

Weather Forecast

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

Governor Highlights Environmental and Housing Achievements in Karnataka

15,000 acres added as reserved forest

3.05 lakh houses sanctioned with ₹4,761 crore

Hesaraghatta Lake declared protected grassland

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot highlighted key initiatives undertaken by the Karnataka government to safeguard the environment and provide housing for the underprivileged.

In his address on Wednesday, the Governor revealed that 15,000 acres of land have been added as reserved forest, strengthening the state's commitment



to ecological conservation. Additionally, the government successfully recovered 5,000 acres of encroached forest land, ensuring that Karnataka's green cover is protected for future generations.

A significant milestone in this direction was the declaration of 5,678 acres of Hesaraghatta Lake area as protected grassland, providing critical habitat protection and preserving the lake's ecological importance. These efforts align with the state's broader commitment to en-

vironmental sustainability and climate resilience.

On the housing front, the Governor announced the construction of 3.05 lakh houses under various housing schemes, with a total allocation of ₹4,761 crore.

To ease the financial burden on beneficiaries, the government has committed to covering most of the construction costs, ensuring that economically weaker sections and vulnerable communities gain access to safe and affordable housing. The Governor reiterated the government's resolve to create inclusive and sustainable development, where environmental protection and social welfare initiatives go hand-in-hand.

With green conservation efforts and affordable housing programs taking centre stage, Karnataka aims to set a model of balanced growth, ensuring livelihood security while preserving the environment.

DCM DK Shivakumar Defends Remarks on Film Industry, Calls It Well-Meaning Advice

- Remarks at Film Festival spark criticism
- Says advice was harsh but well-intentioned
- Cites Dr Rajkumar as role model for film fraternity



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar defended his controversial remarks directed at the Kannada film industry, stating that his advice may have sounded rustic and harsh, but it was meant for the good of the industry.

Speaking on Tuesday, Shivakumar said, "Whatever I said about the Kannada film industry is aimed at ensuring its survival and growth. My words may have sounded tough, but they came from a place of concern and goodwill." The controversy stems from his speech at the inauguration of the Bengaluru International Film Festival on Saturday, where Shivakumar openly expressed disappointment over the low participation of film personalities at the event. He further criticized the industry for not showing support during the Makedatu Padayatra led by the Congress, urging the film fraternity to actively participate in movements related to Karnataka's land, language,

and water issues.

During the event, Shivakumar even hinted at using his authority to restrict film shoots at specific locations if the industry continued its apathy, stating he knew "how to tighten the nuts and bolts", a remark that drew sharp criticism from both the film community and the Opposition.

When questioned about his expectation for film personalities to join the Makedatu protest, Shivakumar responded by citing legendary actor Dr Rajkumar, who, he said, actively participated in state-related movements regardless of political affiliation.

"Dr Rajkumar is a role model for the industry. If he could stand for Karnataka's interests, why not on wednesday's film personalities?" Shivakumar asked.

Despite the backlash, the DCM maintained that his intention was to strengthen the bond between the film industry and the state's larger causes.

CM Siddaramaiah Halts Preparatory Work for Baldota Steel Plant Near Koppal

- Public and political pressure forces halt
- Environmental concerns raised over pollution impact
- KSPCB clearance not obtained, says CM



TPN Correspondent | Koppal

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed the Koppal Deputy Commissioner to immediately stop all preparatory work for the proposed Baldota Steel and Power Limited plant near Koppal town, following strong opposition from local residents, environmentalists, and representatives of all political parties.

A delegation comprising members from all parties, public representatives, and environmental activists met the Chief Minister in Bengaluru, urging him to intervene and halt the project citing serious environmental and health concerns.

The proposed ₹54,000 crore steel and power plant, for which a memoran-

dum of understanding (MoU) was signed just last month during the Global Investors' Meet (GIM), has been strongly opposed by locals who fear increased pollution and health hazards for Koppal town and surrounding villages, already burdened by the presence of several polluting industries in the area.

Following detailed submissions from district in-charge minister Shivaraj Tangadagi and others, Siddaramaiah directed the Koppal DC to immediately halt all preliminary works related to the plant. The Chief Minister also noted that the project had not received clearance from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB). Siddaramaiah assured the delegation that he would consult Industries

Minister MB Patil and seek a detailed report on the project, including its environmental impact and legal compliance.

The opposition to the plant has been steadily growing. On February 24, hundreds of residents and environmental activists from villages around Koppal staged a massive protest at the Taluk Stadium, voicing their strong objections to the project.

Despite public opposition, the company management reportedly proceeded with a land-breaking ceremony, triggering further anger among locals and environmentalists.

Representatives of environmental organisations emphasized that their stance is not against development, but they cannot support a project that would worsen air and water pollution and endanger public health.

The Chief Minister's intervention has provided temporary relief, but local communities and activists are now demanding a permanent cancellation of the project, citing sustainable development and public health as top priorities.

BJP Questions Naxalite Surrender Process in Karnataka

- BJP raises doubts over surrender process
- Says CM's tweet triggered sudden surrender
- Questions state's law and order claims



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Opposition BJP on Wednesday questioned the circumstances surrounding the surrender of six Naxalites in Karnataka, raising doubts over the process followed by the Congress government. During the discussion on the Governor's speech in the Assembly, BJP MLA V Sunil Kumar expressed suspicion over the sequence of events, noting that the Naxalites surrendered just days after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's social media appeal urging them to give up arms and return to the mainstream.

"For years, these Naxalites evaded po-

lice combing operations and ignored repeated warnings. But suddenly, after the CM's tweet, they turned up at his office to surrender. How did this happen so smoothly?" Sunil Kumar asked.

On January 8, six Naxalites surrendered, a week after Siddaramaiah posted his appeal on 'X'. Following their surrender, the state government declared Karnataka Naxal-free, a move the BJP welcomed in principle but strongly objected to the procedural lapses they claim occurred. Kumar further questioned the state government's claims that law and order was under control, citing recent incidents like the riots at Udayagiri police station, a broad daylight robbery in Bi-

dar, and unrest in Mangaluru.

The BJP leader also invoked the controversial statement made by Congress MLC Ivan D'Souza, who last year warned Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot that he could meet the same fate as Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who was forced to flee Bangladesh. "Wasn't this direct threat to the highest office in the state provocative enough to expose the fragile law and order situation?" Kumar questioned.

Additionally, Kumar called the Congress a 'U-Turn government', accusing Siddaramaiah of contradicting himself over the MUDA site allotment case. He noted that Siddaramaiah publicly denied any scam but his wife later returned 14 sites, which, according to Kumar, exposed the double standards of the government. The BJP pressed for a transparent explanation regarding the Naxalite surrender, warning that political interference in security matters could undermine public trust and jeopardize ongoing anti-Naxal efforts in the Malnad and coastal regions.

BJP Accuses Karnataka Congress of Planning 4% Reservation for Muslims in Govt Contracts

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has alleged that the Congress government in Karnataka is planning to introduce 4% reservation for Muslims in government contracts, accusing the ruling party of indulging in minority appeasement.

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra on Wednesday claimed that despite development works stalling across the state, the government is prioritizing a proposal to provide a 4% quota in government contracts for minorities. Vijayendra specifically questioned why the term "minority" is repeatedly equated only with Muslims, despite the presence of several other minority communities in the state and country.

He accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of using appeasement tactics and ignoring the interests of backward communities. "If the Chief Minister is truly a champion of backward communities, as he claims, he should focus on empowering them, rather than introducing reli-



gion-based reservations," Vijayendra said, urging people to oppose these policies.

BJP Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal echoed these sentiments, calling the proposed reservation anti-Constitutional. Yatnal cited Dr B R Ambedkar, claiming the architect of the Indian Constitution opposed the formation of a Minority Welfare Department.

He alleged that the government's focus on minority appeasement was in direct violation of Constitutional principles.

Both leaders announced that the BJP will strongly raise this issue during the ongoing Assembly session and demanded a clear response from the government. As of now, the Congress government has not officially responded to the allegations.

Five Bills Tabled in Karnataka Assembly, Including Three Targeting Illegal Moneylending

Palace Grounds Bill aims to bypass Rs 3,400 crore TDR payout

Three bills seek to curb exorbitant interest and illegal lending

Agricultural produce marketing reforms also introduced



The bill comes after the Supreme Court's December 2024 order, directing the government to issue TDR worth Rs 3,400 crore to the Mysuru royal family for 15 acres and 39 guntas of land required for expanding Ballari and Jayamahar roads. The government argued that the financial burden would severely impact the state exchequer and urban planning efforts. The Bangalore Palace Bill seeks to regulate the use of land acquired under the Bangalore Palace (Acquisition and Transfer) Act, 1996, which vested 472 acres and 16 guntas of Palace Grounds land with the state. The bill asserts that granting TDR now, while civil appeals challenging the constitutional validity of the 1996 Act are still pending before the Supreme Court, would be irreversible and financially crippling.

In addition to the Palace Grounds Bill, the government tabled three bills targeting illegal moneylending practices:

- The Karnataka Prohibition of Charging Exorbitant Interest (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aims to protect vulnerable groups from loan sharks charging excessive interest and using coercive recovery tactics.
 - The Karnataka Pawn Broker Bill, 2025, and
 - The Karnataka Money Lenders (Amendment) Bill, 2025, both introduced to further tighten controls on moneylenders and protect borrowers from exploitation.
- The Assembly also saw the introduction of the Karnataka Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2025, which defines e-commerce platforms and warehouse service providers, extends market committee jurisdiction to sub-market yards, and establishes clearer regulations for warehouse operators and online trading platforms in the agricultural sector. These bills reflect the government's twin focus on land regulation, financial reforms, and agricultural modernization in Karnataka.



Govt Aims to Realise Over 75% of Investment Commitments - Minister MB Patil

- ₹10.27 lakh crore investment commitments secured
- 75% conversion target set for Invest Karnataka 2025
- CNG pipeline fee capped at Rs 1 per metre

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Karnataka State Industries Minister MB Patil informed the Legislative Council that the state government is actively following up to realise over 75% of investment commitments made during Invest Karnataka 2025, which attracted proposals worth ₹10.27 lakh crore.

Patil said 98 MoUs were signed during the Global Investors' Meet (GIM), accounting for ₹6,23,970 crore, while clearances for 1,101 projects would bring in an additional ₹4,03,533 crore. The minister stated that the meet drew participation from 2,892 industrialists from Karnataka, 286 from other states, and 72 foreign investors, showcasing global interest in Karnataka's industrial potential.

Investment proposals cover 21 districts, with Bengaluru Rural securing ₹26,331 crore from 30 companies, and Bengaluru Urban attracting ₹35,297 crore from 14 companies. Projects in

54 other districts have also been proposed.

Patil noted that the proposal-to-project conversion rate during GIM 2022 stood at 60%, and the government is now working towards increasing it to 75% with systematic follow-ups and project monitoring.

CNG Pipeline Fee Fixed at Rs 1 per Metre

Responding to BJP MLC DS Arun, Patil said the government permitted CNG providers to lay pipelines in urban areas at a nominal fee of Rs 1 per metre, aligning with the Centre's policy.

The project, led by GAIL, aims to supply CNG to 66.25 lakh households by 2030 and set up 1,022 CNG stations. By 2023, 4.07 lakh households were connected, with an additional 1.02 lakh connections since the Uniform Policy launch in 2023.

The minister emphasized that local administrative bodies would play a crucial role in achieving these ambitious targets.

Karnataka HC Orders Return of Original Birth Certificates After Issuing Corrected Versions

- Original birth certificates to be surrendered after correction
- Endorsement of cancellation mandatory for old certificates
- e-Janma portal to be updated with correct data



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

The Karnataka High Court has directed the Director of Municipal Administration to issue clear instructions to all Registrars of Births and Deaths across the state, mandating the surrender and cancellation of original birth certificates when corrected certificates are issued.

The court further ordered that an official endorsement must be issued stating the cancellation of the previous certificate, and necessary corrections must be reflected on the e-Janma portal to ensure consistency in official records. Justice Suraj Govindaraj passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Syeda Afifa Aymehn, a resident of M G Nagar in Hospet, Vijayanagar district. Aymehn approached the court seeking cancellation of a birth certifi-

cate issued on May 13, 1993, which incorrectly recorded her birth date as April 15, 1993. The petitioner was actually born on March 15, 1993, and had used the correct date of birth for all official records, including her educational certificates, driving licence, and voter ID. However, due to the error in the original birth certificate, a discrepancy emerged when she applied for a passport.

Following an earlier order from the Lok Adalat, the Registrar issued a corrected birth certificate with the accurate date of birth. However, the passport authorities sought clarification after discovering two different birth

certificates for the same person.

The petitioner applied to the Registrar for a clarification, but on December 5, 2024, the Registrar refused, stating they lacked the authority to issue such clarification without a court order. This forced the petitioner to approach the High Court, resulting in the latest directive to ensure such confusion is avoided in the future by canceling incorrect certificates and updating official records immediately upon correction.

The court's directions are expected to streamline birth record management across Karnataka and prevent similar issues for citizens.

Karnataka Forest Minister Orders Reclamation of 444 Acres from Air Force

- Minister Eshwar Khandre directs forest land recovery from Air Force
- Illegal construction halted in Jarakabande reserve forest
- Legal action to be taken for land recovery



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Wednesday instructed officials to reclaim 444.12 acres of forest land in the Peenya plantation and Jarakabande reserved forest area of Bengaluru, currently held by the Indian Air Force, as per existing rules and government orders.

The dispute dates back to 1987 when 570 acres were allotted to the Air Force. However, in 2017, the Karnataka government cancelled the sanction of 452 acres, declaring it as notified forest land. Despite this, the Air Force reportedly began construction work on March 1, 2025, without

obtaining mandatory Forest Clearance (FC) permission.

Minister Khandre stated that the government order of 2017 had already completed the mutation process, officially registering this land as reserved forest. The Forest Department had previously notified Air Force officials about this and installed boards declaring the area as reserved forest. A formal letter was also sent to the

Ministry of Defense requesting the clearance of forest land occupied by the Air Force.

Officials informed the Minister that, despite this clear communication, the Air Force continued with illegal construction, prompting the Forest Department to halt the activity.

Currently, the Air Force is using approximately 15 acres of the forest land for a shooting range and training activities, while a small office has also been constructed. The rest of the land remains as forest, home to a rich variety of trees and plants.

Minister Khandre directed officials to initiate legal action to reclaim the land and instructed that all necessary applications for land regularisation be submitted through the Parivesh portal. He also stressed the importance of writing to the Air Force once again, urging them to obtain proper Forest Clearance as required by law.

Members Across Parties Slam Karnataka Govt Over Illegal Liquor Sales

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Cutting across party lines, members of the Karnataka Assembly strongly criticised the state government on Wednesday over the rampant illegal sale of liquor in petty shops and small grocery stores across rural areas. Legislators blamed the government's 'abnormally high targets' set for the excise department as the root cause of the problem.

Raising the issue during question hour, Congress MLA Mahantesh Koujalgi (Bailahongal) highlighted that illegal liquor sales in village shops and grocery stores were directly contributing to an increase in road accidents and the death of youngsters. He added that during visits to villages, women regularly complained that these sales were causing youth to fall into bad habits, leading to fights and violence. Excise Minister R B Thimmapur admitted that illegal liquor sales were happening in petty shops and assured that the department had acted on the issue. He informed the House that the department had registered 17,390 cases and arrested 18,253 indi-



viduals in connection with these illegal activities.

However, JD(S) floor leader C B Suresh Babu rejected the minister's assurances, arguing that the unreasonably high revenue targets set for the excise department were forcing bar owners to find illegal ways to boost sales. He alleged that bar owners were using delivery boys on bikes to supply liquor directly to labourers at worksites and even selling liquor by the roadside.

Former Home Minister and BJP MLA Araga Jnanendra added that the excise and police departments were working together to allow liquor sales near SC/ST colonies. As a result, many youngsters from these communities were becoming addicted, further worsening social issues in villages.

Legislators from all parties urged the government to review excise targets and take stronger measures to curb illegal liquor sales across the state.

Electronic City Flyover Closed for Night Maintenance Work

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Electronic City Flyover in Bengaluru will be closed to all vehicular traffic at night starting Wednesday, March 5, as the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has begun major maintenance work on the elevated stretch.



The Bengaluru City Traffic Police, in coordination with NHAI, announced that the flyover will remain closed every night from 11 pm to 6 am until further orders. This restriction applies to both directions from Silk Board towards Electronic City and vice versa.

During the daytime, from 6 am to 11 pm, the flyover will remain open to all types of vehicles. The police have urged the public to cooperate and plan their travel accordingly.

The Electronic City Fly-

over has often been in the news due to traffic congestion, serial accidents, and instances of bike stunts. In the past, there were demands to restrict bike traffic on the flyover to improve safety, though no formal decision was taken. In 2019, similar maintenance work had led to restrictions on the movement of buses and heavy vehicles for several days. The current night closure is expected to continue until all necessary repair and maintenance works are completed. Commuters are advised to use alternative routes during the restricted hours.

Another Price Hike Likely in Bengaluru After Bus and Metro Fare Increase

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru residents, already struggling with recent hikes in bus and metro fares, are likely to face another blow as reports suggest an imminent increase in auto rickshaw meter fares in the city.



Following fare revisions in BMTC buses in January and a steep hike in Namma Metro ticket prices in February, auto drivers' unions have reportedly submitted fresh demands seeking an upward revision of auto meter fares.

With public transport fares already increased significantly, any hike in auto fares is expected to add further pressure on daily commuters, especially those who rely on affordable transport options for work and essential travel. BMTC buses, considered the backbone of Bengaluru's transport system, witnessed a fare revision

earlier this year, affecting millions of commuters. Soon after, Namma Metro fares were increased, drawing criticism from regular metro users. Now, if auto meter fares are hiked in March, it will add to the rising cost of living in the state capital.

The final decision on revising auto fares is expected shortly, with auto unions pushing for the increase citing rising fuel prices, maintenance costs, and inflation.

With public anger already high over the recent fare hikes, another round of increases may trigger fresh dissatisfaction among Bengaluru's residents.

Drunk Men Attack Elephant Task Force Police in Ramanagar Village



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Chaos broke out at Kurabarhalli Doddi village in Ramanagar district, when five drunk men assaulted officers of the Elephant Task Force (ETF) and later attacked police personnel. The village, which borders a forest area, frequently experiences elephant movement. The ETF team had successfully driven away a group of elephants when the incident occurred around 11 pm. As two ETF officers were returning home, the suspects intercepted their vehicle, verbally abused them, and questioned their efficiency. The drunken men hurled personal insults at the officers and their families be-

fore attempting to set the ETF vehicle on fire.

The suspects then physically assaulted the officers. When a Hoysala patrol team arrived following a distress call, the men turned violent against the police as well.

Reinforcements were called in, and three suspects — Kiran, Prathap, and Sundar, all residents of nearby villages — were arrested on the spot. Two others managed to flee and are currently being traced. The Sathanur police have filed cases against all five under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including obstructing public servants from discharging their duties and attempted murder.

Retired IAS Officer, 2 Officials to Face Trial in Bengaluru Land Fraud Case

- Allegations of fake land documents
- Karnataka HC refuses to quash case
- Land located in Anekal taluk

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has refused to quash proceedings against retired IAS officer Aravind Jadhav and two other officials in a land fraud case involving two acres of government land in Ramanayakanahalli village, Sarjapur Hobli, Anekal taluk, Bengaluru Rural district.

The land was purchased by Tarabai Maruthi Rao Jadhav, mother of former Karnataka Chief Secretary Aravind Jadhav. A complaint was filed by Bengaluru resident S Bhaskaran, who alleged that retired Bengaluru



Urban Deputy Commissioner V Shankar, surveyor DB Gangaiah, and Joint Director of Land Records Jayaprakash conspired with Aravind Jadhav to create fake land documents, causing loss to the state exchequer. The complaint, initially filed with the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in August 2016, was later transferred to the Lokayukta police, which filed a charge sheet in a special

court.

The accused officials approached the High Court seeking to quash the complaint and FIR, arguing that the FIR was delayed by two years and that there was no evidence proving the land was government-owned. They also highlighted that while Aravind Jadhav was named, sanction for his prosecution was not granted.

However, Justice HP Sandesh found sufficient prima facie evidence against the petitioners, noting that key land records were altered and processed unusually quickly, allegedly due to Aravind Jadhav's influence. The court highlighted that phodi work (sub-division of land) was completed within three months, a rare occurrence in the Revenue Department, and was done without any formal application.

The court dismissed the petitions, clearing the way for the trial to proceed.

Kannada Actor Ranya Rao Caught Smuggling 14.8 kg Gold at Bengaluru Airport

- DRI seizes 14.8 kg gold worth ₹12 crore
- Actor claims blackmail forced her into smuggling
- Police constable also under scanner



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Kannada actor Ranya Rao was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru for allegedly attempting to smuggle 14.8 kg of gold, valued at over ₹12 crore, from Dubai.

According to reports, Ranya Rao was just one step away from clearing airport security when DRI sleuths intercepted her and recovered the gold bars. During interrogation, the actor claimed that she was blackmailed into smuggling gold,

as reported by media.

The investigation has also revealed the involvement of police constable Basavaraju, who reportedly tried to assist Ranya in evading customs checks. Basavaraju has been detained, and his statement has been recorded.

Ranya, known for her roles in films like 'Maanikyaa' and 'Pataki', was under DRI surveillance due to her suspicious fre-

quent visits to Gulf countries. Within 15 days, she had flown to Dubai four times, raising red flags. Based on this, a targeted operation was planned, leading to her arrest upon her arrival from Dubai on March 3 via an Emirates flight.

Following her arrest, DRI officials raided her Lavelle Road residence, seizing gold jewellery worth ₹2.06 crore and ₹2.67 crore in cash.

Ranya is the stepdaughter of senior IPS officer Ramachandra Rao, currently serving as the Director General of Police (DGP) at the Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation. DGP Rao distanced himself from her activities, stating that she married four months ago and has had no contact with the family since.

"We are unaware of her or her husband's business dealings. This is a huge shock and disappointment. The law will take its own course," DGP Rao told Media.

BDA Property Owners Raise Objections Over Bangalore Business Corridor Project



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is pushing ahead with the ambitious Bangalore Business Corridor (BBC) project, aimed at easing traffic congestion in Bengaluru. Spanning 73 km and estimated to cost ₹27,000 crore, the project involves the creation of a 100-meter wide, six-lane corridor connecting Tumkur Road to Hosur Road, passing through major areas like Hesaraghatta Road, Doddaballapura Road, Bellary Road, Henur, Whitefield, Channasandra, and Sarjapur Road.

Originally proposed as the Peripheral Ring Road (PRR) in 2007, the project has now been renamed BBC, with the state government securing funding through HUDCO. The BDA has started issuing land acquisition notices across villages including Bylakonehalli, Lakshmiapur, Siddhanahalli, and Madanayakanahalli. To handle the large-scale acquisition, nine special land acquisition officers have been appointed.

However, the project faces major hurdles as property owners have raised strong objections. Over 10,000 objections have been submitted, with landowners demanding compensation based on current market rates rather than outdated 2006 valuations. Many have already built homes on the notified land and are resisting eviction, urging the government to save their properties instead of offering compensation.

The BDA estimates that 2,600 acres of land is required for the project, with ₹21,000 crore earmarked for land acquisition alone and ₹6,000 crore for road construction. The BDA also plans to use the land on both sides of the corridor for commercial development, integrating business hubs along the stretch.

While the project aims to decongest Bengaluru by linking major highways, the land acquisition dispute is likely to further delay the already long-pending project, with both landowners and officials yet to reach a consensus.



Ejjipura Flyover Long-Delayed Construction Back on Track, Completion Expected in 2025

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The much-delayed Ejjipura Flyover project in Koramangala, which had been stuck for several years, is finally moving forward. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has confirmed that the long-standing hurdles related to land acquisition and coordination with key institutions have been resolved, paving the way for construction to resume at full speed. The 2.5 km flyover, which connects Koramangala's Central Hall to Ejjipura via Inner Ring Road, was initially slated for completion by February 2025.

However, after prolonged delays, a new deadline of December 2025 has been set. With work gaining momentum, BSCPL Infrastructure Company has been entrusted with the project's execution.

A key breakthrough came when two central government institutions — the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) and St. John's Hospital, both located along the corridor, agreed to part with portions of

their land for the flyover. The BBMP has granted in-principle approval for the acquisition of 1.5 acres, which is critical for the project's progress. Additionally, 30 private property owners along the stretch have also expressed no objection to land acquisition, clearing another major obstacle. The BBMP plans to issue Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to the institutions, compensating them with development benefits in exchange for the land.

St. John's Hospital, while agreeing in principle, has demanded TDR benefits or an alternative solution, particularly for the development of a 100-foot road. The BBMP, however, remains confident of setting the land with or without TDR, citing public interest and broader benefits for Bengaluru's commuters. With all major hurdles cleared, BBMP officials expect to complete the Ejjipura Flyover by the end of 2025, offering much-needed relief to lakhs of commuters along the busy Koramangala-Ejjipura-Hosur Road corridor.

BJP MLAs Protest Over Lack of Visual Coverage in Assembly, House Adjourned

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Assembly witnessed chaos on Tuesday as BJP MLAs staged a protest after alleging that visuals of their speeches were not being shown during the live telecast of House proceedings.

The protest erupted when Leader of Opposition R Ashoka rose to speak on the alleged KPSC exam scam, but the screens inside the Assembly hall continued to display visuals of Speaker UT Khader instead.

Enraged BJP MLAs questioned the technical issue and demanded to know why visuals of only Congress ministers and MLAs were being broadcast.

Deputy Leader of Opposition Arvind Bellad directly confronted the Speaker, questioning whether the telecast system was malfunctioning or if the government had intentionally sidelined the Opposition. BJP MLA V Sunil Kumar sarcastically asked which "nut and bolt" needed to be tightened to fix the problem.

BJP members further alleged that the government had awarded the telecast contract

- ◆ BJP alleges visuals of its MLAs deliberately not shown
- ◆ Accuses Congress workers of controlling Assembly telecast
- ◆ House adjourned for over an hour amid protests



to Congress workers, compromising the neutrality of the Assembly proceedings' coverage. Law Minister HK Patil dismissed BJP's demand to adjourn the House until the issue was resolved, stating there was no such provision in the rules.

IT-BT Minister Priyank Kharge countered BJP's allegations by pointing out that even in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Opposition members' visuals are not always shown. As tempers flared and BJP MLAs continued their protest, Speak-

er UT Khader adjourned the House for over an hour, unable to restore order. The incident has intensified the ongoing tussle between the ruling Congress and Opposition BJP in the state Assembly.



The Brand Bengaluru, Opposition Slams DCM DK Shivakumar Over Unfulfilled Projects

₹1000 crore projects under Brand Bengaluru questioned

BJP calls the initiative a mere slogan
DK Shivakumar defends ongoing works

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Congress government's ambitious Brand Bengaluru initiative, which aimed to transform the city into a global brand, has come under fire from the opposition. BJP leader and opposition leader R. Ashok has accused Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru Development portfolio, of reducing the project to empty rhetoric without delivering results.

The Brand Bengaluru concept, launched in the previous budget, promised a series of development projects across the city. Key announcements included a ₹1000 crore Clean Bengaluru project, ₹1000 crore for maintenance of solid waste treatment plants, Sharane Sathyakka Award for civic workers, Kempegowda Awards, a Healthy Bengaluru programme with a separate Health Commissionerate, Arogya Sarathi health services, Manobimba Samvad YouTube channel, and 50 new Indira Canteens. However, R. Ashok questioned the status of these projects, alleging that most remain on paper. Taking a dig at the DCM, Ashok accused DK Shivakumar of being more focused on politi-

cal showmanship than actual governance. "If you are truly interested in Bengaluru's development, maintain proper accounts of what has been done under Brand Bengaluru.

Otherwise, hand over the responsibility to someone capable," Ashok remarked. He challenged Shivakumar to list his concrete achievements in Bengaluru over the last 20 months, insisting that work should speak for itself rather than slogans.

Ashok further alleged that under Congress rule, Bengaluru has turned into a pothole city and a dust city, with motorists struggling to navigate dangerous roads.

In response, DK Shivakumar recently inspected white-topping works at locations including MEI Road, the 100-foot ring road near Jalahalli TVS Cross, and Netkalappa Circle Road. He defended the ongoing works under Brand Bengaluru, emphasizing that efforts are being made to ease traffic congestion and improve infrastructure.

Despite this, BJP leaders continue to criticize the government, claiming that Brand Bengaluru has become synonymous with potholes, dust, and broken promises.

B.Y. Vijayendra Slams Congress Over Contractor Crisis, Calls Government 'Percentage Sarkar'

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra has strongly criticized the Congress government, accusing it of crippling development works by demanding excessive commissions from contractors and failing to clear pending bills.

Vijayendra took to social media to lash out at the ruling Congress, stating that the government treasury is completely empty, leaving no funds for development projects. Contractors who completed works are left in distress, struggling to recover their dues. According to Vijayendra, officials are pressuring these contractors to pay commissions before processing their long-pending bills, adding to their financial burden. Vijayendra reminded the Con-



gress that during the BJP's tenure, they spread a widespread narrative branding it as a "40% commission government." However, he alleged that contractors themselves have now revealed that the Congress government's demand has shot up to 80%, far surpassing the previous accusations. He accused the Congress of threatening and intimidating contractors into silence, warning them against raising their

voices. The BJP leader further stated that the government has vaguely promised to release some funds in April, but such empty assurances do little to resolve the severe crisis faced by contractors.

Vijayendra emphasized that irrespective of which government initiated the projects, it is the responsibility of the current administration to ensure payments and maintain continuity. Blocking payments

and harassing contractors who have taken loans and invested heavily in these projects will tarnish the government's reputation, he warned.

Highlighting the severity of the situation, Vijayendra noted that several contractors have already committed suicide due to financial distress, and some have even sought permission for euthanasia. If further tragedies occur, the Congress government and the Chief Minister will be directly responsible, he said.

Vijayendra demanded the immediate clearance of pending contractor bills and asked the Congress government to answer to the people for becoming a "percentage sarkar" after building its campaign around the same issue during BJP rule.

Yatnal Claims Yediyurappa Not a Lingayat, Sparks Political Row

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal stirred a major controversy on Tuesday by claiming that former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa does not belong to the Lingayat community, but to the Balegara Shettaru community, a small OBC group in Karnataka.

Addressing the media, Yatnal asserted that anyone interested in knowing the truth about Yediyurappa's caste should visit his birthplace, Bookanakere in Mandya district, where his family is recognized as Balegara Shettaru. Yatnal accused Yediyurappa of blackmailing the BJP using the Lingayat card. He alleged that Yediyurappa manipulated the party into projecting him as a Lingayat leader despite his actual caste background.

The BJP leader further charged that Yediyurappa had consistently deprived the Lingayat community of reservation benefits throughout his political career. Yatnal stated that after former Chief Ministers Veerendra Patil and J H Patel, Yediyurappa was inadvertently accepted by the Veerashai-



va-Lingayat community, despite not belonging to it. Yatnal's remarks have triggered strong reactions within the party and the Lingayat community, with Yediyurappa's supporters dismissing the claims as baseless and politically motivated. The controversy comes at a time when BJP's internal power struggles in Karnataka are surfacing ahead of the upcoming elections, adding further complexity to the party's delicate relationship with the influential Lingayat community, which plays a key role in state politics. This latest political attack by Yatnal is expected to further widen the rift within the BJP's Karnataka unit and could have wider ramifications for the party's strategy in the state.

Karnataka MLAs Demand Action Against Infosys Over Unused Hubballi Land

- 40 acres unused for 10 years
- Council Chairman calls for land withdrawal
- Infosys accused of misusing land for recreation

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Senior legislators in Karnataka have once again targeted IT giant Infosys for failing to utilize 40 acres of prime land allotted to it in Hubballi for over a decade. They demanded that the state government take immediate action, including withdrawal of the land.

The issue was raised during Tuesday's Legislative Council session, where BJP MLC S V Sankanur reminded the House that Infosys was granted the land in 2013 under the Global Investors Meet (GIM) agreement, with a promise to establish an IT campus and generate local employment. However, even after 10 years, the land remains underutilized, with no substantial job creation.

MLC Pradeep Shettar went a step further, accusing Infosys of using the land for personal and recreational purposes instead of industrial development. He alleged that Infosys employees were using the space for walk-

ing, jogging, and hosting private gatherings, which was never part of the agreement.

Industries Minister M B Patil responded that Infosys representatives had recently met him to discuss the matter. However, Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti intervened, urging the government not to remain silent just because Infosys is a corporate giant. Horatti insisted that serious action, including withdrawal of the land, must be considered if Infosys fails to meet its commitments.

Minister Patil assured the Council that he would convene a high-level meeting to review the situation and take appropriate action.

This is not the first time the issue has come up, with similar demands raised during the 2024 Legislature Sessions. Legislators stressed that valuable industrial land must not be wasted, and the government must ensure strict compliance with project commitments.

Govt School Headmaster Goes Missing After Multiple POC SO Cases

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

A headmaster of a government higher primary school in H D Kote taluk, Mysuru district, has gone into hiding after multiple complaints were filed against him for allegedly sexually abusing minor girl students.

The first complaint was lodged on February 25, following which the headmaster stopped attending the school. Another complaint was registered on March 1, further intensifying the case. Based on the complaints filed by the Block Education Officer (BEO) and parents, police have registered cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Local MLA Anil Chikkamadu visited the school on Monday to assess the situation. During his visit, the BEO arrived late, drawing sharp criticism from both the MLA and villagers. Taking serious note of the BEO's absence and alleged negligence, the Education Department suspended BEO K Kantharaju and two other officials for dereliction of duty.

On Tuesday, Mysuru Superintendent of Police Vishnu-



vardhana and Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy visited the school. Villagers gathered at the school premises and demanded strict action not only against the absconding headmaster but also against officials who failed to act promptly on the initial complaint.

Police have formed two special teams to locate and arrest the headmaster, who has been untraceable since the first case came to light.

The incident has sparked widespread outrage, with local residents and parents urging authorities to tighten safety measures and ensure stricter background checks on school staff to prevent similar incidents in future.



Kannada Actress Ranya Rao Arrested for Smuggling ₹12.56 Crore Worth of Gold

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Kannada actress Ranya Rao was arrested on March 5, 2025, at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport after being caught with 14.2 kg of gold worth ₹12.56 crore. Rao, who had made multiple trips to Dubai in recent weeks, was under surveillance by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) due to her suspicious behavior, including wearing the same clothes during each visit. Her frequent travels raised red flags, prompting the authorities to act. Ranya Rao, who is the step-daughter of senior Karnataka IPS officer Ramachandra Rao, currently the Director-General of Police at the Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation, was intercepted by DRI officers after arriving in Bengaluru on an Emirates flight from Dubai on March 3. Upon examination, officers discovered that she had cleverly concealed the gold bars on her person. Following her arrest, a search was conducted at her Bengaluru residence located on Lavelle Road, where officers recovered gold jewelry valued at ₹2.06

crore and Indian currency amounting to ₹2.67 crore, bringing the total value of the seized items to ₹17.29 crore. The authorities have charged her with gold smuggling under the Customs Act, 1962.

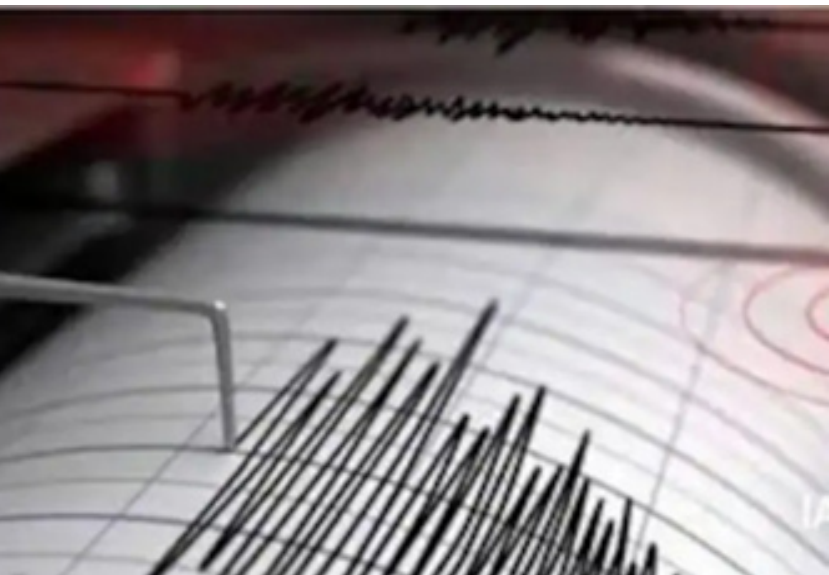
The DRI's action comes as part of a broader effort to curb gold smuggling, which has been a growing concern at Indian airports.

The seizure of such a large amount of gold raises questions about the involvement of influential individuals in illicit activities, highlighting the need for stricter surveillance and enforcement.

Ranya Rao has been placed under judicial custody and faces serious legal consequences. The authorities are continuing their investigation to determine the full scope of the smuggling operation and whether others were involved in facilitating the illegal import of gold.

This incident underscores the ongoing battle against gold smuggling in India and serves as a reminder of the importance of vigilance and oversight at airports and customs points across the country.

Two Earthquakes, Including One Of 5.7 Magnitude, Hit Manipur



TPN Correspondent | Imphal

Manipur was rocked by two consecutive earthquakes on Wednesday, including one with a magnitude of 5.7, which caused tremors across the Northeast. According to officials from the Regional Seismological Centre in Shillong, the first earthquake occurred at 11:06 am with a magnitude of 5.7. Its epicenter was located 44 kilometers east of Yairipok in Imphal East district, at a depth of 110 km.

The tremors were felt not only in Manipur but also in Assam, Meghalaya, and other northeastern states, with residents reporting shaking buildings and swaying structures. Around 12:20 pm, a second earthquake of magnitude 4.1 struck Manipur's Kamjong district, at a depth of 66 km.

Following the quakes, several buildings in Manipur were reported to have developed cracks.

Social media footage showed visible damage at a school building in Wangjing Lamding, located in Thoubal district, where a relief camp for people affected by ethnic strife was set up. Local authorities are currently confirming reports of damage, particularly in the areas where the relief camps are located.

Despite the visible cracks in buildings, no casualties or major structural damages have been reported so far in the affected regions. Authorities are monitoring the situation closely and are working to assess any additional impacts in other parts of the Northeast.

The tremors have heightened concerns across the region, with residents remaining on alert for potential aftershocks. While the situation remains under assessment, there have been no immediate reports of significant damage outside of Manipur.

Karnataka's Six-Day Egg Distribution Boosts School Attendance and Nutritional Intake

- Egg distribution to six days a week, boosting school attendance to 98.97%.
- Nutritional impact: 62.15% of students consume eggs, while 15.12% prefer bananas; chikki distribution halted due to quality concerns.
- Kolar leads in egg consumption (84.16%), while Chikkodi reports the lowest (30.97%); banana consumption remains under 32% statewide.



However, chikkis were recently discontinued due to concerns over their quality.

The initiative has seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries. As of August 2024, when eggs were provided twice weekly, 48.13 lakh students (93.66%) benefitted from the program. Of these, 32.33 lakh students received eggs, 7.09 lakh received bananas, and 8.70 lakh consumed chikki. By January 2025, after increasing egg distribution, the number of students consuming eggs surged to 6.64 crore (62.15%), with bananas consumed by 1.61 crore students (15.12%), and 2.32 crore students (21.7%) continuing to consume chikkis.

The highest egg consumption was observed in Kolar district, where 84.16% of students participated, followed by Kodagu (83.89%) and Hassan (81.26%). However, districts like Chikkodi, Belagavi, and Bengaluru North saw lower participation rates. K.V. Trilok Chandra, Commissioner of DPI, highlighted the positive impact of the scheme, noting that not only has attendance increased, but the nutritional benefit for children has also enhanced, leading to potential academic improvements. This initiative is part of Karnataka's broader effort to tackle malnutrition and ensure that students receive adequate nutrition to support both their health and learning.

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Karnataka's initiative to distribute eggs six days a week as part of the mid-day meal program has led to a significant improvement in student attendance across government and aided schools, according to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Prior to this move, when eggs were provided only twice a week, student attendance was at 93.5%. However, following the increase to six days a week, attendance has risen to 98.97%, as reported by DPI officials.

Along with eggs, bananas and groundnut chikkis were also included in the meals to combat malnutrition among school-children. Eggs were initially introduced twice a week, and bananas and chikkis were offered to students who didn't consume eggs. With support from the Azim Premji Foundation for Development (APF), the government expanded the distribution of eggs to six days a week starting in September 2024.

Delhi, Bengaluru Made Massive Growth In Global Luxury Home Market In 2024

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

India's next generation of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) is increasingly drawn to luxury investments, with a growing interest in luxury real estate. According to a new report by Knight Frank, 25.7% of HNWIs aspire to own a luxury home, making it the second most sought-after luxury asset after high-end cars (46.5%). Art collection (11.9%) and private jets (9.9%) also featured on the luxury wish list.

The survey focused on individuals with an annual income exceeding \$125,000, revealing that nearly 30% of next-gen HNWIs globally prefer high-end real estate, followed by luxury cars at 27.8%, and private jets at 15.1%.

Knight Frank's report highlighted the significant strides made by Delhi and Bengaluru in the global luxury home market. Delhi, in particular, experienced a remarkable surge, moving from 37th place in the Prime International Residential Index (PIRI 100) in 2023 to 18th in 2024. This jump was driven by a 6.7% year-on-year (YoY) increase in luxury residential prices. Bengaluru also saw a positive shift, improving from 59th to 40th place, reflecting growing demand for luxury properties in the city.

The global luxury residential market, overall, saw an av-



erage price increase of 3.6% in 2024. Strong growth was particularly noted in regions like the Middle East and Latin America, where markets rose by 7.2% and 6.3%, respectively. Despite broader global economic challenges, these regions showed resilience, driven by sustained demand in local markets.

The growth of the luxury residential market in cities like Delhi and Bengaluru signals a shift towards high-end investments among India's wealthy elite, as the country's urban landscape continues to evolve as a key player in the global luxury real estate market.

Chennai to Roll Out Mini-Bus Services for Last-Mile Connectivity

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Chennai is set to enhance its public transportation network with the introduction of mini-bus services aimed at improving last-mile connectivity for residents in the city's extended areas. The initiative comes after the Chennai district administration invited applications from mini-bus operators to cover 72 newly identified routes across the metropolitan area.

Chennai Collector Rashmi Siddharth Zagade announced the plan on February 28, inviting mini-bus operators to apply for permits under the newly sanctioned scheme by the Home Department. The initiative is part of the Tamil Nadu government's broader effort to operate a fleet of 18,750 to 25,000 mini-buses across the state. In Chennai, mini-buses will serve areas such as Tiruvottiyur, Manali, Madhavaram, Ambattur, Valasaravakkam, Alandur, Perungudi, and Sholinganallur, which span a total of 240 square kilometers.

The mini-bus services are scheduled



to launch on May 1, and the goal is to improve access to both urban and rural areas while addressing the critical gap in last-mile connectivity. With a minimum capacity of 7 passengers and a maximum of 25, the mini-buses will provide more accessible and affordable options for commuters who currently

rely on costly autorickshaws.

The routes will cover diverse neighborhoods and link key transit points like metro stations and bus terminals. In the northern parts of Chennai, routes will connect areas such as Ambattur, Red Hills, and Madhavaram, while southern regions like Sholinganallur and Perungudi will also see services linking residential areas to commercial hubs.

A minimum fare of ₹4 has been set for up to 2 kilometers, with the maximum fare capped at ₹10 for longer distances, ensuring affordability for all passengers. However, the core areas of the city, including Tondiarpet, Royapuram, and Anna Nagar, will be excluded from this service in the first phase.

While the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) previously operated a fleet of mini-buses, these services were deemed unviable. The new mini-bus scheme is expected to address this issue and provide a crucial service for thousands of commuters in the city's extended areas.

The Delimitation Debate: Why Stalin's Argument Falls Flat



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has recently raised concerns about the upcoming delimitation process based on the 2026 Census, claiming it would unfairly reduce Tamil Nadu's parliamentary strength. In a post on social media, Stalin warned that southern states like Tamil Nadu, which have successfully controlled population growth, could see their representation in Parliament decrease, thus weakening their voice. This claim, however, has been debunked by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who reassured the southern states that their interests would be safeguarded, and there would be no reduction in their seats. Stalin's statements are unsur-

prising, considering the DMK's history of exploiting regional sentiments and promoting a North-South divide for political gains. The primary aim is to rally the Dravidian vote bank by creating fear about potential political marginalization. But what exactly is delimitation? Delimitation is the process of redrawing electoral boundaries based on the latest population data to ensure fair representation. It is a constitutional exercise, mandated by Articles 82 and 170 of the Indian Constitution, which requires periodic adjustments to maintain democratic equality. Contrary to Stalin's claims, delimitation is a legitimate and necessary process to ensure proportional

representation in Parliament and state assemblies. In India, delimitation has been carried out multiple times, with the last exercise conducted in 2002. Population-based adjustments in the distribution of parliamentary seats are based on Census data, and the 2026 Census will guide the next review. While delimitation can result in an increase or decrease in the number of constituencies, it does not alter the total number of seats in Parliament. As India's population grows, the number of Lok Sabha seats is expected to increase, benefiting the southern states in terms of absolute representation. For example, based on population projections, southern

states like Tamil Nadu are likely to see an increase in their parliamentary seats post-delimitation. Tamil Nadu, which currently holds 39 Lok Sabha seats, could see its share rise to 41. This represents a 5.12% increase in Tamil Nadu's seat share, not a decrease, as Stalin claims. Moreover, Stalin's opposition to delimitation is inconsistent with his party's stance on other issues. For instance, the DMK has not criticized the Congress party's slogan "Jitni Aabadi, Utna Haq," which calls for representation based on population. If population is an acceptable yardstick for reservations, why oppose its use for delimitation?



SEBI Under Scrutiny: A Call for Reform and Accountability

Recent developments surrounding the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the country's capital market regulator, have raised significant concerns about its credibility and ability to effectively regulate the stock market. On one hand, former Finance and Revenue Secretary Tuhin Kant Pandey took over as SEBI's chairperson. On the other, a special court in Mumbai directed the Anti-Corruption Bureau to file a First Information Report (FIR) against Pandey's predecessor, Madhabi Puri Buch, and other officials, regarding alleged stock market fraud and regulatory violations dating back to 1994. The case revolves around the fraudulent listing of a company on the stock exchange, allegedly facilitated by authorities at the time.

Though Buch was SEBI chairperson years after the alleged fraud occurred, the court's directive highlights concerns about inaction by law enforcement and regulatory authorities over the years. The failure of SEBI and other agencies to

address the matter earlier has now triggered a judicial intervention, which calls for a thorough investigation into whether Buch ignored or mishandled complaints related to this historical case. This is a serious issue that requires immediate attention to preserve the integrity of the regulator.

Buch had previously faced another controversy when the now-defunct US short-seller firm, Hindenburg Research, accused her and her husband of having stakes in offshore entities allegedly linked to the Adani Group, a matter that was under SEBI's scrutiny at the time. This accusation triggered calls for her resignation, with critics citing a potential conflict of interest. Although Buch managed to weather the storm and continue in her role, the damage to SEBI's reputation was undeniable. These controversies have cast a long shadow over SEBI, undermining investor confidence and tarnishing its image as an impartial and trustworthy regulator.

Haleem hopping in Hyderabad why Ramzan is worth every sleepless night in this Telangana city

When Ramzan begins in Hyderabad, a distinct transformation takes place across the city, particularly in its food culture. While the religious observance of fasting is at the heart of the month, it's the evolving food scene that attracts people from all walks of life. The city's gastronomic offerings gain an entirely new dimension, becoming the main attraction during this holy month.

Haleem, the iconic dish of Hyderabad during Ramzan, is undoubtedly the most celebrated food of the season. This meat-lentil dish, which originated in the 1940s at Irani ca-



fes, has now become a culinary obsession. Despite its increasing price, with mutton Haleem now costing nearly Rs 300, it remains a favorite for many. The tradition of "Haleem hopping," where

people visit different restaurants to sample and compare versions of the dish, has become a popular activity. Irani restaurants like Grand Hotel and eateries in the Old City, such as Nayab Ho-

stel, are among the hotspots for Haleem enthusiasts.

However, in the last decade, the Ramzan food culture in Hyderabad has expanded beyond Haleem. Dishes like Marag (creamy mutton stew) and Pathar Ka Gosht (mutton cooked on stone slabs) have also gained significant popularity. These dishes, which were once hard to find, are now a staple at roadside stalls that emerge during Ramzan, especially in the bustling Old City. The crowds that gather around these stalls are a testament to how food brings people from all parts of the city together, including those who

might never have ventured into the crowded streets before.

The Old City, especially around Charminar, becomes a maze of food stalls and eateries during Ramzan nights. It's no longer uncommon to find people, regardless of their religion, enjoying the vibrant food scene. The atmosphere is electrifying, with both locals and IT professionals from newer parts of the city joining the late-night food tours. This surge in visitors is partly due to the government allowing establishments to stay open all night, making late-night strolls to Charminar a must-do for food lovers and

tourists alike.

Sehri, the pre-dawn meal before fasting, also adds to the unique culinary experience of Ramzan. While dishes like Biryani and Haleem are more commonly associated with Ramzan, Sehri offers a different menu with options like Khichdi Khatta-Kheema and a variety of kebabs, giving visitors a taste of traditional household meals. For many, the night isn't complete without a cup of Irani Chai at Nimrah Café, just outside Charminar. Whether Muslim or non-Muslim, the food scene in Hyderabad during Ramzan is an experience cherished by all.

Why the Death of a Nepali Student in Odisha Should Be a Wake-Up Call

The tragic death of a 20-year-old Nepali student at KIIT (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology) University in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, has sparked not only outrage but also serious diplomatic concerns between India and Nepal. The incident on February 17 led to protests by over 500 Nepali students at the university, who were reportedly mistreated and forcibly removed from the campus. This alarming situation escalated when Nepal's Prime Minister, K.P. Sharma Oli, took to social media, demanding action from the Indian government and the Nepalese embassy, ultimately leading to the reversal of the eviction decision. This incident raises crucial

questions about India's treatment of foreign students, particularly from its neighboring countries like Nepal, with whom it shares deep cultural and historical ties. The unfortunate events also highlight the need for India to address its foreign student policies more effectively, as failing to do so could risk alienating a neighbor at a time when India is working to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region.

The turmoil triggered significant backlash in Nepal, leading to an official warning that Nepal would stop issuing No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to students wishing to study in India unless the situation was resolved fair-

ly. The Nepalese National Human Rights Commission called for an investigation into the student's death, citing allegations of negligence and mistreatment. In response, Prime Minister Oli suggested that Nepalese students should consider pursuing higher education in China instead of India.

Nepal has traditionally sent a large number of students to India for higher education due to geographical proximity and cultural familiarity. The incident at KIIT, however, risks pushing these students—and others from neighboring countries—towards alternative destinations like China, which could have long-term consequences for India's educational

and diplomatic ties.

The KIIT case is far from an isolated incident. Foreign students, particularly those from Africa and Northeast India, have repeatedly faced discriminatory treatment and racism in India.

This not only damages India's reputation but also complicates bilateral relations with other countries. Stereotyping and mistreating students based on region, religion, or culture can have severe political and diplomatic repercussions.

Prime Minister Oli's suggestion to pursue education in China reflects a shift in Nepal's diplomatic stance. His government has already distanced itself from India by opting to visit China first



during his tenure and signing on to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in December 2024. This move signals a growing strategic shift in Nepal's foreign policy, with potential implications for India-Nepal relations in the years to come. India has long been a hub for foreign students, offering an affordable education system with relatively high stan-

dards compared to Western institutions. However, incidents like the one at KIIT highlight significant gaps in how Indian institutions address the welfare of foreign students. The government's silence on the issue is concerning, and there needs to be a stronger institutional framework to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of foreign students.



Kamal Haasan accuses BJP of creating "Hindia", Opposes delimitation and Hindi Imposition

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of trying to create a concept of "Hindia" by imposing Hindi on non-Hindi-speaking states, a move he argues undermines federal principles. Haasan, leader of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), made these remarks while attending an all-party meeting convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin. The meeting primarily focused on issues related to the Centre's proposed delimitation exercise and the three-language formula under the National Education Policy (NEP).

Haasan strongly opposed the Centre's push for the three-language formula, which includes Hindi as a compulsory language alongside regional languages. He said, "They are creating Hindia. Whatever decision taken by the Centre will not be in favour of non-Hindi-speaking states. This decision, which is against federal principles, is unnecessary." The three-language formula has sparked controversy in Tamil Nadu, where many fear it is an attempt to impose Hindi on the state, disregarding regional linguistic diversity.

The actor-politician also pointed out the deep-rooted linguistic pride among Tamilians, stating, "Tamilians have lost their lives for a language. Don't play with those things. Tamilians, even children, know what language they need." His comments resonate with the long-standing cultural and linguistic sensitivities in Tamil Nadu, where there is a strong sentiment against imposing Hindi as a dominant language.

Haasan further criticized the proposed delimitation exercise, which aims to adjust parliamentary constituencies based on population. He questioned the need for such changes, asking, "Why are they repairing something that is not broken? Why are they sending democracy to the workshop for repair?" His concerns reflect fears that southern states, including Tamil Nadu, might lose seats in Parliament due to successful population control measures. During the meeting, Chief Minister Stalin echoed these concerns, suggesting that the delimitation exercise should be based on the 1971 Census for the next 30 years.

S Jaishankar Arrives In London, Holds Bilateral Talks With UK PM

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India and Belgium are working towards finalizing a defence agreement by the end of this year to enhance cooperation between their armed forces and strengthen defence industrial collaboration. This announcement was made by Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken on Tuesday during a media briefing in New Delhi.

Francken, alongside Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot, was part of a delegation led by Princess Astrid, which met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the briefing, Francken described the agreement as a "very big step" towards establishing structural cooperation between the two countries' armed forces and creating a framework for collaboration between their defence industries.

Prime Minister Modi proposed the formation of a task force to expedite the process, urging both sides to finalize the agreement as soon as possible. "Your prime minister asked us to form the task force here in New Delhi and in Brussels to conclude the agreement before the end of the year," Francken



shared. In addition, Belgium plans to appoint a defence attaché at its embassy in New Delhi, which will serve as a point of contact for India's military and defence industries.

The proposed defence agreement is expected to boost cooperation between India and Belgium in various sectors, including defence technology, military training, and defence industry collaboration, aligning with both nations' shared interests in regional and global security.

Francken emphasized the importance of mutual growth in defence capabilities between the two nations. He noted that both countries could learn from each other in terms of military technology, and he reiterated the need for "peace through strength" in today's geopolitical landscape.

Foreign Minister Prévot highlighted the evolving global situation, mentioning the shifting policies of the U.S. administration. He stressed the need to strengthen ties between Belgium and India, calling India a powerful democracy and emphasizing the importance of reinforcing their bilateral relations.

The proposed defence agreement is expected to boost cooperation between India and Belgium in various sectors, including defence technology, military training, and defence industry collaboration, aligning with both nations' shared interests in regional and global security.

Accused seen dragging suitcase with Congress worker's body inside

- CCTV footage shows accused hauling suitcase on deserted road
- Victim Himani Narwal was allegedly strangled by a friend over a dispute
- Accused arrested; police investigating monetary angle in the murder

TPN Correspondent | Haryana

Days after Congress worker Himani Narwal was found murdered and stuffed inside a suitcase, chilling CCTV footage has surfaced showing the accused dragging the luggage on a deserted road.

The footage, recorded at 10:16 pm on February 28, shows a masked man hauling a hard-shell black suitcase. The body of Narwal, who was in her late 20s, was found near the Rohtak bus stand on Saturday. The accused, Sachin, believed to be a friend of the victim, was arrested earlier today. Police say he allegedly strangled Narwal with a mobile phone charger after a heated argument. Additional DGP K K Rao



stated that there was a monetary issue between them, but the exact

details are yet to be confirmed. "After strangling her, Sachin took

her jewellery and laptop, rode her scooter to Jhajjar to hide these items, and later returned to her home," said Mr Rao. He then stuffed her body into a suitcase, took an auto-rickshaw, and dumped the bag near the Sampla bus stand to mislead investigators.

Narwal was cremated on Monday evening after her family initially refused to perform the last rites until the accused was arrested. Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda spoke to Rohtak's Superintendent of Police regarding the investigation. Congress MLA BB Batra described Narwal as an active party worker and demanded strict punishment for those responsible for her murder.

'Defer delimitation exercise indefinitely,' Vijay tells union government

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) President and actor Vijay on Wednesday strongly opposed any move to reduce Tamil Nadu's representation in the Lok Sabha based on population growth. He called for the number of seats in the Lok Sabha to be frozen indefinitely at 543, based on the 1971 Census figures, arguing that any changes that would lead to a reduction in the representation of Tamil Nadu and other South Indian states would be seen as "punishment."

Vijay's statement comes ahead of an all-party meeting chaired by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to discuss the issue. He emphasized that if South Indian states were to lose seats while states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar gained more due to population, it would be unfair. "Tamil Nadu and other South Indian states have invested heavily in education and population control measures over the past 50 years. A reduction in seats for these states would only punish them," Vijay said.

The actor-politician also strongly opposed using population alone as the basis for delimitation, pointing out that it was a flawed approach. He noted that the new Parliament building has seating arrangements for 888 members, which he believes suggests that the intention is to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats. Vijay stressed that increasing the number of MPs was not a pressing issue for ordinary citizens and that it should not be a priority.

Vijay argued that the number of Lok Sabha seats should be frozen, as the current population-based representation system has not seen



any changes in the last 50 years. He further stated that not all 543 MPs even have the time to ask questions in Parliament, proving that more seats are not necessarily needed.

Vijay also raised concerns over the appointment of Election Commissioners, suggesting that their selection process should be more transparent and carried out with consensus to ensure free and fair elections. He criticized the Centre for unilaterally choosing Election Commissioners and questioned the fairness of the process. In a political dig at the BJP, Vijay said that this issue would reveal which parties truly stand with the people of Tamil Nadu.

NDA govt ended Hindu-Muslim riots in Bihar: Nitish Kumar

TPN Correspondent | Bihar

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday asserted that his NDA government had successfully put an end to frequent Hindu-Muslim clashes in the state. Speaking during a debate on the motion of thanks to the governor's address, Kumar highlighted the government's measures, including the fencing of graveyards and bringing perpetrators of communal riots to justice, as key steps in improving law and order in Bihar.

Kumar, who is seeking a fifth consecutive term in office during the upcoming assembly elections, began his address by reminiscing on Bihar's law and order situation prior to the NDA's rise to power in 2005. He stated, "Before we came to power in 2005, the law and order situation was so pathetic that people feared for their safety." His remarks aimed to emphasize the drastic improvements made under his administration, particularly in terms of restoring peace and security in the state.

The chief minister claimed that the proactive steps taken by his government, including efforts to address communal tensions and the installation of security measures, had ensured a decline in religious violence. He specifically cited the fencing of graveyards, a step that was perceived as a preventive measure to curb the illegal encroachment of these sites, and the prosecution of those involved in past communal riots as significant actions that contributed to improved peace and stability in Bihar.



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However, as Kumar continued his speech, opposition members began raising angry slogans, challenging his assertions about the law and order situation. The tension in the assembly underscored the deep political divisions over the state's governance, with opposition leaders questioning the effectiveness of the government's policies and leadership.

With assembly elections looming later this year, Kumar's remarks are likely to play a significant role in shaping the discourse around law and order and communal harmony in the state.

Trump Announces Reciprocal Tariffs on India and Other Nations

- reciprocal tariffs on India and others from April 2.
- Targets high tariffs on US exports, India's 100% auto tariff
- Move escalates trade tensions, impacting economic relations

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

US President Donald Trump has reiterated his criticism of what he calls the "very unfair" tariffs imposed by India and other countries and announced plans to impose reciprocal tariffs on these nations, effective April 2. Trump's statement was made during his address to a Joint Session of Congress, marking the first of his second term.

Trump pointed to nations like India, China, and the European Union, which he claims have imposed significantly higher tariffs on US exports than the US charges in return. "Other countries have used tariffs against us for decades, and now it's our turn to start using them against those other countries," Trump declared. He further criticized India, saying, "India charges us auto tariffs higher than 100 percent."

Echoing his stance on inequitable trade policies, Trump reiterated that the United States would soon implement reciprocal tariffs on countries, including India and China. He noted that during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, he made it clear that India would not be exempt from the new tariff measures. "Nobody can argue with me on this," Trump added confidently.

The new policy, set to take effect on April 2, will impose tariffs on imports from foreign



countries that match the tariff rates those countries impose on US exports. Trump emphasized the principle of reciprocity, stating, "Whatever they tariff us, other countries, we will tariff them. That's reciprocal – back and forth."

Trump's remarks come after the US administration imposed tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada, and China, citing issues like illegal immigration and drug traffick-

ing. These moves have been met with international criticism, including from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Trudeau accused Trump of trying to cripple Canada's economy while also "appeasing" Russia over its actions in Ukraine.

The new tariff measures are expected to escalate global trade tensions and may have significant implications for international economic relations.



Very dumb thing to do: Trudeau after US imposes 25% tariffs

TPN Correspondent | Canada

In response to the U.S.'s recent decision to impose new tariffs, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has expressed strong criticism, calling the move "a very dumb thing to do." Speaking to Canadians, Trudeau stated that while it's not common for him to agree with the Wall Street Journal, he found it necessary to acknowledge their viewpoint on the matter. "Donald, they point out that even though you're a very smart guy, this is a very dumb thing to do," said Trudeau in his speech.

The prime minister's remarks came just a day after Canada retaliated with its own import taxes in response to the U.S. tariffs. Trudeau emphasized the negative consequences of the tariff escalation, particularly the impact it would have on the relationship between the two neighboring countries. He also highlighted the broader geopolitical implications, stressing that the ongoing dispute was precisely what global adversaries wanted to see: two close allies fighting each other.

The controversy over tariffs marks the latest chapter in the tense trade relations between the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. tariffs, which are part of broader efforts by President Donald Trump to impose stricter trade measures on various nations, have drawn sharp rebukes from Canadian officials. Trudeau's comments reflect a broader sentiment in Canada, where leaders are expressing concern that the trade conflict could harm both economies and their long-standing partnership.

Trudeau's speech came in the presence of key ministers, including Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly, Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, and Public Safety Minister David McGuinty, who are all working to navigate the ongoing trade tensions. As both countries continue to grapple with the new tariff measures, the prime minister remains adamant that the issue can be resolved through diplomacy and cooperation, rather than escalating hostilities.

Hardest Part Is.. : Sunita Williams Discusses Unexpectedly Long Space Stay

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore have been aboard the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, initially arriving on a Boeing Co. Starliner spacecraft for a test flight. Their mission, which was intended to last about a week, turned into an unexpectedly extended stay due to technical difficulties with the Starliner. As a result, NASA declared it too risky to bring them back home on the same craft, leaving the astronauts in space for what has now been almost 10 months.

The pair are now set to return to Earth in March 2025 on a SpaceX mission, but their prolonged time in orbit has drawn significant attention. While the extended stay has led to political commentary from figures like former President Donald Trump and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, both Williams and Wilmore have downplayed the impact of politics on their mission.

Wilmore dismissed political claims, stating, "The words they said, well, that's politics... From my standpoint, politics has not played into this at all." He further explained that there was little information on any potential offers to return them to Earth earlier, con-



trary to Musk's claims of offering to bring them back sooner.

In response to Musk's suggestion that the ISS should be retired early, Williams emphasized that the station was still performing at its best. "We're actually in our prime right now," she said, adding that discontinuing the ISS ahead of its planned 2030 retirement would not be the right decision.

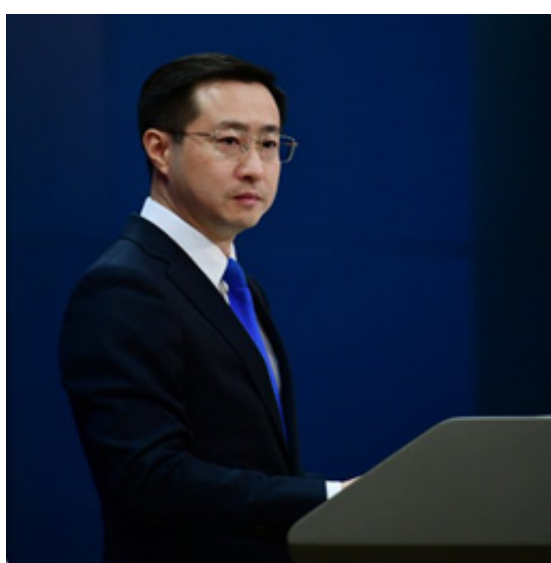
However, while both astronauts have shown remarkable resilience, Williams acknowledged that the most challenging aspect of their extended stay has been the uncertainty for loved ones back home. "I think the hardest part is having the folks on the ground have to not know exactly when we're coming back," she said, highlighting the emotional toll the delay has caused for their families.

If war is what US wants, we're ready: China says fentanyl 'flimsy excuse' to raise tariffs

TPN Correspondent | Beijing

China has strongly criticized the United States' decision to raise tariffs on Chinese imports, calling the fentanyl issue a "flimsy excuse" to justify the tariff hikes. In a statement posted on social media platform X, the Chinese Foreign Ministry rebuffed Washington's claims that China has not taken adequate steps to combat the fentanyl crisis, stressing that the U.S. is solely responsible for the situation within its borders.

The Chinese government emphasized that, contrary to U.S. accusations, Beijing had made significant efforts to help tackle the fentanyl problem. However, these efforts, according to the ministry, have not been acknowledged by the U.S. Instead, China claims that Washington has used these actions as a pretext to escalate tariffs, viewing it as a form of blackmail and punishment for China's cooperation. "We have taken robust



steps to assist the U.S. in dealing with the issue," the statement read. "But the U.S. has smeared us and used pressure tactics, which will not resolve the problem."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry further stressed that the approach of coercion, threats, and pressure would not work on China. "If the U.S. truly wants to solve the fentanyl issue, the right approach is to consult with China and treat each other as equals," it added. The ministry warned that the U.S. was miscalculating by resorting to maximum pressure tactics.

In a response to the U.S. tariffs, the Chinese Embassy in Washington warned that Beijing is prepared for any conflict, whether trade, tariff, or otherwise. "If war is what the U.S. wants, be it a tariff war or any other type of war, we are ready to fight till the end," the embassy posted.

The tensions stem from the recent increase in U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports, rising from 10% to 20%, following accusations that China has not done enough to prevent fentanyl shipments from entering the U.S.

Bangladesh got 'no official response' from India on Hasina's extradition request: Yunus



TPN Correspondent | Dhaka

Bangladesh's interim government Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus, has revealed that Dhaka sent formal letters to India requesting the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, but received no official response from New Delhi. Yunus, in an interview with UK-based Sky News, asserted that Hasina would face trial for "crimes against humanity" in Bangladesh, with the state-run BSS news agency reporting his statements.

Hasina, 77, fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year amid a massive student-led protest that led to the collapse of her 16-year rule under the Awami League. Following her departure, the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several of her close associates, including former ministers, military officers, and civil officials, accusing them of crimes against humanity and genocide.

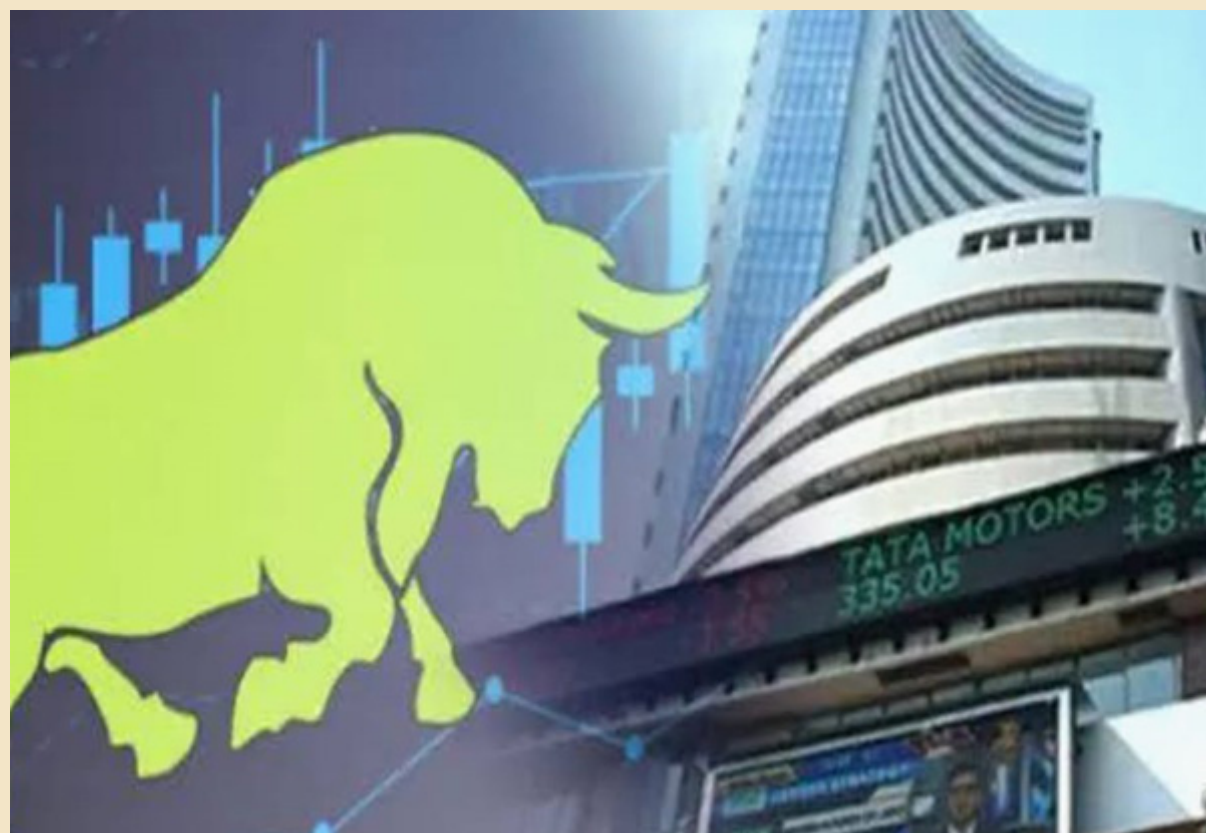
Yunus emphasized that Hasina, along with her family and associates, would face trial either in person or in absentia, even if she remains in India. Despite Bangladesh's formal communication to India, Yunus confirmed that the Indian government had not responded officially to the extradition request. Last year, India acknowledged receiving a "note verbale" from the Bangladesh High Commission but refrained from commenting on the matter. The accusations against Hasina involve her use of security forces and police to orchestrate the abduction, torture, and murder of hundreds of activists. However, Hasina denies the allegations, claiming political persecution. Yunus also criticized the "House of Mirrors," a secret jail where detainees were allegedly tortured and murdered, calling it "the ugliest thing" he had ever seen.

After Ten Days of Decline, Markets Bounce Back: Tariff Optimism Fuels Rally, Sensex +740, Nifty +254

The ten-day losing streak has come to an end. Domestic markets gained heavily on Wednesday. They surprised investors with a spectacular rally. Despite mixed signals from the international community, our benchmark indices started with a gap-up. The US government said that Trump would consider reducing tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China, and the dollar's value fell. On the other hand, investors bought on the expectation that the US Fed would cut interest rates and valuable shares were available at attractive prices. They invested in metal, media, tourism, PSE and PSU bank shares. In total, Nifty rose by 254 points and Sensex by 740 points.



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The BSE Sensex, which closed at 72,989 in the previous session, opened at 73,005 on Wednesday. It touched an intraday low of 72,894. It reached an intraday high of 73,933. It finally closed at 73,730 with a gain of 740 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,073, reached a low of 22,067 and a high of 22,394. It rose by 254 points in total and closed at 22,337. The Nifty Bank rose by 244 points to settle at 48,289.

In the Nifty50, 46 companies gained while 4 lost. Metal, PSE, media, PSU bank, tourism, energy, defence, commodities and auto stocks were the top gainers. Adani Ports, Tata Steel, Adani Enterprises, Mahindra and Mahindra were the top gainers. Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank and Shriram Finance were the biggest losers.

Today, the market breadth has completely shifted in favor of buyers. Out of 2967 shares traded, 2461 gained. 436 lost. Shares of 14 companies reached 52-week highs while 124 reached 52-week lows. Shares of 290 companies simultaneously touched the upper circuit.

Ola Electric Company received an incentive of Rs. 73.7 crore under the PLI Auto Scheme. The Union Cabinet approved Rs. 3880 crore for the Jeevala Arogya Scheme. With this, shares of Hester Biosciences rose. Shares of Adani Group companies surged today. Shares of Adani Green and Adani Energy rose by 10%. Citi has given a buy rating to Lupin with a target price of Rs. 2260. 13 lakh shares changed hands in ICICI Bank. Jefferies maintains buy rating on Adani Wilmar with a target price of Rs 370. 10 lakh shares changed hands in Tata Steel. Avanti Feeds debuts in pet food market under the name Avanti First. Jindal Drilling shares rise 8% after Jindal acquires Pioneer for \$75 million. Motilal Oswal maintains buy rating on DCB Bank with a target price of Rs 150. Bharti Airtel has been given a buy rating with a target price of Rs 1950. MindTech India MD and CEO Anand Balakrishnan resigns from his posts. Rail Vikas Nigam gets letter of acceptance worth Rs 729 crore for a project. Jefferies gives buy rating to Varun Beverages with a target price of Rs 715

Tata Steel

Tata Steel is a global leader in steel production with diversified operations in India and internationally. It manufactures a broad range of steel products, serving sectors like automotive, construction, and consumer durables. Domestic infrastructure spending and urbanization. Global steel demand from emerging markets. Commodity price volatility and cyclical downturns in the steel industry. Long-term growth potential remains positive if infrastructure demand sustains and cost management initiatives continue.



NTPC

NTPC is India's largest power utility, predominantly operating in thermal power generation with a growing portfolio in renewable energy. It benefits from long-term power purchase agreements and regulated tariffs. Expansion into renewable energy projects. Government initiatives for increased power capacity. Regulatory changes and fuel price volatility. A defensive stock with stable long-term growth, bolstered by its transition to renewables.



JSW Steel

JSW Steel is one of India's top steel manufacturers with a significant presence in both domestic and export markets. It offers a diversified product mix, catering to infrastructure, automotive, and industrial sectors. Increased demand from infrastructure projects and a rebound in global steel markets. Strategic investments in technology and capacity expansion. Exposure to raw material price volatility and global economic cycles.



Positive, with long-term prospects linked to domestic infrastructure and export performance, though subject to cyclical fluctuations.

Adani Power

Adani Power is a leading private power generation company in India, primarily focused on thermal power but increasingly investing in renewable energy. It is part of the larger Adani Group, which has a diversified business model across energy, infrastructure, and logistics. Expansion in renewable energy capacity and modernization of existing plants. Government policies promoting increased power generation. Regulatory uncertainties and environmental compliance challenges. High debt burden impacting short-term profitability. Mixed in the near term due to market volatility and regulatory risks, but long-term growth will depend on successful transition to renewable energy and effective debt management.



JSW Energy

JSW Energy, part of the JSW Group, focuses on power generation through a mix of thermal and renewable energy sources. The company is actively expanding its renewable portfolio to capitalize on the global shift toward clean energy. Increased capacity in solar and wind energy. Government support for renewable energy initiatives. Volatility in fuel prices for thermal generation and project execution risks in renewable ventures. Positive long-term outlook as the company shifts more towards renewable energy, though near-term performance may be affected by market and regulatory dynamics.



RBI appoints Dr Ajit Ratnakar Joshi as new Executive Director



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed Dr. Ajit Ratnakar Joshi as its Executive Director (ED), effective from March 3, 2025. Dr. Joshi's extensive career spans over three decades, with significant expertise in the fields of statistics, information technology, and cyber risk management. Prior to his promotion, he served as the Principal Adviser in the RBI's Department of Statistics and Information Management.

Dr. Joshi has a rich background in the compilation of macroeconomic statistics and policy formulation. He has contributed to numerous committees and working groups that focused on these critical areas. Additionally, he has shared his knowledge as a faculty member at the Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), Hyderabad, where he helped shape the next generation of banking and financial professionals.

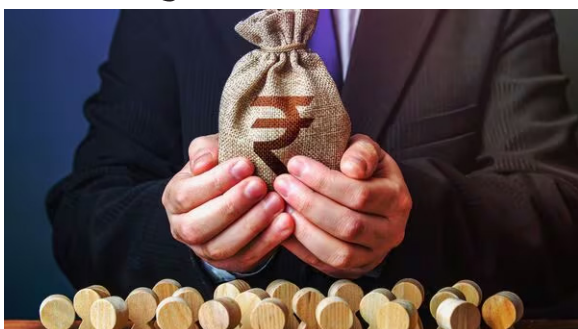
As Executive Director, Dr. Joshi will oversee the Department of Statistics and Information Management as well as the Financial Stability Department, two key areas crucial to the RBI's operational and regulatory framework. His leadership is expected to enhance the RBI's efforts in strengthening statistical analysis, improving financial stability, and addressing the evolving challenges in the financial sector.

Dr. Joshi holds a master's degree in statistics from Nagpur University, a Ph.D. in monetary economics from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, and a Diploma in Development Policy and Planning from the Institute of Economic Growth in Delhi. Furthermore, he is a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Banking and Finance (CAIIB), which adds to his credentials in the banking and finance sector.

With his vast experience and academic qualifications, Dr. Joshi's appointment as Executive Director is poised to bring valuable insights and leadership to the RBI, particularly in areas crucial to the country's financial and economic stability. His appointment is seen as a positive move towards strengthening the RBI's capacity to address emerging challenges in the Indian financial system.

India's high-net-worth individuals grow 6% to 85,698, projected to hit 93,753 by THIS year

India has seen a notable rise in its population of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), those possessing assets over \$10 million, with the number increasing by six percent in 2024. According to Knight Frank's *Wealth Report 2025*, the number of HNWIs in India reached 85,698 last year, up from 80,686 in 2023. This growth highlights the country's expanding wealth landscape and economic potential.



The report projects that the number of HNWIs in India will continue to rise, reaching 93,753 by 2028, further solidifying the nation's position as a key player in global wealth creation. This increase in the HNWI population reflects India's long-term economic growth, rising investment opportunities, and the evolving luxury market. It is a sign of the country's growing prosperity, driven by strong economic fundamentals and an increasingly affluent elite class.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman & Managing Director of Knight Frank India, emphasized that India's growing wealth underscores its economic resilience and long-term growth potential. This surge in wealth is not just about scale but also reflects a shift in the investment preferences of India's elite. The country's affluent individuals are diversifying their portfolios, investing in everything from real estate to global equities.

India's billionaire population has also seen significant growth. As of 2024, the country is home to 191 billionaires, an impressive rise from just 7 in 2019. Of these, 26 billionaires joined the ranks in the last year alone. The combined wealth of India's billionaires is estimated at USD 950 billion, ranking the country third globally, following the US (USD 5.7 trillion) and Mainland China (USD 1.34 trillion).

Looking ahead, Knight Frank predicts that India's influence in global wealth creation will only strengthen in the coming decade, driven by entrepreneurial dynamism, global integration, and emerging industries. This growth represents both the nation's economic vibrancy and its increasing prominence in the global wealth ecosystem.

SEBI Eases Nomination and Asset Transmission Rules

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced a new circular to streamline the nomination process and asset transmission procedures in the Indian securities market. The updated guidelines aim to provide greater flexibility and ease for investors, particularly those with single-holding accounts.



Under the new regulations, investors with single-holding demat accounts now have the option to opt out of nomination both online and offline. Depository Participants (DPs), rather than the Depositories themselves, will facilitate the online opt-out process for both new and existing investors.

Additionally, the new rules offer more flexibility for investors. Nominees can now be changed an unlimited number of times, providing greater control over the nomination process.

Transmission

of Assets Made Simpler

SEBI has also revised the transmission of assets rules for joint account holders. In the event of a joint account holder's death, the assets will automatically be transferred to the surviving joint holders without the need for fresh Know Your Customer (KYC) verification. However, the existing KYC must be updated to complete the process.

Surviving holders will also have the opportunity to update key details, such as their address, mobile number, email, and bank account information during the asset transmission process.

dress, mobile number, email, and bank account information during the asset transmission process.

Phased Implementation

The new rules will be implemented in a phased manner, starting from March 1, 2025, and are expected to conclude by September 2025. These changes are set to make the securities market more accessible, efficient, and investor-friendly.

Banksy's Reimagined The Singing Butler Sells for \$5.5 Million at Auction



A rare reimagining of Jack Vettriano's iconic painting "The Singing Butler" by street artist Banksy fetched nearly £4.3 million (\$5.5 million) at a Sotheby's auction in London on Tuesday. The sale of the piece, titled "Crude Oil (Vettriano)," came just a day after the announcement of the death of Scottish painter Jack Vettriano, aged 73. Vettriano's original "The Singing Butler" depicts a couple dancing on a windswept beach, accompanied by a butler and maid holding umbrellas. It became a commercial sensation after it was sold in 2004 for £744,800, setting a Scottish auction record. The image also went on to become the UK's best-selling print reproduction, outselling works by Monet and Van Gogh. Banksy's version, however, flips the romantic narrative into a stark environmental commentary. In "Crude Oil (Vettriano)," often dubbed "Toxic Beach," the artist adds a sinking oil tanker and two men in hazmat suits unloading toxic waste onto the beach. The piece critiques press-

ing issues like pollution, environmental damage, and the capitalist-driven destruction of nature. The artwork was sold by Mark Hoppus, bassist for the band Blink-182, who had purchased it years earlier. Hoppus, speaking at the auction, noted that his family had deeply appreciated the work but hoped to use some of the proceeds to support up-and-coming artists. He also pledged a portion of the sale's proceeds to Los Angeles-based medical charities and the California Fire Foundation, following the wildfires in the state earlier this year. Banksy's "Crude Oil (Vettriano)" was first exhibited in his 2005 show "Crude Oils: A Gallery of Remixed Masterpieces, Vandalism, and Vermin." Sotheby's described the work as "more relevant today than ever" due to the increasing frequency of environmental disasters. Meanwhile, tributes have poured in for Vettriano, whose work resonated with fans around the world, despite being rejected by some art critics.

PepsiCo vs Coca-Cola: The Latest Chapter in the Cola Wars



The rivalry between Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, two of the world's leading beverage giants, has flared up again with a new advertising clash. PepsiCo India recently launched its "Anytime is Pepsi Time" campaign, directly taking aim at Coca-Cola's "Half-Time" campaign in the context of the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy tournament. Coca-Cola's "Half-Time" campaign, which debuted a month ago across TV and digital platforms, positions the drink as the ideal beverage to enjoy during half-time breaks of cricket matches. In contrast, PepsiCo has cleverly flipped the script, urging consumers to enjoy Pepsi "any time" — emphasizing that no pause is necessary to savor the refreshment. Pepsi's latest campaign evokes nostalgia for its iconic 1996 "Nothing Official About It" ad campaign, which starred cricket legends like Sachin Tendulkar, Vinod Kambli, and Mohammad Azharuddin. At the time, Pepsi boldly took on Coca-Cola's official sponsorship of the cricket World Cup, with the

tagline suggesting that Pepsi was the drink for the people, not the official sponsors. "Nothing Official About It" became a cultural moment, and PepsiCo is clearly trying to channel that same effortless cool with its new campaign. The rivalry between Coca-Cola and PepsiCo is one of the most storied in advertising history. The 'Cola Wars' reached their peak in the 1980s, with Pepsi launching the famous "Pepsi Challenge" — a blind taste test where consumers preferred the sweeter taste of Pepsi over Coke. In response, Coca-Cola famously introduced "New Coke" in 1985, only to face backlash when consumers demanded the return of the original formula, which was rebranded as "Coca-Cola Classic." While both brands have histories dating back to the late 19th century — Coca-Cola launched in 1886 and Pepsi in 1893 — their rivalry continues to fuel creative marketing and bold advertising moves, with each trying to outdo the other in the battle for global dominance.

Scroll Smarter: Why Reddit is the Thinking Person's Social Media

Tired of political debates that go nowhere and movie discussions that end at 'mass or class'? Maybe it's time you discovered Reddit - where the internet actually thinks.



Yansi Gopisetty

Reddit is the internet's best-kept secret and a goldmine for curious readers who love a good debate. If you've never heard of it, don't worry - you're not alone. Reddit quietly operates as a massive global forum where people discuss everything, from serious political issues to bizarre conspiracy theories. Think of it as a WhatsApp group, but without the "Good morning" messages. Instead of endless reels and one-sided debates - Reddit offers real conversations where people actually think before they comment, well, most of the time. The platform



is made up of topic-specific communities called subreddits, where users post news, opinions, thoughts, questions, gossip, and memes while others respond with insightful or sometimes sarcastic comments. Now, why should you, a reader interested in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana politics, care about Reddit? Because this is where real, unfiltered discussions happen - without paid promotions, screaming debates, or viral propaganda that often

plague mainstream platforms.

If politics feels too heavy, Reddit also happens to be a paradise for cinephiles. Unlike YouTube comments that just say "goosebumps", Reddit's film communities break down every frame, dialogue, and hidden meaning in a movie. It's not just for politics and movies. Reddit has communities for everything under the sun - cricket debates, stock market trends, startup advice, space exploration,

memes, or even niche topics like conspiracy theories and historical mysteries, there's a subreddit for you. But since anyone can post, be wise in choosing communities, fact-check before believing anything, and remember: upvotes don't always mean truth. Fact-check before believing.

If you're tired of news that feels like a rerun and movie debates that never go beyond box office numbers, Reddit is your upgrade. It's where facts get more love than clickbait, where politics is discussed without panelists yelling, and where a simple movie thread can turn into a full-blown thesis, and one click can take you from serious policy talk to a heated debate on the best Maggi flavor. So jump in, explore, and stay curious—you might just find the most interesting conversations happening in the unlikeliest corners of the internet.

- How to navigate Reddit: Lurk for a while, read posts, and observe how discussions flow. Upvote smart discussions, ignore the noise.
- To get started, check out these subreddits: r/india for national issues, r/andhra_pradesh and r/hyderabad for local updates, r/IndiaCricket for cricket fans, r/tollywood for all things Telugu cinema.

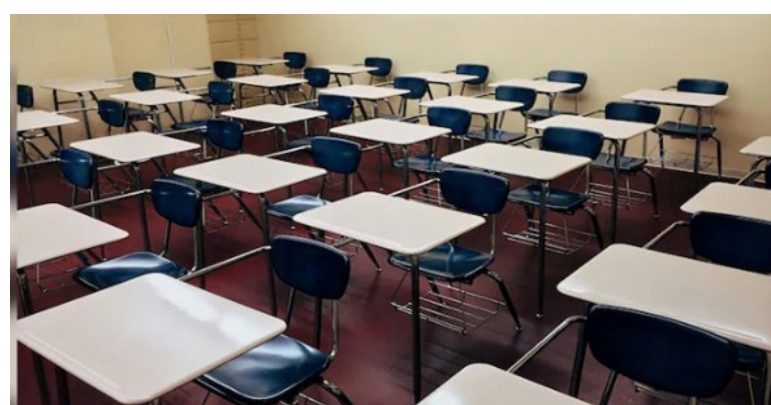
Social Media Giants Urge Australia to Reconsider YouTube Exemption for Children's Ban

Social media giants, including Meta Platforms (owner of Facebook and Instagram), Snapchat, and TikTok, have called on the Australian government to reconsider its decision to exempt YouTube from new laws that restrict social media access for children under the age of 16. The legislation, which passed in November, imposes some of the world's toughest restrictions on social media platforms, requiring companies to either prevent minors from logging into their services or face hefty fines up to AUD 49.5 million (\$31 million or roughly Rs. 269 crore). Under the current law, YouTube is exempted from the ban, as it is seen as a key educational tool and is the only platform permitted for children when part of a family account with parental supervision rights. However, Meta, along with TikTok and Snapchat, argues that YouTube should not be exempt, pointing out that minors using the platform are exposed to the same risks as other social media sites. YouTube, like its competitors, offers algorithmic content recommendations, social interaction features, and potential exposure to harmful content. Meta expressed its concerns in a blog post, stating that YouTube's exemption contradicts the stated purpose of the legislation. It called on the government to ensure that the law is applied equally to all social media services, urging a consistent approach across the industry. TikTok raised similar concerns, arguing that the decision to

exempt YouTube is "illogical, anticompetitive, and short-sighted." The company urged the government to ensure that no platform receives preferential treatment. Likewise, Snapchat echoed this sentiment, calling for fair and impartial application of the rules. Experts in mental health and extremism have also raised alarms about YouTube, arguing that the platform can expose children to addictive and harmful content, including material that can be just as dangerous as what is found on other social media sites. With increasing scrutiny on how social media affects young people, these companies are urging Australia to revise its approach to ensure a level playing field.



School In England Removes Mirrors From Toilets To Get Students Back In Class



A school in England has sparked controversy by removing mirrors from its toilets to address what it sees as an issue with students spending too much time in the restrooms. Grant Edgar, headteacher of William Farr Comprehensive in Welton, explained that the decision was made to prevent students from gathering in large groups and potentially delaying their return to class. According to Mr. Edgar, mirrors in the toilets often encourage students to spend excessive time there, which affects punctuality and creates discomfort for others who need to use the facilities. "Mirrors can encourage students to spend too much

time in toilets often in large groups," he stated, adding that this could cause some students to feel uncomfortable. The decision has sparked a variety of reactions from parents. Some have expressed frustration, with one parent commenting, "They're just mirrors, aren't they? We have mirrors at home, why can't we have them in school?" Others have called the move "silly," "a bit extreme," and "strange." Despite the criticism, Mr. Edgar defended the measure, emphasizing that the school had faced challenges during transition times and that the absence of mirrors would help keep students focused and on time for their lessons. For students who require mirrors for medical purposes, the school has made provisions, stating they can request a mirror at the reception. This is not the first time mirrors have been removed from school bathrooms for similar reasons. In January 2024, a middle school in North Carolina removed bathroom mirrors due to concerns about students using class time to create TikTok videos. In 2023, Christopher Whitehead Language College in Worcester replaced mirrors in girls' toilets with posters warning against the harmful effects of makeup. While the decision has generated debate, the school maintains that the goal is to help students make the most of their learning time and reduce distractions.

Champions Trophy: New Zealand Beats South Africa by 50 Runs, Set to Face India in Final



New Zealand secured a dominant 50-run victory over South Africa in a thrilling semi-final to reach the Champions Trophy final, where they will face India on Sunday in Dubai. Rachin Ravindra (108 off 101 balls) and Kane Williamson (102 off 94 balls) led the

charge with impressive centuries, helping New Zealand post a mammoth total of 362/6, the highest score in Champions Trophy history. Daryl Mitchell (49), Glenn Phillips (49*), and Michael Bracewell (16) contributed in the final 10 overs, adding 112 runs to the total.

In reply, South Africa, despite a fighting century from David Miller (100* off 67 balls) and fifties from Rassie van der Dussen (69) and Temba Bavuma (56), fell short, finishing at 312/9. Mitchell Santner was the standout bowler for New Zealand, taking 3/43 to help restrict the Proteas.

Achanta Sharath Kamal Announces Retirement After WTT Contender Chennai



Indian table tennis legend Achanta Sharath Kamal has announced that the upcoming WTT Contender Chennai, from March 25 to 30, will be his final tournament as a professional athlete. The 42-year-old, who made his international debut in Chennai, will conclude his illustrious career in the same city. Sharath Kamal has an impressive legacy, winning 13 Com-

monwealth Games medals, including six golds, and two Asian Games bronze medals. Despite his remarkable achievements, including participation in five Olympic Games, he has yet to win an Olympic medal. As the highest-ranked Indian at world number 42, Kamal expressed hope that the younger generation will carry forward his dream of Olympic success.

Rejuvenated Virat Kohli Ready to Conquer New Peaks



Virat Kohli's 84-run knock in India's Champions Trophy semi-final against Australia showcased his determination to overcome past challenges. While his century would have been his 25th in a chase, his measured approach was just as effective. Kohli tamed spinners, a long-standing Achilles' heel, and demonstrated

his readiness for more challenges. His disciplined batting against Australia's Adam Zampa and others highlighted his adaptability, particularly on a slow Dubai pitch. India head coach Gautam Gambhir praised Kohli's tactical approach, while Steve Smith acknowledged his exceptional chasing abilities. Kohli,

with 5999 runs in successful chases, continues to dominate ODI run chases, even surpassing 8000 career runs in the process. Kohli's focus on singles and patience, rather than aggressive strokes, helped settle his nerves and maintain control. His rejuvenation is clear—Kohli is back, more determined than ever to conquer new heights.

East Bengal vs FK Arkadag AFC Challenge League: Live Streaming Details



Indian football giants East Bengal will face Turkmenistan's FK Arkadag in the first leg of the AFC Challenge League quarter-finals on March 5, 2024. The match will take place at Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata, starting at 7:00 PM IST. Despite being eliminated from the Indian Super League playoffs, East Bengal has been in excellent form

in the continental competition, topping Group A of the West region. However, they will face a tough challenge against FK Arkadag, the 2024 Turkmenistan champions, who went undefeated in their domestic league. While the match will not be televised in India, fans can catch the live streaming on the FanCode app and website.

Champions Trophy: Ravindra, Williamson Tons Propel NZ to 362/6 Against South Africa in Semis



Rachin Ravindra and Kane Williamson's centuries guided New Zealand to a formidable total of 362 for six against South Africa in the second semi-final of the Champions Trophy on Wednesday. Ravindra's 108 off 101 balls and Williamson's 102 off 94 balls, along with contributions from Daryl Mitchell (49) and Glenn Phillips (49*), helped New Zealand set a daunting target. Lungi Ngidi (3/72), Kagiso Rabada (2/70), and

Wiaan Mulder (1/48) were the standout bowlers for South Africa. With the winner of this match set to face India in the summit clash on Sunday in Dubai, New Zealand's strong batting display has set the stage for an exciting finale. **Brief Score:** New Zealand: 362/6 in 50 overs (Rachin Ravindra 108, Kane Williamson 102; Lungi Ngidi 3/72).

Teams: New Zealand: Santner (c), Young, Ravindra, Williamson, Mitchell, Latham (wk), Phillips, Bracewell, Henry, Jamieson, O'Rourke. South Africa: Bavuma (c), Ricketton, van der Dussen, Klaasen (wk), Miller, Markram, Mulder, Jansen, Maharaj, Rabada, Ngidi.

Special Olympics Bharat Sends Off 49-Member Contingent to World Winter Games

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Special Olympics Bharat organized a grand send-off ceremony for the Indian contingent heading to the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy, from March 8 to 15. The 49-member team, including 30 athletes and 19 support staff, was honored at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi. Dignitaries such as Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya, Special Olympics Bharat President Dr. Mallika Nadda,

and Executive Director Dr. VK Mahendru attended the event. Indian athletes will compete in six sports disciplines: Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Floorball, Short-track Speed Skating, Snowboarding, and Snowshoeing, among 1,500 athletes from 102 countries. Minister Mandaviya and Dr. Nadda praised the athletes for their dedication and determination, wishing them success. The athletes were also gifted traditional Himachali woollen caps for good luck.



India's First Film Festival in Montana Celebrates Cultural Diversity



The Consulate General of India in Seattle, in partnership with the Montana World Affairs Council, hosted the first-ever 'Festival of Indian Cinema' in Missoula from March 2-4, 2025. The event, held at the University of Montana, featured screenings of popular Indian films like English Vinglish, Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, and Raksha Bandhan. Over 500 students from 33 schools participated in the Montana Academic World Quest 2025, where India was the 'Theme Country.' Along with the film festival, interactive sessions on Indian classical dance, music, and digital payment platforms were organized. The event aimed to deepen students' understanding of India's cultural richness. The winning students will visit India later this year.

'Kanchana 4': Lawrence's Biggest Venture Yet!



Lawrence, who achieved a superhit with 'Kanchana' in 2011, followed it up with 'Kanchana 2' in 2015, which grossed 120 crores and became a blockbuster. As the franchise gained immense popularity, Lawrence increased the budget for each successive film. For 'Kanchana 4', a massive 65 crores have been allocated. This

time, Lawrence aims to make the film a huge success both in terms of content and box office collections. Pooja Hegde will be seen playing a 'deaf' character in the movie. Lawrence plans to release the film either by the end of this year or the beginning of next year, aiming for it to be his biggest hit yet.

'Agent' to Stream on Sony Liv from March 14



Akhil Akkineni's action-packed spy thriller Agent, directed by Surender Reddy, will be available for streaming on Sony Liv starting March 14. The film follows Ricky, a talented RAW agent assigned a dangerous mis-

sion by Colonel Mahadev, the leader of a secretive organization known as The Devil. As Ricky works covertly to complete the mission, former RAW agent Dharma, alias God, plots to destroy India, leading to unexpected

twists in the story. The movie stars Akhil Akkineni alongside Malayalam superstar Mammootty, Dino Morea, Sakshi Vaidya, Denzel Smith, and Vikramjeet Virk. Their performances add excitement to the

film. Written by Vakkantham Vamsi, with screenplay by Surender Reddy, Agent is produced by Ramabrahmam Sunkara, Ajay Sunkara, and Pathi Deepa Reddy under AK Entertainments and Surender 2 banners.

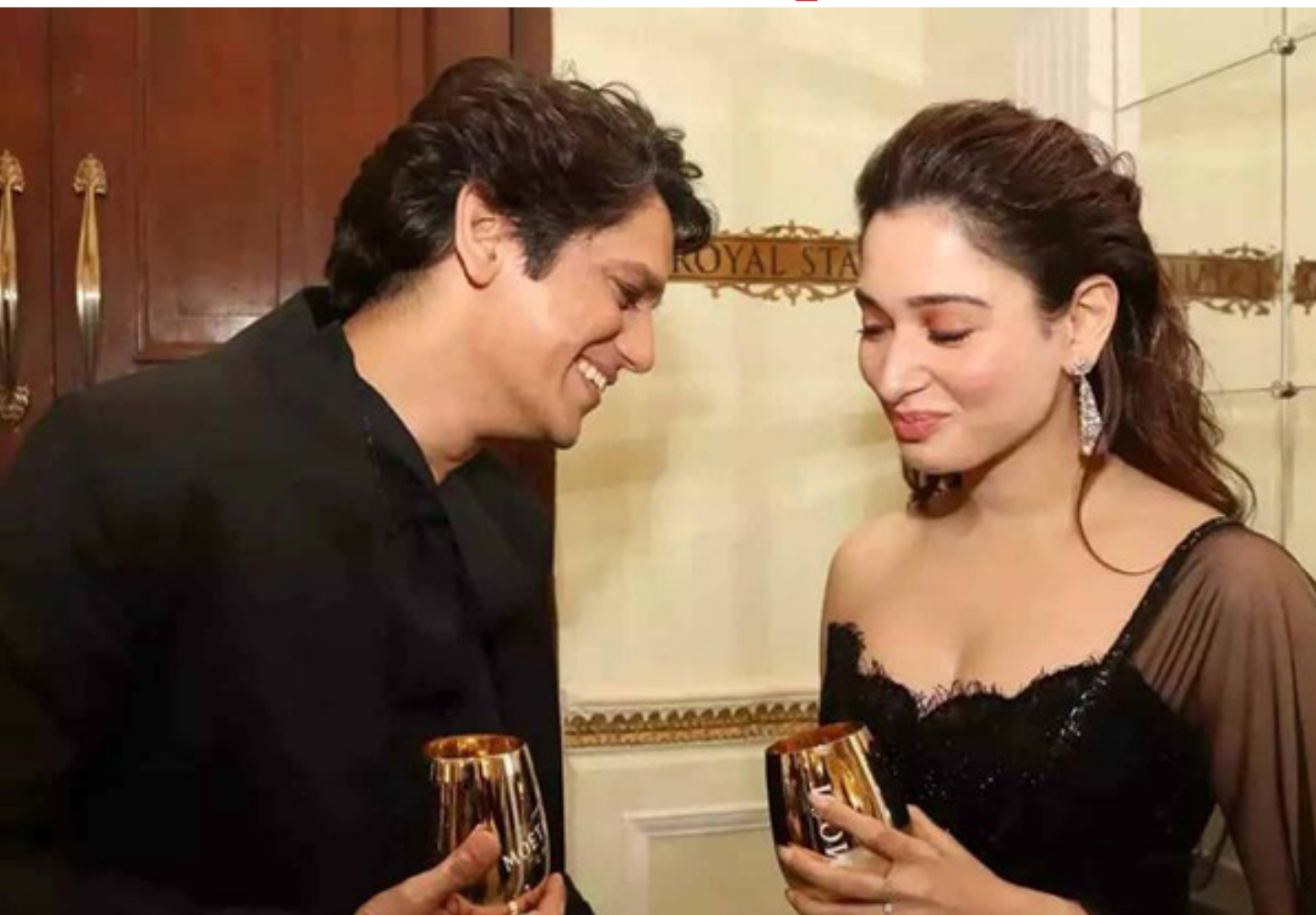
Nayanthara Requests Fans and Media to Drop 'Lady Superstar' Title



Actress Nayanthara, often referred to as 'Lady Superstar' by her fans, has requested the media and audiences to address her simply as Nayanthara from now on. In a heartfelt statement, she thanked her fans for their immense love and support throughout her career. While acknowledging that the title "Lady Superstar" was born from the affection of her fans, Nayanthara shared that it meant a lot to her. However, she humbly expressed

her desire to be called by her name, Nayanthara, as it holds a special place in her heart and represents who she is both as an actor and as an individual. She emphasized that while titles and accolades are meaningful, they could sometimes create a barrier between the stars and their work. Nayanthara reiterated that the bond of love with her fans is what truly matters, and she remains committed to entertaining them with her work in cinema.

Tamannaah and Vijay Varma's Breakup



Rumors have emerged surrounding the breakup of Tamannaah Bhatia and Vijay Varma, who had been dating for two years. Sources suggest their busy schedules and personal differences led to the split, though neither has confirmed it. An alleged reason for the breakup is Ta-

mannaah's desire to settle down, as she reportedly grew impatient with the relationship's pace. Speculation also suggests that her controlling nature created tension, causing frequent disagreements. The couple met on the sets of Lust Stories 2, where their on-screen chemistry

blossomed into a real-life romance. Despite the breakup, both actors remain focused on their careers, with Tamannaah working on Odela 2 and Vijay starring in Ul Jalool Ishq. Fans continue to await an official statement from the duo to address the rumors.

Yami Gautam Opens Up About Turning Down a Big-Budget Film



Bollywood actress Yami Gautam has revealed that she turned down a big-budget film due to her preference for content-driven cinema. In a recent interview, Yami shared that she prioritizes scripts that resonate with her, emphasizing that every professional decision is a conscious one. While she did not disclose the film's title, she explained, "I value the time I spend on projects that truly connect with me." Yami also expressed gratitude for the respect and appreciation she receives for her work, rather than just the film's scale. She further highlighted her instinctive approach to script selection, aiming for versatility and avoiding comfort in repeating past roles.