



Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD	VIJAYAWADA	TIRUPATHI
H 33 °C	H 35 °C	H 36 °C

It's time for CM Siddaramaiah to up his game

CM Siddaramaiah to present his record 16th Budget on March 7.

Balancing welfare schemes with infrastructure development remains a key challenge.

Opposition to target government over fiscal strain, price rise, and economic claims.

Calls for an independent study on the impact of guarantee schemes grow louder.

Focus on Bengaluru's infrastructure and rural development expected in the budget.



strain these schemes have imposed on the state, the government has reiterated its commitment to their continuation. With crucial zilla panchayat, taluk panchayat, and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) elections expected this year, any change in the welfare programs is unlikely. Striking a balance between welfare spending and infrastructure development without increasing the financial burden on the middle class will be a tough challenge. The government must also ensure fiscal discipline while addressing concerns over rising prices and economic sustainability. A wrong move could further dent the government's image, which has already been criticized for failing to maintain roads, footpaths, and cleanliness in Bengaluru. Noted economist and former director of the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Prof. R.S. Deshpande, believes Siddaramaiah will find new revenue sources. He emphasized the need for pragmatic fiscal planning that enhances welfare without straining the state's finances. Siddaramaiah remains confident, citing Karnataka's strong economic indicators. He claims that the state's budget has grown at an average of 18.3% over the last two years, with Karnataka's own tax revenue witnessing a 15% rise. He also pointed out that the state spends 15.01% of its budget on capital expenditure, a figure higher than Maharashtra (12.74%), Tamil Nadu (10.58%), and Telangana (11.58%). Further strengthening his position, the recent Lokayukta report cleared Siddaramaiah of any wrongdoing in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) sites allotment case. Additionally, investment proposals worth ₹10 lakh crore during the Global Investors' Meet have added to his confidence. However, opposition parties continue to attack his government over allegations of neglecting development. The upcoming budget is expected to address these concerns, particularly in Bengaluru, where Deputy CM and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar has been pushing for key projects, including tunnel roads aimed at easing traffic congestion. While urban mobility projects remain critical, experts have raised concerns about the feasibility of tunnel roads, urging the government to conduct detailed studies before proceeding. Beyond Bengaluru, the CM is expected to focus on strengthening the rural economy, tackling migration from villages, and improving healthcare and education in rural areas. Despite longstanding awareness of these issues, previous governments have failed to implement sustainable solutions. On the guarantees front, there are growing calls for an independent and transparent study to evaluate their economic and social impact. Since these schemes consume a significant portion of the budget, a critical assessment could help refine them for better efficiency. Meanwhile, the budget session from March 3 to 21 is expected to be stormy, with the opposition BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) preparing to attack the government on various fronts, including price rise, law and order, microfinance firm harassment, and the alleged diversion of SCSP/TSP (Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan & Tribal Sub-Plan) funds. The BJP has also demanded a white paper on the state's economy, questioning the government's financial claims. The budget will provide clarity on Karnataka's economic trajectory and whether the government has a long-term vision for rural development, infrastructure expansion, and major pending irrigation and drinking water projects. The balance Siddaramaiah strikes in this budget will be crucial for his government's political and economic credibility.



Will D K Shivakumar play Shinde in Karnataka?

BJP fuels speculation of Shivakumar splitting Congress to become CM

DCM reminds high command of the 2.5-year power-sharing agreement

Political analysts believe Shivakumar will stay loyal to Congress

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

With Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar growing assertive in his claim for the chief minister's post once incumbent Siddaramaiah completes two-and-a-half years in office this October, the opposition BJP is keenly observing the internal developments within the ruling Congress. BJP leaders, including Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, are speculated to be encouraging Shivakumar's ambitions, drawing parallels with Eknath Shinde's defection in Maharashtra. Shivakumar, known for his belief in astrology, reportedly feels the time is in his favor and is aggressively pushing for the top post. The key question, however, remains—will he rely on his astrological predictions or abide by the Congress high command's decision?

BJP's Political Strategy

The BJP is believed to be fueling Shivakumar's aspirations, hoping he might split the Congress and form a government with its support. In Maharashtra, Shinde had led a split in the Shiv Sena and joined hands with BJP to become the Chief Minister. However, in Karnataka, Shivakumar faces a more complex situation. A major challenge is that he would need at least two-thirds of Congress' 138 MLAs to defect in order to bypass the anti-defection law. If he attempts such a move, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi, a Siddaramaiah loyalist, might counteract by leveraging his brother, Ramesh Jarkiholi, who is already aligned with the BJP.

High Command's Role

Shivakumar recently met AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal, reminding him of the 2023 agreement that Siddaramaiah would step down after two-and-a-half years. Sources indicate that he assured Venugopal—who is seen as sympathetic to Siddaramaiah—that he could lead the Congress to victory in the 2028 elections. However, Shivakumar's presence at the Isha Foundation's Mahashivaratri event, where he shared the stage with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has added to the tensions within the party. Critics from the Siddaramaiah camp have raised concerns, especially as Sadhguru had previously mocked Rahul Gandhi. AICC secretary P V Mohan, a supporter of Venugopal, strongly condemned Shivakumar's participation in the event.

Will Shivakumar Switch Sides?

Political analysts believe Shivakumar, who has stated he has another decade in politics, is unlikely to make drastic moves. His longstanding loyalty to Sonia Gandhi and the Congress leadership is considered a major reason why he might not switch to the BJP.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is set to present his record 16th Budget—his third in the current tenure—on March 7, amid mounting challenges of balancing welfare initiatives with infrastructure development. The key question remains whether the budget will address opposition claims that the state's financial burden due to guarantee schemes is hindering development. In the 2024-25 budget, Siddaramaiah allocated ₹52,000 crore for the five guarantee schemes out of a total outlay of ₹3.71 lakh crore. While many Congress leaders have acknowledged the financial

Mehndi on hands, Body in Suitcase Congress worker Himani Narwal found dead in Rohtak



7th page

Uttarakhand Avalanche Recovers two more Bodies, Death toll Rises to Six



7th page

World-class film city to come up in Mysuru: CM Siddaramaiah

Karnataka to establish a 150-acre world-class film city in Mysuru.

CM urges filmmakers to create cinema with human values and social relevance.

Deputy CM criticizes Kannada film industry members for lack of participation in state initiatives.

Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFF) opens with 200 films from 60 countries.

Concerns raised over political misuse of cinema to spread propaganda.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the establishment of a world-class

film city in Mysuru, emphasizing the state's potential to emerge as a global cinema hub. Speaking at the inauguration of the 16th Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFF) at Vidhana Soudha on Saturday, he stressed that Karnataka is self-sufficient and can create vast opportunities for filmmakers. "For this, we are building a world-class film city in Mysuru," he said, highlighting the need for cinema that integrates human values with advanced technology. He urged filmmakers to produce films that promote social harmony and reflect reality rather than spreading negativity.



Siddaramaiah lamented the diminishing values in modern films, contrasting them with the works of legendary actor Dr. Rajkumar. "His films were full of harmony and human values, which is why people loved them. Today's films, however, often promote nonsense and go against constitutional values," he remarked.

Quoting 12th-century reformer Basavanna, he stated that cinema should not promote blind beliefs and should instead address real societal issues. He asserted that films portraying people's struggles and offering solutions will remain relevant and impactful in the long run. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who dedicated the

festival's theme, Sarva Jananagada Shanthiya Totha (Garden of All Races and Peace), spoke about the significant role of the film industry in Karnataka. He noted that nearly 18% of the state's workforce is employed in the industry. However, he criticized Kannada film industry members for their lack of participation in public causes. "I am angry with the cinema industry. Except for Sadhu Kokila and a few actors, most from the Kannada film industry did not take part in the Mekedatu Reservoir march a few years ago. Even now, some have not attended this event. This is not the CM's or my personal event;

it is for the Kannada film industry," he said. BIFF Ambassador Kishore Kumar voiced concerns over the misuse of cinema for political propaganda. He accused vested interests of controlling democratic institutions and using films and media to distort history, spread hatred, and undermine constitutional values. "We are witnessing a divide-and-rule strategy, where movies and TV channels are being used to promote oppressive politics," he warned. State Film Academy President Sadhu Kokila stated that the festival has curated 200 films from 60 countries, showcasing contemporary global issues.

Pro-Planet People: BEE's Bold Green Drive

Milind Deore, Secretary, BEE along with CEO's of State Designated agencies of States is releasing a Poster on Mission LIFE facilitated by Media Adviser wing of BEE..

- Nationwide Expansion and Global Aspirations
- BEE Urged SDA's to fully focus on Mission LIFE
- Global Energy festival 2025 Kerala - A Grand Success
- PM Modi's Vision: A Call to Action at COP26



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

In a major step toward energy efficiency and environmental stewardship, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Ministry of Power, is spearheading the nationwide rollout of Mission LIFE. As part of this initiative, BEE has introduced the Pro Planet People Initiative (PPPI) to strengthen India's commitment to sustainable development and climate action. Developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Power (MoP) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), this initiative promotes an eco-conscious lifestyle that minimizes environmental impact. The Union Government designates individuals embracing such practices as "Pro Planet People."

To drive this transformation, BEE has urged all State Designated Agencies (SDAs) to join the Massive Mass Movement (MMM or 3M) and aggressively promote Mission LIFE as a global movement. This initiative seeks to empower individuals to actively participate in environmental conservation and responsible consumption, fostering a more sustainable future.

BEE Secretary Milind Deore revealed that the MoP and MoEF&CC have finalized an ambitious plan to mobilize one billion individuals globally while ensuring that 80% of India's villages and urban areas adopt this mission.

BEE is confident that key Southern and Northern states, particularly Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, will play a proactive role in advancing Mission LIFE. The rollout will occur in phases, focusing on major metropolitan cities and renowned pilgrimage centers such as Tirupati, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Lucknow, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Bhopal, and Chandigarh.

Following the success of the BEE-Indo German Energy Partnership National Summit, Milind Deore and BEE Director Abhishek Sharma emphasized the need for SDAs to establish

dedicated energy conservation cells within key government departments. These cells will actively promote Mission LIFE at the grassroots level.

BEE has also recognized K.R. Jyothi Lal, Additional Chief Secretary, Power Department, and EMC, SDA of Kerala, for the success of the International Energy Festival Kerala 2025. The event, hailed as a landmark in energy efficiency, united global energy professionals, policymakers, and investors to explore key strategies for a greener future.

In a strategic presentation on communication strategies, A. Chandra Sekhara Reddy, Media Adviser for Southern States and UTs, urged SDAs to develop targeted programs to enhance public awareness and encourage participation. The objective is to improve living standards, boost economic growth, and promote ecological well-being.

To sustain momentum, BEE has recommended that state governments allocate dedicated green energy budgets as matching grants alongside BEE funding, particularly for program implementation and outreach. The agency also urged SDAs to champion Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Mission LIFE.

BEE Secretary Milind Deore highlighted that BEE's initiatives have resulted in:

- Energy savings exceeding 50.98 million tonnes of oil equivalent (MTOE)
- Electricity savings of 306.55 billion units annually, leading to significant monetary savings
- A reduction of approximately 306.40 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year

SDAs also commended Prime Minister Modi's leadership at COP26, where he introduced Mission LIFE as a transformative movement aimed at shifting environmental consciousness. The initiative seeks to replace the prevailing "use-and-throw" culture with sustainable, mindful consumption and a circular economy.

Five engineering students killed in car-truck collision in Kollegal

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Five engineering students lost their lives in a tragic accident near Chikkinduvadi village in Kollegal taluk on Saturday when an over-speeding truck crashed head-on into their car. The students were on their way to take part in the car festival and offer puja at Male Mahadeshwara temple ahead of the Shivaratri jathra festival.

The deceased have been identified as Srilakshmi (20) of Alanahalli in Mysuru, Nithin (21) of Lakshegowdana Doddi, Suhas (21) of Sriramanagar, Sreyas (21) of Hallegere, and Likitha (20) of Shanubhoganahalli in Periyapatna taluk. While three of them hailed from Mysuru district, two were from Mandya.

According to preliminary reports, the accident occurred when the truck, attempting to overtake another vehicle, rammmed into the students' car. The impact was severe, causing both vehicles to be thrown off the road into a nearby paddy field.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Boralingaiah and Superintendent of Police (SP) Kavitha visited the accident site and directed officials to take swift action in apprehending the truck driver.

K-RERA orders BDA to pay ₹12.5 lakh for site delay



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority (K-RERA) has directed the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) to compensate a senior citizen with ₹12,43,792 for the delay in handing over a site in Arkavathy Layout. The order, passed on February 13 by K-RERA Chairman Rakesh Singh and Member G. Ravindranadha Reddy, also instructed BDA to register the layout under K-RERA, a directive it had ignored since November 2023.

Suthanthiraraj, a retired chartered accountant from Vidyananyapura, had purchased a 60x40 site in the 18th Block of Amani Byrathikane in 2006 by paying ₹7,51,100. The sale deed was registered on January 2, 2017. However, he was unable to access his property for years as the land

loser refused to vacate, citing unpaid compensation. The issue was finally resolved in March 2024, allowing access to the site.

Despite the settlement, he noted that Arkavathy Layout lacked basic amenities. "While all 22 blocks suffer, the 18th Block is the most neglected. There is no water or power supply, and the roads are unpaved," he said. An interim K-RERA order on November 2, 2023, had instructed BDA to register the project under Section 3 of the RERA Act within two weeks. However, BDA failed to comply, and its commissioner did not appear for nine hearings despite repeated summons.

Planned in 2003-04, Arkavathy Layout consists of 8,813 sites carved out from 16 villages in Bengaluru East and Yelahanka.

Karnataka HC quashes case against students over skit

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has quashed proceedings against seven students and two faculty members of the Centre for Management Studies, Jain (Deemed-to-be University), in connection with a controversial skit on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Scheduled Castes performed during Youth Fest-2023.

Justice S.R. Krishna Kumar, in a recent order, allowed two petitions challenging the case filed by the Social Welfare Department. The petitions were filed by students and

faculty members, including Director Dinesh Nilkant Borkar and Assistant Professor Prateek Thokdar, questioning the legality of the charges against them.

The court observed that continuing the case would amount to an abuse of the legal process. The complaint was based on a compact disk containing a video of the skit, which led to an FIR at Siddapura police station on February 10, 2023. The accused were booked under IPC Sections 153-A, 149, and 295-A, along with provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

However, the court noted that the skit lacked the necessary elements to constitute these offences.

It highlighted that the skit was intended for entertainment, without any intent to insult or intimidate any community. Furthermore, the FIR was not filed by a member of the SC/ST community.

Citing constitutional protections under Article 19, the court emphasized that satire and entertainment fall under the freedom of speech and expression, reinforcing that the skit did not violate any legal provisions.

Kannada Okkuta call for statewide bandh on March 22

Statewide bandh announced on March 22 from 6 AM to 6 PM.

Protest triggered by the assault of a state-run bus conductor in Belagavi.

Activists urge CM, transport sector, and industries to support the bandh.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Kannada Okkuta, a coalition of pro-Kannada organizations, has called for a statewide bandh in Karnataka on March 22. The protest was triggered by the alleged assault of a state-run bus conductor in Belagavi by Marathi-speaking individuals for not conversing in their language. As part of their agitation, Kannada Okkuta plans to lay siege to Raj Bhavan in Bengaluru on March 3, demanding government action to "Save Belagavi." Kannada activist and Okkuta leader Vatal Nagaraj has called upon

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and various organizations to support the shutdown. Speaking to the media, Nagaraj announced that the bandh will be observed across Karnataka from 6 AM to 6 PM on March 22. He also urged Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy to suspend all state-run bus services on that day. Additionally, he called on hotel associations, the film industry, government employees, farmers, lorry owners, private schools, and other unions to participate in the protest. Further demonstrations have been planned leading up to the bandh. On March 7, a 'Belagavi Chalo' procession will be held. On March 11, protests will be staged in Attibele near the Tamil Nadu border, followed by demonstrations in Mandya, Mysuru, and Ramanagara on March 14. A traffic blockade is planned on Old Madras Road near Hoskote on March 16, and a pro-Kannada organizations' meeting will take place in Bengaluru on March 18.

The attack on the bus conductor has reignited the long-standing Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute. The incident, which took place last week on a Belagavi-Balekundri route bus, led to the temporary suspension of inter-state bus services between the two states. Nagaraj criticized politicians from all parties in Belagavi, accusing them of siding with Marathi interests rather than Kannadigas.

The Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute dates back to 1957 when Maharashtra claimed Belagavi, citing its Marathi-speaking population and over 800 Marathi-majority villages. Karnataka, however, maintains that the linguistic demarcation as per the States Reorganisation Act and the 1967 Mahajan Commission Report is final. To reaffirm its claim, Karnataka built the 'Suvarna Vidhana Soudha' in Belagavi, modeled after Bengaluru's Vidhana Soudha, as a symbol of its territorial integrity.

Somanath: Software drives India's space success



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

India's space achievements are powered by in-house software development, deeply integrated with scientific applications, said Dr. S. Somanath, Former Director of ISRO, at the Software Product Management (SPM) Summit held at IIM Bangalore on Saturday.

Speaking at the event, Somanath emphasized that ISRO does not outsource its critical software systems due to the necessity of domain expertise across various fields, including environmental science, physics, and computer science. "Every piece of software, whether for satellite operations,

data analysis, or mission simulations, is built in-house to ensure accuracy, security, and scientific rigor," he stated.

He highlighted ISRO's contributions in developing advanced software systems for geospatial data portals, disaster management platforms, and climate monitoring tools. These innovations support governments, researchers, and the public by transforming raw scientific data into actionable intelligence.

The two-day summit, held on February 28 and March 1, marked its 7th edition with the theme 'Software Product Management Excellence at Scale.'

Bengaluru man's ₹180 Metro vs. ₹210 Auto Fare Comparison Goes Viral

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A Bengaluru resident's comparison of metro and auto fares has ignited a heated debate on social media, shedding light on the affordability and practicality of public transport in the city. The viral post, which detailed the cost difference between the two modes of transport for the same route, has sparked widespread discussions on the rising costs and accessibility of commuting in the tech hub.

The viral post, shared on X (formerly Twitter), highlighted that a metro ride for three people from Malleleshwara to Yelachenahalli costs ₹180, whereas an auto for the same journey charges ₹210. The revelation triggered a flurry of responses, with users debating the financial and logistical aspects of each transport mode.

Public reaction: Metro vs. auto debate

Social media users had mixed opinions, with some arguing that metro fares are relatively affordable given the comfort, safety, and speed it provides. Others countered that additional expenses on last-mile connectivity, such as auto fares from metro stations to final destinations, could push the overall cost beyond ₹210, making auto travel a more direct and economical choice.

"If we account for spending on last-mile transport, it may exceed ₹210," a user pointed out, raising concerns about metro connectivity issues in Bengaluru.

Another segment of users suggested that the Karnataka government should collaborate with auto unions to introduce more electric autos, which could reduce costs for passengers.

With lower operational costs, e-autos could be an environmentally friendly and budget-friendly alternative to conventional autos.

Meanwhile, some defended metro travel, emphasizing its efficiency and reliability. "Metro has AC, is safer, and ensures timely arrival. But three people in an auto for long distances isn't comfortable," a user remarked.

Additionally, a few users highlighted the stark difference in travel time, stating that while an auto ride may take significantly longer due to Bengaluru's notorious traf-



fic, a metro journey offers a fixed schedule and avoids road congestion. "Metro takes about 20-25 minutes, while an auto takes longer," a user noted, supporting metro travel despite its higher costs.

Impact of fare hike on metro ridership

The metro fare debate comes in the wake of a recent fare hike by the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL). On February 8, BMRCL increased metro fares by nearly 100%, along with an additional 5% surcharge during peak hours. The hike has led to a substantial drop in metro ridership.

According to BMRCL data, metro usage declined by approximately 2.3 lakh passengers per day after the fare hike, bringing daily ridership down to 6.3 lakh. Despite

the fare increase, revenue has not met expectations, as fewer passengers are opting for the metro.

"There was a decline in metro ridership by about 2.3 lakh. The expected revenue from the hike has not been achieved. So, our revenue is still the same, or less than it, compared to what it was before February 9 when the hike was effected," a BMRCL official told PTI.

Even after implementing a fare cap of 71% instead of the initially proposed 100% hike in some sections, BMRCL continues to witness a decline in metro commuters. The fare increase has raised concerns about public transport affordability and the government's approach to urban mobility planning.



Conservation crucial, but Bengaluru's power demand continues to rise

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Despite the rising demand for electricity and high power generation costs, Bangalore Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (BESCOM) has assured that the supply remains stable with no power cuts, except for scheduled maintenance works.

Refuting claims by residents about frequent outages and power line failures due to overload, BESCOM Managing Director N Shivashankar clarified that power disruptions are only caused by technical issues or maintenance, with prior notice given to consumers.

BESCOM officials highlighted a steady increase in the city's power demand, with peak loads recorded multiple times in January and February. The highest demand was observed at 9:50 AM on February 26, reach-

ing 8,472 MW. Earlier, on February 20 and February 7, peak loads stood at 8,278 MW and 8,248 MW, respectively.

In January, the demand peaked at 8,203 MW on January 31 at 11:57 AM, followed by 8,053 MW on January 30 and 7,901 MW on January 27.

Shivashankar made these remarks on the sidelines of the launch of new energy-efficient Brushless Direct Current (BLDC) ceiling fans in Bengaluru. The initiative, part of the Central government's push for low-power consumption appliances, is being implemented in collaboration with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency and Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Limited.

BESCOM emphasized that such measures are key to balancing conservation efforts with the city's growing power needs.

Enough water in KRS, Kabini for Bengaluru, Mysuru

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa assured that there is no threat of water scarcity in Bengaluru and Mysuru, as the Kabini and KRS reservoirs have sufficient water. Presiding over a review meeting at the Zilla Panchayat office, he directed officials to take precautionary measures to prevent any shortages during the summer.

The minister emphasized the need to identify villages facing water supply issues and take necessary measures. He also instructed the health department to be prepared to treat people affected by rising temperatures. Additionally, he called for ensuring adequate fodder stock, reviving dried-up borewells, and



maintaining hygiene around water sources.

Irrigation officials confirmed that there is no drinking water scarcity, with a surplus of 9 tmcft of water available in

Kabini and KRS to meet requirements. Water will also be released into irrigation canals up to May. Kabini Circle Superintendent Engineer Mahesh noted that even a delayed monsoon would not impact drinking water supply, as Kabini currently holds 14.2 tmcft and KRS 30 tmcft of water. Other reservoirs like Harnai, Nugu, and Taraka also have sufficient reserves.

To meet Bengaluru and Mysuru's drinking water needs, the irrigation department is discharging 600 cusecs of water from Kabini. Executive Engineer AS Ranjith Kumar assured that Mysuru will have sufficient water until June-end but noted that Rs 13 crore is required to complete pending works.

IKEA pays over Rs 65 lakh penalty for license violations

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Swedish furniture giant IKEA India Private Limited has paid a penalty of Rs 65,93,600 for unauthorized usage of high-power machinery and selling aerated water, soft drinks, and bottled water without valid licenses in Bengaluru.

According to BBMP health officials, IKEA obtained a business license from the corporation on May 13, 2022, and renewed it for five years. However, during an inspection on January 8, officials found that the company was operating 4,021 HP-driven machinery for industrial and commercial purposes, which was not covered under its license. Additionally, the sale of aerated water and bottled beverages was being conducted without the required permit.



Following the violations, the BBMP Dasarahalli Zone issued a notice demanding a penalty for five years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. Despite being served two notices, IKEA did not respond, leading to a third notice on February 20. Subsequently, on February 25, the company submitted a de-

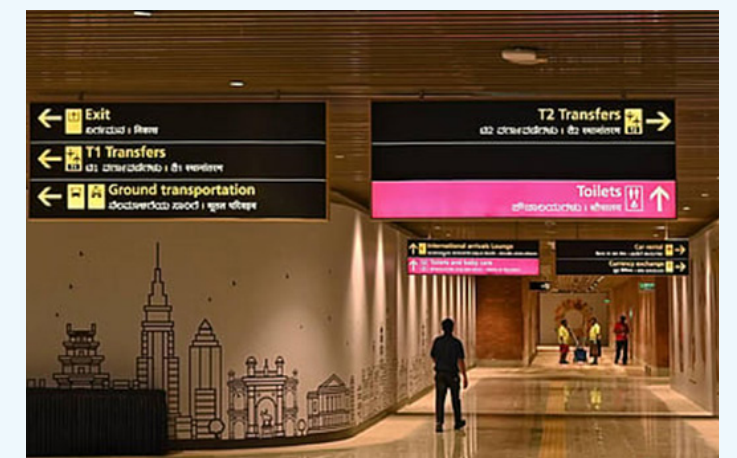
mand draft of Rs 65,93,600 in the name of the Chief Commissioner of BBMP to settle the fine and obtain the necessary business licenses.

BBMP Zonal Commissioner Girish HC emphasized the importance of compliance, urging traders to ensure they obtain the required permissions and licenses for their businesses.

Responding to the development, IKEA stated, "IKEA complies with the law of the land. We have paid this money under protest to meet the BBMP deadlines. This is a subject under discussion with BBMP regarding the details of the license. Our operations are 100% legal, and we will seek clarification from the authorities and take further steps."

Foreign National Arrested for Attacking CISF Personnel at Kempegowda International Airport

Personnel at Kempegowda International Airport



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A 37-year-old foreign national was arrested at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru for allegedly creating a disturbance and assaulting security personnel. The accused, identified as Foils Elliott Blair, has been booked on multiple charges, including assaulting a woman, attacking a public servant, criminal intimidation, and disturbing public order.

Blair, who holds passports from Australia, the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland, was reportedly behaving aggressively in the departure area of Terminal 2 between 10 pm and 11 pm on Wednesday. This terminal primarily handles international flights.

According to a complaint filed by CISF Sub-Inspector A K Mishra, Blair attempted to enter the terminal without a valid flight ticket and was warned by security personnel. However, he refused to comply and allegedly attacked CISF staff, verbally abusing officers and obstructing their duties. Officials stated that he also attempted to assault both male and female security personnel as well as passengers present in the departure area.

Following the altercation, Blair was detained by BIAL police and subsequently arrested. Authorities stated that he had been traveling across India on a tourist visa for several months and had reportedly been in Goa and other locations before arriving in Bengaluru. He wished to return to the UK but had not purchased a flight ticket. A police official revealed that Blair appeared to be mentally disturbed. He has been placed under judicial custody as investigations continue into the incident.

Karnataka has Siddaramaiah, not Shinde, model govt: Minister Mahadevappa

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa asserted on Saturday that Karnataka is governed under a strong Siddaramaiah-led model, dismissing any speculation about a Maharashtra-like political scenario in the state. Refusing to comment on the possibility of developments similar to Maharashtra, where Chief Minister Eknath Shinde split Shiv Sena and allied with the BJP, Mahadevappa stated that such comparisons were baseless. He also downplayed the significance of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar sharing the stage with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the Shivaratri celebrations in Coimbatore, held by the Isha Foundation. He emphasized that no political meaning should be attached to the event.

Mahadevappa accused BJP leaders of making statements for political reasons and asserted that their remarks should not be given undue importance. "Siddaramaiah's leadership remains strong in Karnataka, and the so-called 'Shinde model' will not work here," he stressed.

No misuse of SCP-TSP funds

Addressing the BJP's Janandolan against the alleged diversion of Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) funds, Mahadevappa rejected the allegations, stating that the question of misusing



these funds does not arise. He challenged BJP leaders to push their central leadership to introduce legislation that allocates funds for SC/ST communities in proportion to their population. "The Karnataka government has allocated Rs 25,000 crore under landmark legislation for the development of Dalits, while the Union government, which could have allocated Rs 10 lakh crore, has only earmarked Rs 1 lakh crore in its budget," he pointed out. He accused BJP leaders of engaging in political theatrics instead of ensuring real change and urged them to implement sim-

ilar policies in BJP-ruled states.

Decision on Greater Mysuru

Mahadevappa also revealed that the government will soon decide on upgrading the Mysuru City Corporation to Bruhat Mysuru City Corporation. He stated that discussions will be held with the Devaraja Market Traders regarding their relocation from the dilapidated market structure. He added that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's upcoming budget will prioritize development, including key projects for Mysuru, based on a submitted wish list of demands.

Violence should not be glorified in films - Union Minister Suresh Gopi

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

Union Minister Suresh Gopi stated that while cinema may have an influence on violence in society, it cannot be solely blamed for its origin. Speaking to the media in the state capital on Saturday, he emphasized that audiences should not just watch films but try to understand their underlying messages.

Referring to the criticism surrounding the film *Idukki Gold*, Gopi remarked that the movie was made because such realities exist. "You should ask the artists behind the movie whether there's any reason for glorifying it," he said.

While refraining from directly commenting on reducing violence in films, Gopi stressed that vio-



lence should not be glorified. He urged viewers to recognize that what is portrayed on screen is not merely for entertainment but also a reflection of society. "They should realize that such acts are not correct," he pointed out. The minister also called upon political parties and local leaders to take responsibility in curbing the inflow of drugs into society. He urged residents' associations and booth-level leaders to actively participate in addressing the issue.

Karnataka farmer takes 10 women workers on Goa flight trip



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti announced on Saturday that the case involving BJP MLC C T Ravi's alleged derogatory remarks against Women and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar has been referred to the Council Ethics Committee. Speaking at Vidhana Soudha, Horatti stated that while he had earlier ruled on the matter in Belagavi, both parties had filed fresh complaints. "I had offered to mediate, but neither agreed. Therefore, I have referred the case to the Ethics Committee, which has been asked to submit its

report within a month. A decision will be made based on their findings," he said. Horatti clarified that the issue will not be debated in the legislature. He also noted that although Ravi was a member of the Ethics Committee, he has been removed from it as his own case is under review. "If the House was in session, this situation might not have arisen. Since it occurred during a recess, it has been handed over to the committee. We believe that 99 per cent of the issues will be resolved at the committee level. If not, the report will be presented in the legislative session," he added.

D K Shivakumar had informed high command of attending Isha programme: D K Suresh

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Former Bengaluru Rural MP D K Suresh clarified on Saturday that his brother, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, had informed the Congress high command about his participation in the Isha Foundation Mahashivaratri celebrations, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah was also present. Suresh's remarks come amid allegations that the camp of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is trying to use the event to target Shivakumar. Supporters of Siddaramaiah have also pointed out that Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, who organized the celebrations, had earlier mocked Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi.

Dismissing any secrecy surrounding Shivakumar's participation, Suresh stated, "Shivakumar has not met

anyone secretly. He had informed the high command when he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also when he attended the Isha Foundation programme. He did not go secretly but went publicly. Sadhguru came to his house and invited him, and he accepted the invitation." He also emphasized that Shivakumar has always been a believer. Addressing speculation about Shivakumar's future as Chief Minister, Suresh affirmed his brother's faith in the Congress leadership. "Now, Siddaramaiah is CM, and there is no point in discussing the post. I wish for Shivakumar to become CM one day, but time should decide that. The party will take care of these matters," he stated, adding that Siddaramaiah's position must be respected while he is in office.

Rajanna questions D K Shivakumar over sharing dais with Sadhguru

TPN Correspondent | Hassan

A fresh political controversy has erupted in Karnataka after Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar shared the stage with spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev and Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the Mahashivaratri celebrations in Coimbatore. Karnataka Cooperation Minister K N Rajanna launched a sharp attack on Shivakumar, questioning his decision to be seen alongside Sadhguru, who had allegedly remarked that he "doesn't know who Rahul Gandhi is." "Shivakumar must clarify his stance! Doesn't he know that Sadhguru has humiliated our senior leader Rahul Gandhi?" Rajanna said, reminding that Congress MPs from Karnataka are well aware of BJP lead-



ers who have criticized Gandhi in Parliament. While Rajanna took an aggressive stand, another senior Congress leader, Satish Jarkiholi, adopted a more

measured response, stating that the matter is for the party's central leadership to decide. However, senior minister M B Patil dismissed the contro-

versy outright. "Is Shivakumar not a practicing Hindu? What's wrong in attending a religious event?" he asked, asserting that Shivakumar remains a staunch Congress loyalist and brushing off the criticism as unnecessary media hype.

Meanwhile, former BJP Deputy Chief Minister K S Eshwarappa countered the Congress backlash, stating, "Hindutva is not the property of the BJP! Leaders from all parties, including Shivakumar, are working to preserve Indian culture."

With political tensions escalating in Karnataka, all eyes are now on Shivakumar's response. Whether he will issue a clarification or let the controversy fade remains to be seen.

Govt committed to transferring 45 acres in Hebbal to BMRCL, says Minister Patil

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government is committed to transferring 45 acres of land in Hebbal to Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) for the construction of a multimodal transport hub. However, legal hurdles surrounding the land must be resolved before proceeding, said Large and Medium Industries Minister M. B. Patil on Saturday. In a press release, Patil stated that the total land in question spans 55 acres and 13 guntas, out of which Namma Metro has sought 45 acres and 5 guntas. A meeting was held on Friday between Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar and Patil to discuss the issue, during which it was decided that legal complications must be cleared before finalizing the transfer.

Patil pointed out that the previous BJP government had issued an order permitting the organisation claiming ownership of the land to implement its project over the next three years. Additionally, a court order is in place regarding the matter. "If we transfer the land to Namma Metro without resolving these legal issues, it could lead to further complexities," he explained.

The minister clarified that any decision must align with government policies and court directives. "It is not appropriate for a minister to act against the decisions of the



government and the judiciary. A unilateral move could create additional complications. Hence, we are working towards the most feasible solution to ensure a smooth transfer of land to Metro," he emphasized. Patil assured that all possible solutions are being explored, including discussions with project promoters and legal experts. He reiterated the significance of the project, stating that developing a multimodal transport hub in Hebbal would benefit lakhs of commuters.

"While we are committed to ensuring the transfer happens swiftly, we must also ensure that no new legal problems arise in the process. At the same time, unnecessary delays must be avoided, as any delay could hinder the progress of this crucial public project," he added.

The government is carefully reviewing all available options to facilitate a legally sound and seamless land transfer for the project's timely execution.



Southern Railway orders probe into train-trailer collision

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Southern Railway has initiated an investigation into the collision that occurred between Train No. 16352, Nagercoil - Mumbai Express, and a trailer at a closed level crossing in the Tiruchi Division on Sunday. The incident, which took place between Parikkal and Tiruvennainallur Road railway stations, almost resulted in a major accident but was fortunately averted due to the quick actions of the Loco Pilot and Assistant Loco Pilot.

Railway sources confirmed that a high-level team has been formed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. While no injuries were reported, the locomotive collided with and dragged the trailer for some distance, leaving part of it blocking the adjacent track. This track was soon to be used by the Chennai-Vaigai Superfast Express, which was approaching at high speed from the opposite direction.

In a timely response, the Loco Pilot and Assistant Loco Pilot immediately alerted the nearest Station Master to stop the Vaigai Express. They also followed safety protocols by placing mild-intensity detonators and a Red Flag 1,000 meters ahead of the accident site to signal oncoming trains.

The tractor involved in the ac-

cident had entered the tracks illegally by removing the barricades at a closed level crossing. Southern Railway spokesperson M. Senthamil Selvan explained that the driver of the tractor trailer had disconnected the trailer and moved the tractor away from the track after noticing the approaching train.

The level crossing where the incident occurred, LC-144, was closed in September 2018 with approval from the Villupuram District Collector, and a new Rail Over Bridge had been constructed. Southern Railway has made efforts to prevent trespassing at closed crossings, with barricades and trenching installed at these locations.

Selvan also highlighted that Southern Railway has been actively replacing both manned and unmanned level crossings with Limited Use Subways. Over the past decade, 596 such subways have been constructed, with 185 more under construction.

In recognition of their prompt action, Southern Railway has awarded Loco Pilot P. Arunkumar and Assistant Loco Pilot A. Ramanathan of Madurai Division ₹5,000 each for averting a potentially disastrous situation. Their swift and decisive response prevented a major mishap and ensured the safety of passengers and crew.

Weapons Surrendered in Manipur Amid Ongoing Ethnic Strife



TPN Correspondent | Imphal

In a significant development, 42 more firearms and ammunition have been voluntarily surrendered by the public in five districts of violence-hit Manipur, according to police reports on Sunday, March 2, 2025. This surrender comes amidst the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups that has been plaguing the state since May 2023.

The firearms were handed over across various districts, including Imphal West, Imphal East, Churachandpur, Bishnupur, and Tamenglong on Saturday, March 1. Among the surrendered items were five firearms, including two pistols, six grenades, and over 75 rounds of ammunition in Bishnupur district. In Tamenglong, a larger batch of weapons was surrendered, including seventeen country-made guns, nine locally fabricated mortars (pompi), and additional cartridges. Other items were voluntarily surrendered at police stations in Churachandpur, Lamsang, and Yaingangpokpi, according to the police.

Meanwhile, during a search operation in Imphal West district, security forces seized a cache of

weapons, including an INSAS LMG, an AK-56 rifle, three SLR rifles, an SMG 9mm carbine, and a variety of other firearms, grenades, and ammunition.

In addition to the weapons surrendered, security forces dismantled several illegal bunkers in Kangpokpi and Imphal East districts. Two bunkers were destroyed at Mark Hill in the Thingsat hill range, while three more were demolished in the Wakan hill range, which straddles both districts.

The call for weapon surrender was made by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on February 20, urging warring groups to voluntarily return weapons looted from security forces or held illegally. As of the deadline, which was extended to March 6 due to requests from various communities, more than 300 firearms have been handed over, mostly from the valley districts.

The ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur has resulted in the loss of over 250 lives, with thousands displaced. The central government imposed President's rule in the state on February 13, following the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh, and the state assembly is currently under suspended animation.

Kerala Resident Killed in Shooting at Jordan-Israel Border

TPN Correspondent | Kerala

A tragic incident occurred at the Jordan-Israel border when a Kerala resident, Ani Thomas Gabriel, was shot dead by Jordanian military personnel on February 10. Gabriel, 47, from Thumba, was confirmed dead by his family members on March 1, after receiving an email from the Indian Embassy in Jordan. Metilda, a family member, shared the news with PTI, stating, "We received an email from the Indian Embassy in Jordan about his death, but there has been no further communication after that."

Gabriel, who had traveled to the Middle East, was reportedly attempting to cross from Jordan into Israel along with three other individuals, with the help of an agent. The group had entered Jordan on three-month visit visas. When the Jordanian military confronted the group at the border, they allegedly attempted to flee, which led to the soldiers opening fire.

Gabriel was struck in the head and died from his injuries, while another relative, Edison, who was also shot, survived with a leg injury.

Edison was treated at a Jordanian mil-



itary hospital for his injuries before returning to India. The family confirmed that Edison had made it back home, but Gabriel's death remains a sorrowful blow. Gabriel had left for his journey on February 5, with plans to visit Velankanni, a Christian pilgrimage site in Tamil Nadu.

His family was informed about the shooting incident by the Indian Embassy after an agonizing wait for confirma-

tion. The circumstances surrounding the incident suggest that the group was attempting to cross the border illegally, and the shooting occurred as they tried to escape from the military personnel. The Indian Embassy is reportedly in communication with local authorities to gather more details, but the incident has left the family of Gabriel in deep grief.

NGT seeks presence of Uttarakhand Govt officials over illegal felling of 176 trees

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the member secretary of the Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB) and the state's principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) to appear before it regarding the illegal felling of 176 trees in Udhham Singh Nagar district. The trees were cut down during the development of a residential colony in Chandpur village, a matter that has raised serious environmental concerns.

The NGT was hearing a petition related to this unauthorized tree felling and ordered the appearance of the officials in its latest proceedings. The Bench, comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel, referred to a report submitted by a joint committee formed to investigate the incident. The committee, which included representatives from the District Magistrate's office, the Dehradun regional office of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the UKPCB, confirmed that 176 trees had been felled illegally. The tribunal also noted that environmental compensation was to be recovered for the harm caused.

In its order dated February 24, the NGT directed that the Uttarakhand Chief Secretary and other concerned officials respond to the findings and provide relevant records in the next hearing. Given the gravity of the situation, the tribunal deemed it essential for the member



secretary of the UKPCB and the PCCF to be present either in person or via video conference during the upcoming hearing. The Tribunal emphasized that their appearance would assist in a fair and proper adjudication of the case.

This case highlights the growing issue of unauthorized tree felling in the country, especially in environmentally sensitive areas. The NGT's intervention comes at a time when there is increasing awareness about the need to preserve forests and biodiversity. The tribunal has also taken steps to ensure that those responsible for such illegal activities are held accountable, and the necessary compensations are made to restore environmental harm.

Tamil Nadu Braces for a Milder Summer, With Coastal Areas Expecting Soaring Temperatures

TPN Correspondent | Tamil Nadu

Most parts of Tamil Nadu are expected to experience a relatively milder summer, with the maximum temperatures predicted to remain close to normal. However, the coastal belt of the state could experience higher-than-average temperatures during the summer months. According to the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) outlook for hot weather from March to May 2025, the southern peninsular region, including Tamil Nadu, is likely to experience normal to below-normal daytime temperatures. The IMD's forecast suggests that heat may be less severe in Tamil Nadu throughout March, with day temperatures staying below average in the interior regions and along the western Ghats.

March has had a pleasant start for Tamil Nadu, with many areas in the south receiving heavy rainfall. Oothu in the Tirunelveli district recorded the highest rainfall in the past 24 hours, with 8 cm of rain until 8:30 a.m. on Saturday. Other places such as Thanjavur and Tirunelveli



li also saw light rainfall. The Regional Meteorological Centre in Chennai confirmed that an upper air circulation over the east Equatorial Indian Ocean and the adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal would continue to influence wet weather over Tamil Nadu until Monday. The southern regions of the state are expected to receive more rainfall than the northern districts until Monday. P. Senthamarai Kannan, Director of the Area Cyclone Warning Centre in Chennai, indicated that dry weather would return to the state by March 4, with day

temperatures gradually rising by two to three degrees Celsius in isolated areas until March 5.

Chennai, for instance, is forecasted to experience maximum temperatures of 33-34°C on Sunday. Meteorologists noted that such brief wet spells are not uncommon at the end of winter. Former Deputy Director General of Meteorology Y.E. A. Raj explained that small weather perturbations like this have occurred in the past.

The summer outlook indicates a lower likelihood of heatwave conditions across most of Tamil Nadu, although the north coastal areas may experience heatwaves. Experts advised residents, especially those traveling outdoors, to be prepared for hotter conditions than average, as temperatures could feel more intense than the measured averages in controlled environments. Despite this, Tamil Nadu is predicted to receive above-normal rainfall in March, with places like Nagapattinam and Pamban expected to receive 1.3 cm and 1.2 cm of rain, respectively.

The Imperialist Philosopher Who Demanded The Ukraine War

In August 2022, six months into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a cultural festival named Traditions was held just outside Moscow, at the former summer retreat of the celebrated Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. The keynote speaker for this event was Alexander Dugin, a scholar and influential ideologue widely seen as the intellectual force behind the movement supporting the war. Dugin, often referred to as the prophet of the new Russian Empire, has long advocated for a vision of Russia as a dominant, spiritual force in global history. His recent book *Being and Empire** (2023), a dense, 784-page tome, argues that Russia is "the last place of the true subject of history in time and space."



At the Traditions festival, Dugin delivered a lecture titled *Tradition and History*, which lived up to its grandiose name, covering an expansive range of topics. Dugin spoke about the

spiritual core of the Russian nation, looking back to its pre-modern past for clues to its deeper, metaphysical identity. He discussed the seasonal rhythms of the Russian peasantry, positing that the labor of the land

was not merely a form of work, but a manifestation of Russia's spiritual essence. Through this lens, the everyday life of the Russian people was imbued with profound, historical significance.

Dugin's intellectual and ideological positions have made him a central figure in the Russian political and cultural elite. His ideas about a new Russian Empire, grounded in a blend of nationalism, orthodoxy, and mysticism, are seen as providing a philosophical justification for Russia's aggressive military actions in Ukraine. At the Traditions festival, this worldview was not merely academic but presented as a living, spiritual truth for the nation.

Trump, Musk, and Patel: A Geopolitical Reckoning Liberals Can't Ignore



When Donald Trump reclaims the White House, he doesn't stand alone. Alongside him is Elon Musk, the world's richest man and the mastermind behind X (formerly Twitter), and Kash Patel, newly appointed as FBI Director following a contentious Senate vote. Together, this trio forms a power bloc that could reshape global politics, economics, and ideologies in ways that pose an existential challenge to liberals who champion global cooperation and progressive values.

This powerful coalition—Trump's nationalistic fervor, Musk's unrestrained influence, and Patel's security-driven vision—suggests a future where dominance trumps cooperation. For liberals who have spent decades building international alliances, climate action, and institutional trust, this shift signals the unraveling of everything they've worked for.

Under Trump's "America First" mantra, reinforced by Musk's wealth and Patel's security grip, the U.S. could turn inward, severing key alliances like NATO in favor of deals with like-minded

autocrats—such as Putin or Modi. Patel's FBI, driven by political loyalty rather than traditional law enforcement principles, could tighten intelligence flows, further isolating the U.S. from its global partners. For liberals, this represents a disastrous departure from multilateral diplomacy and could lead to a fragmented world where international norms are ignored, and global stability is endangered.

This emerging isolationist framework would put global leaders in a precarious position, forcing them to recalibrate their strategies as America no longer plays the stabilizing role it once did.

Elon Musk's control over X, with its vast global reach and 210 million followers, has already reshaped American political discourse. His platform has amplified Trump's return and boosted the rise of figures like Vivek Ramaswamy. Musk's influence extends beyond U.S. borders, where he's backed far-right European leaders and criticized climate activism. Under his leadership, X has become an increasingly hostile environment for progressive voices, further

aligning with Trump's populist rhetoric.

For liberals, this consolidation of power by one billionaire who influences political debates without facing elections is deeply unsettling. Musk's growing alignment with Trump could elevate X into a megaphone for right-wing ideologies, leaving little room for left-leaning perspectives in public discourse.

Patel's FBI: A Security-Driven Shakeup

Kash Patel's appointment as FBI Director signals a turning point. A staunch Trump ally with no law enforcement experience, Patel's approach promises to reshape the FBI into a political tool. His focus on rooting out "dissenters"—real or imagined—could turn the agency into an enforcer of Trump's vision rather than an objective intelligence body. International partners may hesitate to share intelligence, fearing that political agendas will influence national security decisions. This could escalate geopolitical tensions, further isolating the U.S. from its allies.

Liberals are particularly

alarmed by the rise of a security state driven by partisan loyalty. With Patel in charge, the FBI could become a vehicle for silencing opposition, both domestically and abroad, marking a dangerous shift toward authoritarianism.

The Global Right Strikes Back

Giorgia Meloni, Italy's populist prime minister, recently declared the left's worldview "decadent" and "elitist." With Trump, Musk, and Patel rising, it's clear why: this trio is not only challenging the left—they are overpowering it. With their combined wealth, influence, and security control, they are re-writing the rules of politics and economics in a way that leaves liberals scrambling to adapt.

As Trump's political machine, Musk's fortune, and Patel's security apparatus converge, the world is on the brink of a new geopolitical order—one that prioritizes dominance over diplomacy, strength over cooperation, and loyalty over justice. For liberals, the message is clear: adapt or watch their ideals crumble.



Shashi Tharoor | The outsider within

The four-time MP for Thiruvananthapuram has landed in back-to-back controversies after his comments on Kerala's industrial growth and Congress leadership

Shashi Tharoor, known for his literary prowess and political career, has often found himself at the center of controversy due to his sharp words, which sometimes appear to cause more trouble than they are worth. As a four-time Member of Parliament in the Congress, his political commentary has frequently stirred reactions, not only from his rivals but also from within his own party. From the "cattle class" comment in 2009 to his latest remarks about Kerala's Congress leadership, Tharoor's words have been both his greatest asset and his Achilles' heel in the political arena.

Most recently, Tharoor's interview in a newspaper sparked a new round of controversy. He reportedly spoke about the lack of a clear leader in Kerala's Congress unit and mentioned alternative "options" such as speaking tours and writing books, should the party not require his services. Although he later accused the media of twisting his words to imply that he was seeking a leadership position, the damage had been done. The comments were seen by many as a subtle pitch for a more prominent role in Kerala's politics, especially ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, adding fuel to the fire of his strained relationship with state Congress leaders.

This incident came closely after another storm. Earlier in February, Tharoor praised Kerala's industrial ecosystem, highlighting the growth in the startup sector and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's achievements in fostering MSMEs. His remarks, made just before the Invest Kerala Global Summit, were seized by the ruling LDF to counter Congress's negative view of the state's investment climate. This infuriated local Congress leaders, who quickly tried to downplay his comments. The issue only subsided after Tharoor met with Rahul Gandhi, seeking clarification and damage control.

The Congress Party's Struggle for Relevance: A Call for Reform and Leadership



Will the Congress party ever learn from its repeated electoral defeats? This is the question that looms large over the party's future. Once the architect of India's independence, known for its art of political compromise and deft management of competing regional ambitions, the Congress now seems a shell of its former self. The party is plagued by a lack of coherence, a vanishing ideology, intolerance for dissent, and an inability to manage regional leaders effectively. These internal struggles, coupled with a lack of meaningful leadership, have led to its continuous defeats at the polls.

The Congress, which once commanded respect, is now overshadowed by a group of divisive and narrow-minded political forces. Today, the country finds itself in the hands of leaders who focus more on dividing societies, suppressing dissent, and marginalizing minorities than on fostering inclusive growth. The rise of such politics, focused on hyper-nationalism and divisiveness, represents a painful departure from the ideals that once made India a beacon of democracy.

Meanwhile, the right-wing parties have thrived, effectively harnessing the power of nationalism to build a strong base. Figures like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, backed by populist policies and a focus on national pride, have created a political environment where division is the norm, and governance takes a backseat to rhetoric. The right-wing's success lies in its ability to consolidate a vote bank by manufacturing societal divisions, often using nationalism as a weapon to unite its supporters.

This presents a dire challenge for the Congress: it must articulate a clear, compelling ideology that speaks to the needs of ordinary Indians—addressing unemployment, economic revival, education, social welfare, and regional harmony. The Congress must also recognize the importance of building a strong organization that reaches out to constituents year-round, not just during election cycles.

Ramzan Mubarak!: PM Modi Extends Greetings As Holy Month Begins

- PM Modi extend Ramzan greetings
- Wish for peace, harmony, and devotion
- J&K communities celebrate with unity

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday extended his heartfelt greetings to the people on the occasion of the holy Islamic month of Ramzan. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), he wished for peace and harmony to prevail in society as the month of fasting and devotion begins.

"As the blessed month of Ramzan begins, may it bring peace and harmony in our society," the Prime Minister said in his message. He emphasized that this sacred month serves as a time for reflection, gratitude, and devotion, reminding people of the core values of compassion, kindness, and service. He concluded his message with a warm "Ramzan Mubarak!"

Congress leader and Member of Parliament Rahul Gandhi also shared his greetings, sending wishes for happiness and peace during the holy month. "Ramzan Mubarak! May this sacred month fill your life with happiness and bring peace to your heart," Rahul Gandhi wrote in his post on X, extending his heartfelt wishes to the people observing Ramzan.

In Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri, the community marked the start of Ramzan with joy and togetherness. People in the region came together to distribute sweets, celebrating the beginning of the holy month. The distribution of sweets symbolizes a sense of unity and the spirit of sharing that is central



to Ramzan. Ramzan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a time of fasting, reflection, prayer, and community for Muslims around the world. During this month, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, engage in acts of charity, and strengthen their connection with God through devotion and worship. As the holy month begins, both political leaders and citizens have come together to celebrate the values of unity, compassion, and peace that Ramzan embodies.



Eknath Shinde Dismisses Speculations Over Rift Within Mahayuti Alliance

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday dismissed rumors of a rift within the ruling Mahayuti alliance, assuring that the BJP-led coalition would remain intact. Addressing a joint press conference ahead of the upcoming budget session, Shinde humorously responded to claims of internal conflict, quipping that a "cold war" would be impossible in Maharashtra's scorching heat. "This is the second session of our government. Only we (BJP and Shiv Sena) have changed roles. But Ajit Dada's role remains constant... We have restarted several projects that were stalled by the MVA government. Ajit Dada will present the Maharashtra budget," Shinde said.

His comments followed opposition claims that Shinde had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on February 22 in Pune to discuss alleged attempts by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to undermine his authority. Reports suggested that Shinde had complained about being sidelined and that his decisions were being reversed by Fadnavis. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut further alleged that during the meeting, Shinde had expressed his desire to be the Chief Minister again, to which Shah purportedly responded that only by merging his Shiv Sena faction with the BJP could Shinde's claim to the CM post be considered.

Shinde's comments were aimed at quelling these rumors. "No matter how many breaking news stories you publish, we (Mahayuti) will not break. What is cold war? There is nothing like that. In this scorching heat of Maharashtra, how is a cold war possible?" Shinde added, mocking the speculation.

The Mahayuti coalition, comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP, secured a significant victory in the 2024 Assembly elections, winning 235 out of 288 seats. Despite the ongoing speculation, Shinde's remarks underline the coalition's resolve to maintain unity and focus on governance in the state.



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. Further, the Chief Minister directed all Deputy Commissioners to set up operational district control rooms to address grievances and enhance the public service delivery process during the holy month. "Our collective effort should be to ensure a smooth and hassle-free Ramadan for the people. It is our responsibility to put all necessary arrangements in place," Abdullah remarked.

Mehndi on hands, Body in Suitcase

Congress worker Himani Narwal found dead in Rohtak

TPN Correspondent | Haryana

A major political row erupted after Congress worker Himani Narwal was found dead in a suitcase near the Sampla bus stand in Rohtak. The 20-22-year-old had mehndi on her hands and a scarf around her neck, suggesting she had attended a celebration recently. Sampla police, who received information about the body on Friday, have launched an investigation.



Himani Narwal, from Kathura village in Sonapat, was an office-bearer of the Youth Congress in Rohtak. She gained prominence after appearing alongside Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra and played an active role in the Haryana Assembly election campaign with Bhupinder and Deepinder Hooda. She was also

known for performing with Haryanvi folk artists at Congress rallies and social events. Congress MLA Bharat Bhushan Batra confirmed her close association with the Hoodas during the election campaign. Her X account identified her as the vice president of the Indian Youth Congress.

Who was Himani Narwal?

The Congress has identified the deceased as Himani Narwal, an office-bearer of the Youth Congress in Rohtak. Himani Narwal hails from Kathura village in Sonapat. Narwal became popular after she appeared alongside Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. She was also active during the Haryana Assembly elections,

campaigning for the Congress. During the election campaign, Narwal was pretty active with Bhupinder Hooda and Deepinder Hooda.

Congress leaders strongly condemned the murder. Haryana Congress president Bhupinder Singh Hooda called it a "barbaric act" and a "blot on the law and order situation" in the state. He demanded a high-level, impartial probe and justice for the victim's family. Former Youth Congress chief Srinivas BV also paid tribute, recalling her dedication to party activities, including the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Police are investigating the case, and the body has been sent for post-mortem. Authorities are working to identify the culprits behind the brutal killing.

Uttarakhand Avalanche

Army recovers two more bodies, death toll rises to six

TPN Correspondent | Uttarakhand

The Indian Army recovered two more bodies from the avalanche-hit area near Mana village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, raising the total fatalities to six. The search operation continues to locate the remaining two missing individuals.

According to PRO (Defence), Dehradun, the bodies recovered today are being transported to Mana post. The rescue mission, involving the Army, ITBP, Air Force, NDRF, and SDRF, is working relentlessly to locate the missing workers. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami confirmed that advanced equipment, including ground-penetrating radar, thermal imaging cameras, and victim-locating cameras, is being used to aid the search efforts.

The Chief Minister noted that while weather conditions are improving, the risk of further avalanches remains high. As a precaution, authorities have suspended work in high-altitude areas.



Chamoli District Magistrate Sandeep Tiwari provided an update on the situation, stating that doctors had confirmed four deaths by Saturday. Initially, authorities estimated 55 workers were present, but later confirmed one was on unauthorized leave and had returned home, adjusting the

total count to 54, with four still missing at that time. Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force deployed a Mi-17 helicopter to airlift a drone-based Intelligent Buried Object Detection system for search operations in the avalanche-affected region. IAF Cheetah helicopters have been active-

ly assisting in rescue efforts since Saturday, after the avalanche struck a BRO camp near Mana village on February 28. The multi-agency search and rescue operation remains underway, with officials committed to locating the remaining missing individuals.

Trump-Zelensky Clash Spurs Europe to Strengthen Security Amid Fears Of U.S. Shift

TPN Correspondent | London

Europe is reassessing its security strategy after a public confrontation between U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House. The diplomatic fallout has prompted European leaders to reinforce their support for Ukraine and evaluate their options amid fears of a weakened American commitment.

Following the White House meeting, Zelensky received a warm reception in Britain, where he attended a summit hosted by UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and held an official audience at Sandringham. His visit comes as European leaders seek to reassert their backing for Ukraine, fearing that a shift in U.S. policy could embolden Russia and leave Europe more vulnerable.

Trump's administration has initiated direct talks with Russian officials to negotiate an end to the war, sidelining both



Ukraine and Europe. This shift, coupled with a phone call between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, has raised concerns that Washington may force Kyiv into an unfavorable peace deal, potentially strengthening Moscow's position in the region.

European leaders, including those from Germany, France, Spain, Poland, and the Netherlands, have expressed solidarity with Ukraine through public statements, with Zelensky personally acknowledging their support. However, the possi-

bility of the U.S. stepping back from its role as a security guarantor has led to urgent discussions on Europe's defense preparedness.

The U.S. has provided approximately \$114 billion in aid to Ukraine since the war began three years ago, while Europe has contributed around \$132 billion. Should American support wane, European forces stationed at key Ukrainian infrastructure sites could face increased risks from Russian military actions. Without a strong deterrent, Moscow might re-

sume hostilities, threatening regional stability.

In response, European officials are convening a series of high-level meetings to discuss their defense strategy. A summit in London on Sunday and a special European Council session in Brussels on Thursday will focus on accelerating military reinforcement and defining clearer security guarantees for Ukraine.

Ukraine remains determined to secure security assurances from Washington, recognizing the importance of U.S. support in deterring future Russian aggression. However, the diplomatic rift has fueled European efforts to build a more independent defense policy.

As tensions escalate, Europe faces a critical decision: whether to rely on Washington's unpredictable stance or rapidly strengthen its own military capabilities. The outcome of this week's discussions will likely shape the continent's security strategy in the years ahead.



Israel Stops Entry of Aid Into Gaza as Ceasefire Ends

TPN Correspondent | Tel Aviv

Israel announced on Sunday that it is halting the entry of all goods and supplies into the Gaza Strip following the expiration of the first phase of the ceasefire with Hamas. The Israeli prime minister's office did not specify the duration of the blockade but warned of "additional consequences" if Hamas does not agree to what Israel says is a US-backed proposal for an extended ceasefire. The first phase of the truce, which saw an increase in humanitarian aid deliveries, expired on Saturday. While negotiations for a second phase were expected—potentially involving the release of more hostages in exchange for an Israeli pullout—no agreement has been reached.

Israel stated that it supports a proposal to extend the ceasefire until April 20, covering Ramadan and Passover. The plan, reportedly put forward by US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, suggests Hamas release half of the remaining hostages on the first day and the rest once terms for a permanent ceasefire are settled. So far, Hamas has not responded to the offer, and there has been no official comment from mediators Egypt, Qatar, or the United States. The situation remains tense as humanitarian concerns grow over the renewed blockade of aid.



"What Are Your Needs?" New Scam In Indonesia Uses President Deepfakes

TPN Correspondent | Jakarta

A deepfake scam using AI-generated videos of Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has swindled people across 20 provinces, with fraudsters luring victims by promising financial aid.

The scam involves a manipulated video of Prabowo, where he appears to ask viewers, "What are your needs right now?" Those who fell for the message were instructed to contact a WhatsApp number and pay between 250,000 and one million rupiah (\$15-\$60) as an "administrative fee" to receive aid that never materialized.

Authorities have arrested one suspect who pocketed 65 million rupiah (\$4,000) through the scheme, while a second person linked to another deepfake scam was also detained. However, similar fake videos continue to circulate widely on platforms like TikTok, with some clips amassing millions of views. Social media platforms are now scrambling to remove misleading content. TikTok confirmed taking down at least one such video, while Meta has not yet responded to requests for comment. Experts warn that deepfake scams are on the rise in Indonesia, posing serious threats to public trust and financial security. TikTok said it had removed one of the deepfake scam videos and the associated account, adding it would continue to remove any that violated the platform's community guidelines, which prohibit misleading posts. Facebook parent Meta did not respond to AFP's request for comment. AFP, along with more than 100 other fact-checking organizations, is paid by TikTok and Meta to verify social media posts that potentially contain false information.

Thousands Evacuated As Japan Battles Largest Wildfire In 30 Years

TPN Correspondent | Tokyo



A massive wildfire in northern Japan has forced the evacuation of thousands as authorities struggle to contain the country's worst blaze in over three decades.

The fire, which broke out near Ofunato city, has already claimed one life, damaged over 80 buildings, and spread across an estimated 1,800 hectares. Around 2,000 residents have fled to stay with relatives, while more than 1,200 have taken shelter in emergency centers.

Military helicopters are assisting in firefighting efforts, with nearly 1,700 firefighters mobilized from across the country. Japan experiences most of its wildfires between February and April, when dry conditions and strong winds heighten risks.

Aerial footage by NHK showed columns of white smoke billowing, four days after the blaze first materialized, with military helicopters trying to douse them. One burned body has been discovered so far, with more than 80 buildings damaged and around 1,700 firefighters mobilized from across the country. The number of wildfires has declined since the peak in the 1970s, according to government data, but there were about 1,300 across Japan in 2023 — concentrated in the February to April period when the air dries and winds pick up.

JD Vance Faces Pro-Ukraine Protest During Vermont Ski Holiday

TPN Correspondent | Vermont

US Vice-President JD Vance faced a wave of pro-Ukraine protests during his ski holiday in Vermont, following his heated exchange with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House. Protesters gathered in Waitsfield on Saturday, holding signs that read "International embarrassment" and "Vermont stands with Ukraine," while waving Ukrainian flags.

According to reports, the Vance family was forced to move to an undisclosed location from their planned ski resort due to the demonstration. The protest, initially planned before the Oval Office clash, saw increased participation after Vance's combative remarks against Zelensky and Ukraine aid policies.

"After what he did yesterday, he crossed the line," said protester Cori Giroux, speaking to Vermont Public Radio.

Despite the tensions, Vermont's Republican Governor Phil Scott, a critic of Trump, urged residents to be respectful. "Please join me in welcoming them to Vermont and hoping they have an opportunity to experience what makes our state, and Vermonters, so special," he stated. The controversy stems from Vance's confrontation with Zelensky during a White House meeting on Friday. The discussion, initially cordial, turned tense when Vance praised Trump's push for a diplomatic resolution to the Ukraine-Russia war. Zelensky challenged Vance, questioning what kind of diplomacy he was referring to.



"I'm talking about the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country," Vance retorted, accusing Zelensky of interfering in US politics by meeting with Trump's opponent Kamala Harris during the 2024 election campaign. As protests against the Trump-Vance administration continue, the fallout from the White House clash with Zelensky is expected to further deepen divisions on US support for Ukraine.

US-Funded NGOs May Be "Biggest Scam Ever": Elon Musk

TPN Correspondent | Washington, D.C.

Billionaire entrepreneur and key Trump advisor Elon Musk has claimed that US-funded NGOs might be the "biggest scam ever," alleging that taxpayer money is being misused to fund organizations with little oversight. His remarks, made during a podcast with Joe Rogan, have sparked intense debate over the role of these organizations in government spending.

Musk, who heads the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under the Trump administration, stated that his team is working to cut wasteful expenditures. According

to him, several NGOs receive billions in government funds without proper scrutiny, allowing individuals to profit from non-profit organizations.

"The whole NGO thing is a nightmare. A government-funded non-governmental organization is just a government-funded organization—it's an oxymoron," Musk remarked, adding that some NGOs were formed recently yet received substantial amounts of money.

Citing an example, Musk revealed that one particular NGO, barely a year old, received \$1.9 billion in funding. He argued that these organizations operate as loopholes, enabling activities that would otherwise be illegal if directly carried



out by the government.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO also accused billionaire philanthropist George Soros of exploiting the system, claiming that he mastered the art of leveraging small donations into massive funding from the government. "Soros figured out how to create a non-profit, lobby politicians,

and turn a \$10 million donation into a billion-dollar NGO," Musk alleged.

Musk's accusations align with his earlier criticism of government agencies such as USAID, which he described as "money laundering operations." He emphasized that while some NGOs might serve genuine purposes, the majority engage in questionable financial practices, siphoning public funds under the guise of philanthropy.

Referring to the US government's fiscal crisis, Musk pointed out that the country is losing \$2 trillion annually and has repeatedly failed financial audits. He highlighted a case where the Navy received \$12 billion for additional submarines

but was unable to account for the funds. DOGE, under Musk's leadership, is reportedly scrutinizing the government's payment system, which he claims has been operating with minimal oversight. "When we arrived, we found that payments worth trillions were being processed without proper categorization or descriptions—essentially blank checks," he said. Musk expressed deep concern over America's financial future, warning that continued mismanagement could lead to economic collapse. He noted that many NGO payments persist even after the approving officials retire or leave their positions, likening it to an unchecked gym membership renewal.

Stock Markets set for Turbulence amid Global Uncertainties



Domestic stock markets are expected to face significant volatility this week, influenced by global developments. The tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump on Mexico, Canada, and China are set to take effect from March 4. Additionally, tensions have escalated after Ukrainian President Zelensky, who had engaged in peace talks, suddenly got into a disagreement with Trump, adding further uncertainty to the market. Given this



MURTHY NAIDU PAADAM
Stock Market Analyst
+91 988 555 9709

situation, investors are advised to remain cautious. However, if conditions turn favorable, there is a possibility of a counter rally in the benchmark indices. During the past week, stocks across all sectors declined, with only metal and private bank stocks showing some resilience. Analysts suggest that certain stocks may present good investment opportunities, provided investors exercise caution and implement

stop-loss strategies.



Stock Recommendations

Shares of HDFC Bank, which had reached an all-time high in December, witnessed a 15% correction before recovering at the crucial ₹1,660 support level. The stock has outperformed the Nifty index and recorded a 5% increase in the last three sessions. It closed at ₹1,732 last Friday, and investors are advised to enter around ₹1,700 with a target price of ₹1,825, keeping a stop-loss at ₹1,675. Coal India has seen renewed buying interest after a prolonged selling phase, as it is now available at attractive valuations. Despite market weakness, the



stock has shown stability. Closing at ₹369 last Friday, investors may consider entering around ₹350, targeting ₹390-₹425, with a stop-loss at ₹335.



Axis Bank has demonstrated consistent strength since late January, performing well even in a declining market. Relative strength is improving, and price action remains favorable. The stock closed at ₹1,015 in the previous session, and investors can consider an entry around ₹1,000, aiming for ₹1,125-₹1,150, with a stop-loss at ₹975.



Trent has been on a downward trend since October, losing 45% of its value. However, value investors are show-

ing renewed interest following strong quarterly results. Closing at ₹4,851 last Friday, the stock presents a potential entry at ₹4,800, with a target of ₹5,250, and a stop-loss at ₹4,750.



Hindalco has been outperforming the Nifty index, with the metals sector showing signs of recovery. Price action in the stock has been strong. Closing at ₹634 last Friday, investors can consider entering at ₹625, with target levels of ₹690-₹725, and a stop-loss at ₹600. Investors should proceed with caution. With ongoing global uncertainties, market participants should closely monitor developments and maintain a disciplined approach while trading in the current environment.

India's Economic Growth Shows Balance, Set to Reach 6.5% in FY25

India's economic growth is becoming increasingly balanced, with private consumption's share in GDP rising in fiscal year 2025, according to a new report by Crisil. The country's real GDP growth is expected to reach 6.5% for FY25, slightly revised from 6.4% in the second advanced estimate. This puts the projected growth closer to the pre-pandemic average of 6.6% for the past decade.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist at Crisil, noted that this growth is underpinned by various factors, including normal monsoons, lower food inflation, and expected rate cuts in the range of 75-100 basis points in the current cycle, which began earlier this month. The GDP growth forecast for the next fiscal year is also pegged at 6.5%.

In fiscal 2024, public and household investments were the fastest-growing components, with the corporate sector lagging behind. Despite the financial flexibility and low leverage that many corporates enjoy, healthy investments have yet to materialize. Ongoing tariff wars and concerns about potential dumping from China have made the corporate sector more cautious in its investment decisions.

Joshi highlighted that the evolving risks from tariff actions, including those already in place and the possibility of more measures in the coming months, have created a downside bias to their



growth forecasts.

In terms of quarterly performance, India's GDP growth accelerated to 6.2% in Q3 of FY25 (October-December), up from a revised 5.6% in the previous quarter. For FY25, the growth is now estimated at 6.5%, while the previous fiscal year (2023-24) saw a revised growth rate of 8.2%, marking a 12-year high.

Regarding fiscal matters, the fiscal deficit for the first 10 months of the current financial year (April-January) stood at Rs 11.70 lakh crore, which is 74.5% of the annual estimate.

India Poised to Lead the AI Age with Strong Policies and Infrastructure: Piyush Goyal

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized that India is poised to take the lead in the AI revolution, thanks to the government's forward-thinking policies that enable entrepreneurs and innovators to leverage the digital wave. Speaking at the Mumbai Tech Week 2025, Goyal expressed confidence that Mumbai could become the country's tech hub, given the significant investments in infrastructure, capital, and skill development underway in the city.



The global significance of AI was underscored by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the AI Action Summit in Paris. Co-chairing the event with France, PM Modi stressed that AI is a global responsibility, one that requires ethical, inclusive, and trustworthy development.

He emphasized the need for governance frameworks that balance innovation with risk management and ensure access to AI, especially for the Global South. Modi also highlighted the importance of democratizing technology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

"Had an excellent interaction at the Mumbai Tech Week 2025, where I had the opportunity to discuss India's growing role in AI adoption and its commitment to ethical usage," Goyal posted on X. He highlighted that India is already taking a leadership position in artificial intelligence, with 3 billion AI-related app downloads recorded in 2024—far surpassing the U.S. (1.5 billion) and China (1.3 billion). According to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, this growth indicates that India is not just conducting research on AI but is actively implementing it on a large scale.

The Prime Minister also pointed out India's success in building a Digital Public Infrastructure for its 1.4 billion citizens, ensuring open and accessible technology. He underscored that India is developing its own Large Language Model (LLM) for AI, taking into account the country's vast diversity. Modi concluded by announcing that India will host the next AI Summit, solidifying its position as a global leader in the AI era.

Manufacturing and services sectors set to boost GVA output as profitability improves in Q3FY25

A report by ICICI Bank suggests that the Gross Value Added (GVA) output, a key indicator of total value created by businesses, across the manufacturing and services sectors is set to maintain its momentum in the third quarter of the Financial Year 2025 (Q3FY25). This projection follows a significant improvement in profitability observed in Q3.

The report highlights that both manufacturing and services sectors showed steady recovery in profitability after a subdued second quarter. For Q3, ICICI Bank's Global Markets report predicts a continued pick-up in GVA output for these sectors, driven by improved profitability levels.

In Q3FY25, companies across manufacturing and services sectors wit-



nessed a rebound in revenue growth after a brief slowdown in the preced-

ing quarter. The service sector, in particular, saw robust top-line growth,

with a year-on-year (YoY) increase of 12.9%, outpacing the manufacturing sector, which grew by 4.4% YoY.

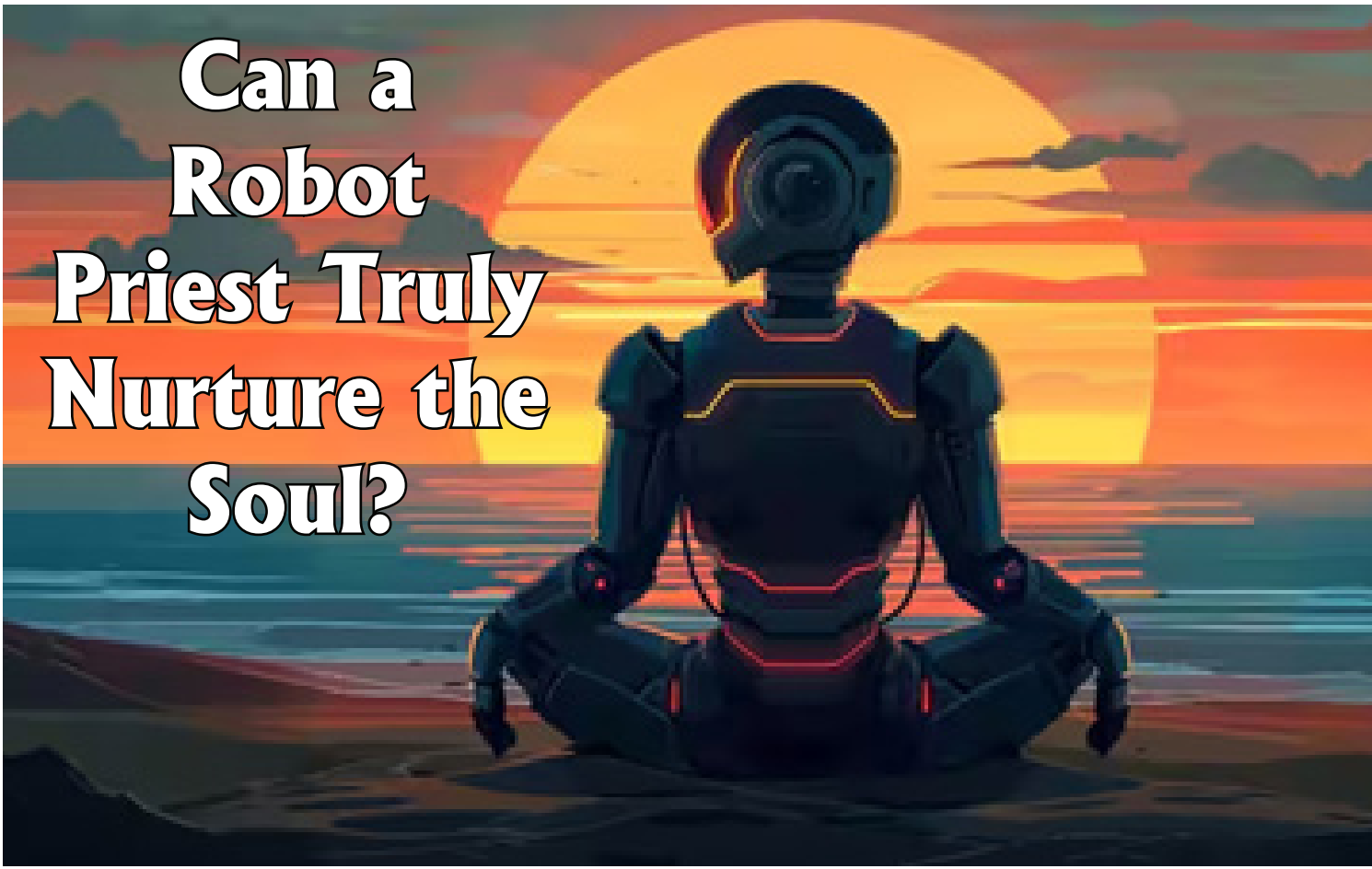
Manufacturing growth was largely driven by increased production volumes, although muted commodity prices restricted revenue expansion, particularly in commodity-focused sectors. However, manufacturers excluding refineries registered a faster revenue growth of 8.8% YoY. Key industries such as FMCG, chemicals, and electronics played a significant role in driving this growth.

The report also noted that the revenues of the manufacturing sector, excluding commodity sectors, grew by a stronger 10.3%, indicating a diversity of growth drivers within the industry. This revenue increase was primarily

supported by higher production volumes. However, manufacturing expenses rose by 4.9% YoY, mainly due to rising raw material costs, which account for about 72% of total manufacturing expenses.

In the service sector, industries like telecom, information technology (IT), and real estate contributed significantly to growth. However, the IT sector saw a deceleration in sequential revenue growth, largely due to the ongoing geopolitical uncertainties.

The report also pointed out that while the Quick Service Restaurants (QSR) sector faced challenges in the quarter, it is expected to perform better going forward, thanks to favorable policy announcements in the Union Budget.



As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to weave its way into every aspect of our lives, it is now making its presence felt in sacred spaces. From robot monks reciting prayers in Japan to AI-powered blessings and robotic aartis in India, faith leaders across different religious traditions are beginning to explore the role AI can play in spiritual practices. But the question remains: Can a robot priest truly nurture the soul, or is AI simply adding convenience to worship? AI's role in religion is still in its early stages, but some believe it has the potential to transform spiritual experiences. In Japan, for instance, Buddhist monks have been using robots to chant sutras and perform rituals for congregants, while in Hindu temples, robots are used to conduct aartis – the sacred lighting of lamps. These robots can recite prayers and deliver blessings with remarkable accuracy, yet they lack the emotional depth and spiritual understanding that human priests provide. While AI may be able to perform certain religious duties with precision

and consistency, it is difficult to imagine that it can fully replicate the personal connection and empathy that human faith leaders offer. Religion is not just about ritual; it is about community, compassion, and emotional support during times of crisis or joy. A robot, no matter how advanced, may struggle to fill this deeply human role. Moreover, the integration of AI into religious practices raises important ethical and philosophical questions. Can AI truly understand the spiritual significance of religious rituals, or is it simply following pre-programmed algorithms? Can a machine offer the same comfort as a human priest who understands the nuances of human emotion and the complexities of faith? Ultimately, while AI can enhance convenience and accessibility in worship, it is unlikely to replace the deeply personal and emotional aspects of religious practice that nourish the soul. As technology continues to advance, it is essential to maintain a balance between innovation and the essence of spiritual connection.

The Rise of AI-Powered Athlete Management: A New Era in Sports Training



Performance Optimization: Personalized insights are provided based on real-time data, adjusting workout intensity, technique, and recovery plans to ensure peak performance while minimizing the risk of injury. **Talent Scouting:** AI-powered video analysis helps identify emerging talent by evaluating biomechanics, speed, and movement patterns, ensuring that potential athletes from remote areas are not overlooked. **Coaching Support:** Virtual assistants provide data-driven strategies, analyze opponents, and assist in developing tailored development pathways for athletes, helping coaches focus on refining techniques and strategies.

Technology is no longer just an accessory in sports; it's becoming the digital coach athletes never knew they needed. Artificial intelligence (AI), computer vision, and data analytics are revolutionizing athlete management by personalizing training regimens, monitoring performance, and preventing injuries. These innovations are opening up new opportunities for athletes to reach their full potential.

AI's Impact on Athlete Management
A new wave of athlete management is emerging, inspired by successful global models like Australia's Winning Edge Program and its FTEM (Foundation, Talent, Elite, Mastery) framework. These systems emphasize digitization, providing real-time tracking and performance analysis. India is working towards implementing similar models in preparation for hosting the 2036 Olympics. One of the most notable examples of this technological shift is seen in the Indian table tennis team's preparation for the 2024 Olympics. With AI-driven tools offering data-driven feedback, athletes have fine-tuned their skills and made crucial adjustments, optimizing their training to meet global performance standards. **Features of AI-Powered Digital Coaches**

AI-driven agents are transforming the landscape of athlete development. Key features include:

AI-powered systems offer several transformative benefits:
Personalized Training: Tailored programs are designed based on individual performance data and injury history, optimizing training for smarter, not harder, results.
Injury Prevention: Real-time biomechanical assessments detect potential issues early, extending athletes' careers and minimizing downtime.
Talent Identification: Data-driven scouting tools ensure a broader, more inclusive talent pool, giving every athlete a fair chance to be discovered.
Real-Time Decision Making: Coaches can adjust strategies on the fly based on live data, making precise decisions during competitions.
The Future of Sports Technology in India**
As India gears up for the 2036 Olympics, embracing AI and real-time analytics will not only elevate the nation's sports infrastructure but also position it as a global leader in sports technology. This digital transformation will foster a new generation of champions, making technology accessible to athletes at all levels and ensuring a competitive edge on the world stage.

Apple's Foldable iPhone: What We Know So Far



Apple is reportedly working on a foldable iPhone that could rival devices from competitors like Samsung, Oppo, and Huawei. According to multiple reports and leaks, the tech giant may soon enter the foldable phone market, with a device featuring a book-style design and a unique screen ratio. While Apple has not yet confirmed any official plans, it has secured patents for technologies that could be utilized in such a device. A tipster on Weibo, a popular Chinese microblogging platform, recently leaked details about the device's inner and outer displays. According to the leak, Apple's foldable iPhone will feature a 5.49-inch outer display, similar to the

one on the first-generation Oppo Find N. The device is expected to unfold into a 7.74-inch internal screen, which the tipster describes as "unfolding like an iPad," offering a large screen ideal for content consumption. The leak also suggests that Apple's foldable iPhone will have a distinctive "unprecedented" screen ratio, possibly offering a different experience compared to current foldable models like Samsung's Galaxy Z Fold and Oppo's Find N. With this unique design, the device could serve as both a smartphone and a tablet, positioning it as a strong contender in the growing foldable market.

While the foldable iPhone has not been officially confirmed by Apple, industry insiders are speculating that it could debut as early as next year. Additionally, rumors point to the potential release of foldable iPads and MacBooks by 2027. Apple has also reportedly secured an ultra-thin glass supplier, possibly for its foldable phone's screen. Bloomberg's Mark Gurman previously mentioned that Apple is also working on an iPad-like foldable with no visible crease, which could launch in 2028. Though details about Apple's foldable plans remain scarce, it's clear that the company is taking significant steps toward entering the foldable device market in the near future.

UK Woman Celebrates 106th Birthday, Credits Chocolate and Parties for Longevity

A UK woman celebrating her 106th birthday has shared her secret to a long and happy life: a love for chocolate and parties. Edith Hill, a retired secretary from Yorkshire, believes that eating chocolate daily helps keep her feeling young and active. Edith, who moved into a care home six years ago at the age of 100, marked her special day on March 3, 2025. Born in 1919, Edith has witnessed the rise of 23 prime ministers, lived through two world wars, and experienced the reign of five monarchs. Despite her love for sweets, Edith has always maintained a healthy lifestyle, never smoking or drinking excessively. In a conversation with **Mirror**, Edith said, "It's being independent, eating lots of chocolate, and partying," when asked what she believed contributed to her long life. Her favorite chocolate is the classic Cadbury Dairy Milk, though she enjoys trying other treats, especially around Easter. Now living at Aspen Lodge Care Home in Skegness, Lincolnshire, Edith continues to charm those around her with her vitality. To commemorate her 106th birthday, the care home has organized a special celebration complete with a double chocolate cake, in honor of her favorite dessert. The facility has also launched a heartwarming campaign to collect 106 birthday cards for Edith, one for every year of

her remarkable life. So far, she has received 40 cards, and the care home is hopeful that they will reach the 106-card goal. Anita Tindle, the head housekeeper at the care facility, shared her admiration for Edith, saying, "It makes my heart melt that people have taken part. It goes to show that there is still community spirit and kindness out there. She is truly one in a million." Edith, who has a son, is looking forward to her birthday party, which will feature a spring theme and live performances of 1940s and 1950s classics. Her 86-year-old niece, Anne Turner, described her as "independent, kind, and loving," and emphasized Edith's strong connection with her family.



Rare Footage Captures Polar Bear Cubs Emerging from Den for the First Time

In an extraordinary breakthrough, scientists have unveiled rare footage capturing polar bear cubs emerging from their dens for the first time. This rare moment was captured in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, providing a glimpse into one of the most challenging and understudied life stages of these iconic Arctic animals. The captivating footage shows a mother polar bear exiting her den with her three playful cubs trailing closely behind her, slipping and sliding across the icy terrain. The heartwarming scene offers an unprecedented view into the early life of polar bear cubs, who are typically born in the winter months and spend the early weeks of their lives in the protection of their dens. To capture this rare glimpse, a team of researchers from Polar Bears International, the Norwegian Polar Institute, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, and the University of Toronto Scarborough has been monitoring polar bear dens in Svalbard for nearly a decade. The scientists utilized GPS collars

with remote cameras placed at the den sites to observe the bears' behavior without disturbing their natural habitat. This innovative technique has enabled researchers to gather valuable insights into the behavior, survival strategies, and early development of polar bear cubs in the harsh Arctic environment. The footage not only provides a fascinating look at the cubs' first steps in the wild but also serves as a critical resource for understanding the challenges polar bears face in a rapidly changing environment. As Arctic temperatures rise and sea ice melts due to climate change, these changes threaten the habitats and survival of polar bears, making such research increasingly vital. This momentous discovery sheds light on the resilience of polar bear families, offering hope and valuable data that can inform conservation efforts aimed at protecting these magnificent creatures in the face of climate change.



India Beat New Zealand by 44 Runs, Set Semi-Final Date with Australia in Champions Trophy

India defeated New Zealand by 44 runs on Sunday to top Group A in the Champions Trophy and secure a spot in the semifinals against Australia. India posted 249/9 in their 50 overs with Shreyas Iyer leading the charge, scoring 79 runs off 98 balls. Hardik Pandya and Axar Patel contributed with 45 and 42 runs respectively. Despite a strong fightback from New Zealand's Kane Williamson, who made 81, the Black Caps were bowled out for 205 in 45.3 overs. The star of the match was Indian bowler Varun Chakravarthy, who claimed 5 wickets for 42 runs in 10 overs. Matt Henry was New Zealand's top bowler, taking 5 wickets for 42 runs. India's win ensures they top Group A, setting up a semifinal clash with Australia on Tuesday. New Zealand will face South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday.

Brief Scores:

- India: 249/9 in 50 overs (Shreyas Iyer 79; Matt Henry 5/42)
- New Zealand: 205 all out in 45.3 overs (Kane Williamson 81; Varun Chakravarthy 5/42)



Yuva All Stars Championship 2025 Set to Kick Off on March 6 in Haridwar



The much-awaited Yuva All Stars Championship 2025, a groundbreaking tournament in the kabaddi ecosystem, will commence on March 6 at the Vandna Kataria Indoor Stadium in Haridwar. The championship will feature 12 teams, including the six top-performing teams from the 11th edition of the Yuva Kabaddi Series. The tournament will take place over 30 days, with four matches scheduled daily at 10:15 am, 11:45 am, 4:00 pm, and 5:30 pm. Fans can catch the action live on FanCode. Vikas Gautam, CEO of Yuva Kabaddi Series, expressed excitement

for the unique format of the tournament, describing it as a "battle of the best" showcasing the nation's brightest young talents. The championship will feature teams like Palani Tuskers, Sonipat Spartans, Kurukshetra Warriors, UP Falcons, Chandigarh Chargers, and Vasco Vipers, who secured their spots after strong performances in the division rounds. The competition will also include six Invitational Youth Teams, which will be revealed soon. The tournament will have three rounds to crown the ultimate kabaddi champion.

ISL 2024-25: Chennaiyin FC Focused on Strong Finish Ahead of NorthEast United Visit

Chennaiyin FC (CFC) will look to finish their regular season on a high when they face NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) in their penultimate match of the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on Monday. Head coach Owen Coyle emphasized the importance of closing the season strong, following recent wins against East Bengal, Punjab, and a solid performance against Bengaluru. He also mentioned that some players would be given opportunities in this match and must seize those chances. The fixture has often produced high-scoring games, with CFC winning four out of the last five encounters. Coyle noted that NorthEast United's playoff hopes would make them a motivated opponent, highlighting their strong desire to secure a win or at least a draw. Chennaiyin's home form has been under scrutiny, but Coyle aims to finish these last two matches strong and bring joy to their supporters. Fullback Ankit Mukherjee, recovering from injury, expressed his intent to stay with the club next season.



Stefanos Tsitsipas Wins First Title in Nearly a Year, Re-enters ATP Top 10

Stefanos Tsitsipas clinched his first title in almost a year with a dominant 6-3, 6-3 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime in the Dubai final on Saturday. The match lasted one hour and 28 minutes, and Tsitsipas ended a 500-level finals losing streak, securing his first win in three attempts in Dubai after previous defeats to Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic. Tsitsipas, who had been ranked No. 3 in early 2023 but had dropped to 11th, will rise to 9th in the ATP rankings following his triumph. "I'm happy to be back in the top 10, it's one of the greatest feelings," Tsitsipas said. His victory was marked by a strong baseline game and resilience under pressure, as he never dropped serve in the match.

Joginder Sharma, Ramit Tandon, Anahat Singh Promote Fitness During 'FIT India Sundays on Cycle' in Porbandar



Former cricketer Joginder Sharma, alongside Asian Games medallists Ramit Tandon and Anahat Singh, participated in the 'FIT India Sundays on Cycle' event in Porbandar, spreading the message of fitness and fighting obesity. The event, which started from Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium and traversed key locations like India Gate and Vijay Chowk, saw around 1000 participants, including citizens from various sectors and age groups. Joginder, who is now a Deputy Superintendent of Police, emphasized the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise.

Ramit Tandon and Anahat Singh, both prominent squash players, highlighted the significance of fitness beyond sports, stressing its role in maintaining overall health. In Porbandar, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya led 650 cyclists, encouraging citizens to embrace cycling for a healthier, pollution-free lifestyle. The event was attended by various government officials, including the Porbandar Collectorate and the Indian Navy.

"Top Performers of Ranji Trophy 2024-25: Vidarbha's Dominance and Record-Breaking Stars"

The 2024-25 Ranji Trophy season concluded with Vidarbha securing their third title, and several Vidarbha players stood out in the tournament's top performers list.

Top Run-Getters:

- Yash Rathod (Vidarbha) was the highest run-scorer with 960 runs in 18 innings at an average of 53.33, including five centuries.
- Shubham Sharma (Madhya Pradesh) accumulated 943 runs at an average of 104.77, with a best score of 240.
- Tanmay Agarwal (Hyderabad) scored 934 runs in 12 innings at 77.83, including three centuries.
- Karun Nair (Vidarbha) impressed with 863 runs in nine matches, including four centuries, his best being

135 in the final.

- Danish Malewar (Vidarbha) contributed with 783 runs, including a match-winning 153 in the final.
- Top Wicket-Takers:**
 - Harsh Dubey (Vidarbha) dominated with 69 wickets, breaking a long-standing record, and also scored 476 runs, earning the Player of the Tournament award.
 - Auqib Nabi (Jammu and Kashmir) took 44 wickets at an average of 13.93.
 - Shams Mulani (Mumbai) took 44 wickets and scored 365 runs, including a century.
 - Dharmendrasinh Jadeja (Gujarat) claimed 40 wickets at 20.85.
 - Jalal Saxena (Kerala) was a prominent all-rounder, with 40 wickets and 366 runs.





Shubham Sharma to Represent India at Mister Supranational 2025



Shubham Sharma, the newly crowned Mr India 2025, is set to represent India at the prestigious Mister Supranational 2025 pageant in Poland, scheduled for June 28. The 24-year-old from Maharashtra emerged victorious from a pool of 80 contestants who competed in the mega auditions held in Mumbai. Sharma expressed his gratitude, stating, "Winning Mr India 2025 is a dream come true, and I am honored to represent my country globally. I look forward to making India proud at Mister Supranational 2025." The Mr India 2025 competition tested contestants on personality, talent, confidence, intellect, fitness, and presentation, with a distinguished jury panel including Mr World 2016 Rohit Khandelwal and Mister Supranational winners. Additionally, the competition introduced a web series titled "The Hunt for India's Most Desirable Man," documenting the contestants' journey from registration to the grand finale.

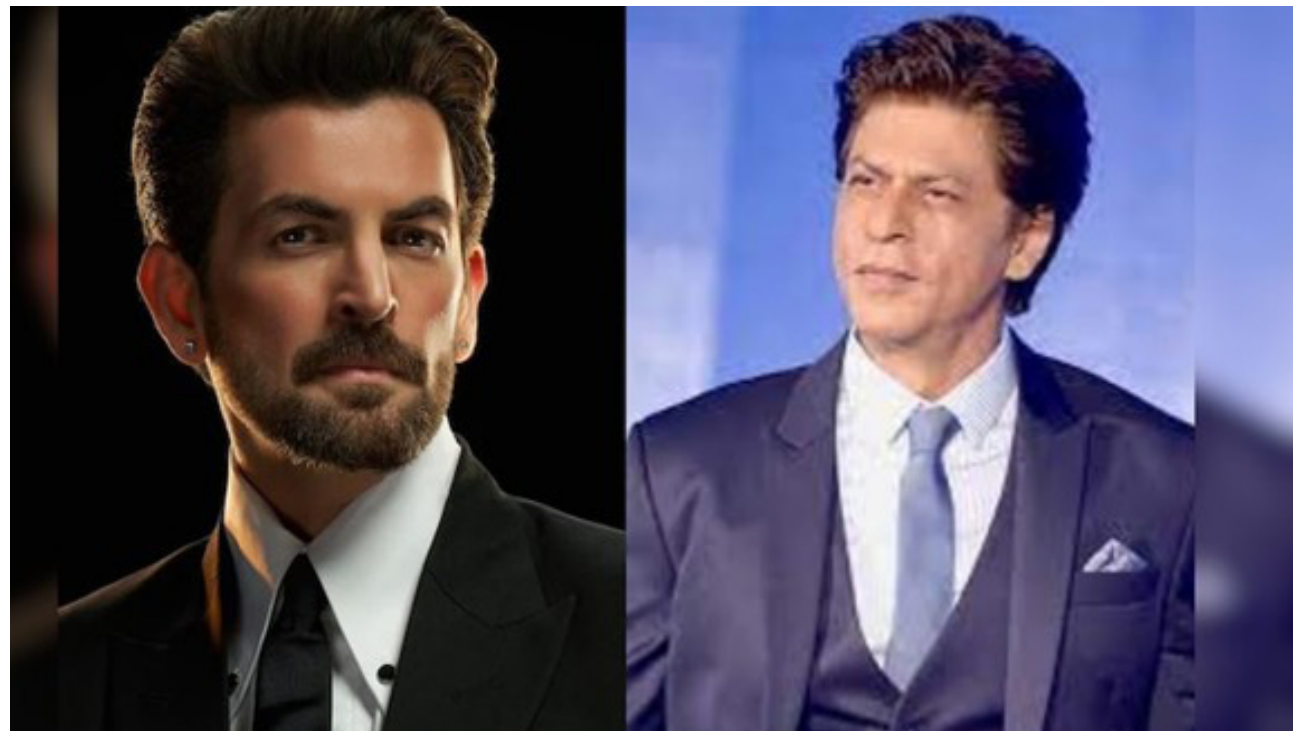
Vidya Balan Warns Fans About Misleading AI Content



Actor Vidya Balan has cautioned her fans against AI-generated videos circulating on social media that falsely feature her. In a post shared on Instagram, the 46-year-old actress clarified that these videos are inauthentic, stating that she has no involvement in their creation or dissemination. "I urge everyone to verify information before sharing and be cautious of misleading AI-generated content," Balan wrote, urging fans not to engage with such content. She emphasized that any claims made in these videos do not reflect her views or work. This isn't the first instance of AI content involving celebrities; others like Rashmika Mandanna, Katrina Kaif, and Aamir Khan have also faced similar issues online. #FakeAlert #Stay-Aware

Neil Nitin Mukesh Reflects on Viral 2009 Filmfare Moment with Shah Rukh Khan

Neil Nitin Mukesh recently addressed the viral moment from the 2009 Filmfare Awards, where he told Shah Rukh Khan to "shut up" after a joke about his name. The incident sparked headlines, with SRK humorously pointing out that Neil had three first names but no surname. In response, Neil defended his reaction, explaining that it was a lighthearted moment, but he would never speak to a senior like SRK in such a manner. Neil clarified, "We are in an era where I would never say 'shut up' to my seniors. It was a different situation, and the conversation had a lot of things at play." He also spoke about the importance of his name, which honors his father and grandfather, emphasizing that he would not tolerate disrespect towards it. On the work front, Neil's latest satirical action comedy, *Hisaab Barabar*, is now streaming on Zee5.



Malaika Arora Celebrates Mother Joyce Polycarp's Birthday with Family and Friends



Malaika Arora celebrated her mother Joyce Polycarp's birthday with heartfelt moments shared on Instagram. The actress posted a series of beautiful pictures, including a special snap of Joyce with her daughters, Malaika and Amrita Arora, as well as their close friend Kareena Kapoor. The post also included a nostalgic throwback photo of the sibling duo posing with their mom and a tender moment between Malaika and Joyce. Malaika's caption read, "Happy birthday my Momy... love you," accompanied by red heart emojis. The post received warm birthday wishes from friends like Seema Kiran Sajdeh, Isha Koppikar, Farah Khan, and Sophie Choudry, among others. Amrita Arora also shared a loving tribute to her mother, reposting a picture with Joyce and writing, "Happy birthday, my lovely mommy! We love you and wish you the best always." On the professional front, Malaika was last seen in a special appearance in the Marathi film *Yek Number*, while Amrita has been away from acting since 2015.

Producer Nagavamsi Explains Release Date Change for 'Mad Square'

The release date for *Mad Square*, the sequel to the popular *Mad* movie, has been moved up by a day. Initially scheduled for March 29, the film will now release on March 28. Producer Nagavamsi explained that the change was made due to the presence of Amavasya (new moon) on March 29, which led to the decision to shift the release date. Nagavamsi shared, "On the advice of the distributors, we moved the release to March 28. Since Amavasya falls on March 29, we believe this change will be beneficial for the film's box office performance." The film, starring Nithin, Sangeeth Shobhan, Ram Nithin, and Vishnu, promises to bring more laughter in this sequel. Directed by K.V. Anudeep and produced by Harika Suryadevara, Sai Soujanya, the film is backed by Sitaara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas. Nagavamsi also wished success to Nithin's *Robin Hood*, releasing on the same day.



Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga Responds to Former IAS Officer's Comments on 'Animal'

Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga has responded strongly to the criticism made by a former IAS officer about his film *Animal*. In a recent interview, the director addressed the remarks that suggested movies like *Animal* were unnecessary for society and were created solely to make money. The former IAS officer had also criticized films like *Animal*, stating that reading books could help one become an IAS officer, but it would not help in filmmaking. Sandeep Vanga expressed that the comments

deeply hurt him, likening it to being accused of a crime. He dismissed the criticism as baseless and shared his thoughts on the matter. Vanga stated, "If you want to become an IAS officer, yes, you can go to Delhi, join a coaching center, and study hard. But filmmaking or writing a script does not come from books or formal courses. It comes from learning by doing and having a passion for it." He emphasized that films are a result of personal taste and experience, not something that can be learned through books alone.

