrastructure has suffered significant damage, with roads and power lines disrupted.

The latest visuals from Kullu show vehicles stranded in deep sludge, underscoring the destructive impact of the flash floods. The Meteorological Department has issued warnings as the Western Disturbance is expected to bring light snowfall to isolated areas in Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur, and the higher reaches of Kullu.

As of Friday, the Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority reported that 583 roads, including five national highways, were blocked due to the combined effects of rain and snowfall. The state is also grappling with power outages, as 2,263 distribution transformers have gone down, affecting power supply to numerous areas. In addition, 279 water supply schemes have been disrupted, leaving many residents without access to

essential services.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has advised residents to stay away from rivers and streams, as parts of Kullu and surrounding areas continue to battle heavy rainfall and snowfall. He urged the public to be cautious and follow the administration's guidelines. "I've been taking stock of the situation since morning. All people are requested to be cautious and stay away from rivers and streams," said Mr. Sukhu.

The chief minister also announced that the gates of one of the power project dams in Kullu would be opened due to the heavy downpours. Intense snowfall has been reported in the upper Himalayan regions, with the Shimla Meteorological Centre issuing alerts for continued rain and snow in Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, and Mandi districts.

Kullu's Deputy Commissioner, Torul S Ravish, has urged residents to remain indoors until floodwaters subside. He highlighted that many roads, including the main road along the left bank, were blocked due to the rain and landslides. Schools in Kullu have been closed, and efforts are underway to restore power in affected areas.

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.

Punjab Launches Intensified Crackdown on Drugs with New Cabinet Committee



TPN Correspondent | Punjab

The Punjab government has ramped up its efforts in the ongoing 'War Against Drugs' by forming a five-member cabinet subcommittee to oversee the crackdown on the state's growing drug problem. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann convened a high-level meeting with top police officials on Friday, instructing them to work in close coordination to tackle the crisis. The police will focus on identifying drug hotspots, dismantling supply chains, and taking strict action against traffickers. Properties of drug traffickers will also be seized and demolished as part of the new strategy.

The immediate priority, according to officials, is to develop an effective policy for preventing drug abuse and rehabilitating victims. During their tenure, AAP cabinet ministers claim to have arrested over 6,500 major drug traffickers, filed more than 30,000 cases under the NDPS Act, transferred 10,000 police personnel involved in drug trafficking, and arrested 100 officers linked to the trade.

While the Bhagwant Mann-led government highlighted its own ef-

forts, it criticized the Centre and the Border Security Force (BSF) for their inadequate response to cross-border drug smuggling. Cabinet Minister Aman Arora, a member of the new subcommittee, argued that the BSF should take the lead in tackling drug smuggling across the international border, especially since their jurisdiction has been expanded from 15 km to 50 km by the Centre.

However, a senior BSF official, requesting anonymity, responded by calling it unfair to target the force. The official noted that the BSF had already provided extensive lists of drug peddlers to the state government and questioned why their officials had not been invited to the high-level meeting.

Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema announced that the crackdown on drug traffickers has begun, with bulldozers demolishing properties linked to the trade. A notable case involved a woman drug trafficker in Ludhiana whose house was demolished after a challenge to the village sarpanch. Cheema also accused previous governments of offering political protection to drug traffickers.

The newly formed cabinet subcommittee, led by Cheema, will oversee the police and health departments' efforts to combat drug addiction, including implementing de-addiction programs. The committee includes ministers from various departments, including Health, Transport, and Rural Development.

Hope for Peace in Manipur as Weapon Surrender Gains Momentum

TPN Correspondent | Manipur

Over the past week, as many as 650 weapons have been voluntarily surrendered in Manipur, marking a significant response to Governor Ajay Bhalla's appeal for the return of illegal weapons. These include firearms looted from armouries during the ethnic violence that erupted in May 2023. The success of this initiative has sparked optimism that the people of Manipur may be more willing to cooperate, particularly given the sustained peace in the state over the past few months. This period of calm has remained intact even after the fall of the N Biren Singh government and the imposition of President's Rule, further reinforcing the possibility of lasting peace.

In response to the positive outcome, Bhalla has extended the deadline for voluntary surrender of illegal and looted weapons to March 6. This extension comes ahead of an in-depth review of the situation by Home Minister Amit Shah, scheduled for Saturday. The review will include Bhalla, heads of various security forces deployed in the state, and the state police chief.

A key element of this strategy's success is the involvement of local community leaders. The government has reached out to village heads and civil society figures across Manipur to help spread Bhalla's message and encourage compliance within their communities. These leaders have warned that failure to surrender weapons could result in police and security raids on villages, with strict criminal action against any individuals found in possession of looted or illegal firearms.

For now, the government has reassured the youth that they will not face penalties if they voluntarily surrender their weapons. Additionally, the option to hand over arms to village heads or community leaders, rather than directly to the police, provides a level of anonymity and protection. This approach aims to reduce fears of future identification, police action, or profiling, encouraging more rebels and youth to give up their weapons without fear of retaliation. The strategy, so far, appears to be fostering a positive response and could pave the way for further peace-building efforts in the region.

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 Re-development 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.

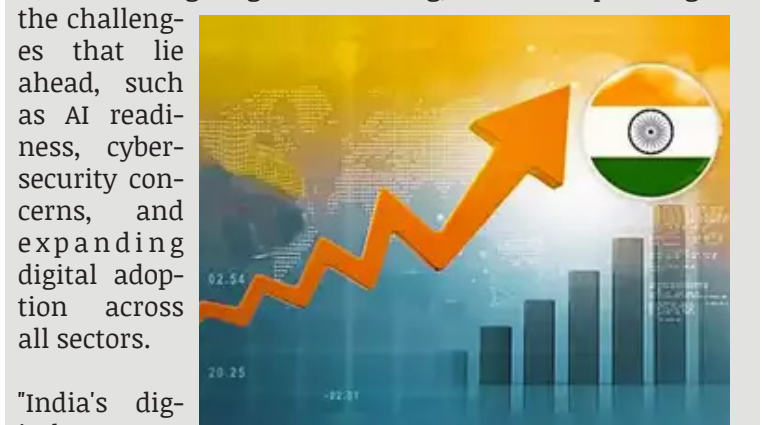
In response to these challenges, the government is expected to continue managing its finances carefully over the remainder of the fiscal year. Analysts predict that while the deficit may temporarily overshoot the target in the short term, it will be brought back on track through disciplined revenue collection, 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 at-

tempt. "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 Indira 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.