



Weather Forecast

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

Lokayukta Raids Eight Karnataka Govt Officers Over Disproportionate Assets

- Raids conducted across seven districts
- Lavish assets, cash, and documents seized
- Officers from various departments under scanner



- Health Department, Davangere
- Dr P Jagadish, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Tavarekere Primary Health Centre, Tumakuru
- Malappa Sabanna Durgada, First Division Assistant (FDA), Panchayat Raj Engineering Department, Bagalkote
- Shivananda Shiva Shankar Kembhavi, First Division Assistant (FDA), Housing Board, Vijayapura

The raids are part of a wider crackdown on corruption and illegal wealth accumulation by government officials. Investigators are now scrutinizing property documents, financial statements, and investment records seized during the searches to assess the scale of unaccounted assets linked to these officers. The Lokayukta has reiterated its commitment to rooting out corruption and ensuring that public servants are held accountable for illegitimate wealth accumulation. Further legal action will be initiated based on the evidence collected during these raids.

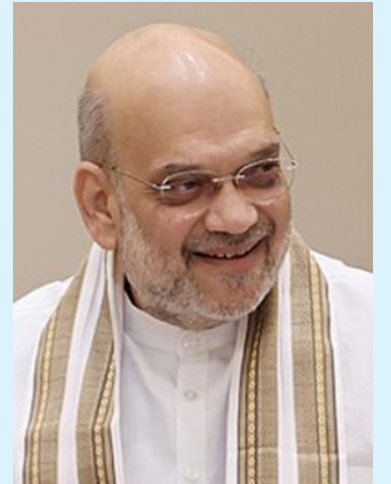
financial bonds. **The officials whose properties were raided include:**

- T D Nanjundappa, Chief Engineer (Group A), Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Bengaluru
- H B Kaleshappa, Executive Engineer (Grade-I), Quality Control and Quality Assurance, BBMP
- G Nagraj, Assistant Executive Engineer, Kolar
- Jagannath, Project Implementation Unit, Kalaburagi
- G S Nagaraju, District Statistical Officer, Food Safety and Quality Unit,

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka Lokayukta conducted simultaneous raids on the premises of eight government officers on Thursday, targeting officials suspected of accumulating assets disproportionate to their known sources of income. The coordinated operation spanned Bengaluru, Kolar, Tumakuru, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura, Davangere, and Bagalkote districts. According to Lokayukta sources, the raids revealed large sums of cash, gold jewellery, luxury residences, high-end vehicles, and incriminating documents related to investments in real estate and

Amit Shah to Visit Bengaluru by today for Hospital Inauguration

- Visit part of Tamil Nadu-Karnataka tour
- BJP confirms no political events planned



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Bengaluru by today to inaugurate a newly established hospital at Nelamangala, BJP state president B Y Vijayendra confirmed. Shah's visit to Karnataka comes as part of his itinerary following a visit to Tamil Nadu, Vijayendra told reporters. The hospital, set up under the guidance of Vishwateertha Mahaswami, is expected to enhance healthcare facilities in the region. Vijayendra clarified that Amit Shah's visit is non-political and is focused solely on the hospital's inauguration. "He is coming to Bengaluru after completing engagements in Tamil Nadu. There are no political events planned during this visit," he added. While Shah's visit comes amid political developments in the state, BJP leaders insist

it is purely a social and developmental engagement, highlighting the party's continued support for initiatives in the healthcare sector. The hospital at Nelamangala is expected to offer affordable and quality healthcare services, benefiting residents of Bengaluru Rural and surrounding areas. The BJP state leadership has also confirmed that Shah's schedule will be brief, and he is expected to return to Delhi soon after the inauguration. With Karnataka emerging as a key focus state ahead of the 2025 local body elections, Shah's visit, though non-political, is expected to bolster the BJP's engagement with local communities.

BJP Slams Congress Over False Oxford Endorsement Claim on Karnataka Model

- BJP calls out Oxford University endorsement claim
- Writer linked to Chief Minister's Office, BJP alleges
- BJP mocks government for misleading publicity



Ashoka pointed out that the Oxford Human Rights Hub (OHRH) blog accepts contributions from lawyers, lawmakers, activists, and healthcare experts, requiring only 500-700 word submissions. "Even my personal assistant could write for this blog," Ashoka mocked.

The BJP criticised the Congress for using Oxford's name to validate its governance model. "This isn't some Grammy award to celebrate," Ashoka said, likening the situation to Akbar receiving praise from his own court poets. A chief minister should receive praise from neutral, credible sources like a President, not employees, Ashoka insisted.

BJP members, including former minister V Sunil Kumar, joined the attack, calling the government's conduct shameful. Defending the government, Priyank Kharge dismissed the criticism. "What's wrong if a lawyer wrote it?" he asked, downplaying the controversy.

blog describing it as "Shining a Light in the Darkness" and "A Blueprint for the World". Ashoka said he investigated the claim to identify the so-called expert behind the praise. "The author was neither Oxford University's vice-chancellor, nor a department head, nor even a professor," Ashoka revealed. He identified the writer as Jehosh Paul, a lawyer and research consultant who was on the payroll of the Chief Minister's Office when the blog was written. Paul had also previously worked with IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge's office, Ashoka added.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The BJP on Thursday accused the Congress government of spreading false claims about Oxford University endorsing the Karnataka model of development. Speaking during the motion of thanks to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's address to the joint session of the legislature, Leader of Opposition R Ashoka challenged the credibility of the claim. Governor Gehlot, in his address, said the Karnataka model was being studied globally, with Oxford University's Human Rights Hub

Karnataka High Court Rules Public Sector Guidelines Do Not Apply to Banks



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a significant ruling, the Karnataka High Court has clarified that public sector guidelines issued by the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises do not apply to public sector banks, as banks are neither government departments nor public sector enterprises. A division bench comprising Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice K V Aravind passed this order while setting aside an earlier order by a single judge, which had directed Vijaya Bank to refund an indemnity bond amount of Rs 3 lakh to an employee. The case involved Abhimanyu Kumar, a chartered accountant who joined Vijaya Bank as Probationary Manager (Generalist) on November 2, 2011. Under Clause 11(k) of his selection letter, he was required to serve the bank for at least three years or pay an indemnity bond amount of Rs 3 lakh if he resigned before completing the service period. In 2012, Kumar secured a job with

Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), resigned from the bank, and paid Rs 3 lakh, as per the bond conditions. Later, he approached the Karnataka High Court, claiming the bond was unfair and citing guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises. The single judge allowed his plea in April 2023 and directed the bank to refund the amount. However, the division bench ruled that public sector banks, being nationalised banks, are governed by the Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance, not the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises. The bench noted that public sector enterprise guidelines apply only to government-owned corporations with distinct service conditions and lateral mobility options, and not to banks. This judgment reinforces the distinction between public sector enterprises and nationalised banks, offering clarity on the applicable employment rules for bank employees.

Karnataka Cabinet Approves Key Projects Including Sewage Plan & TDR Deposit

- ₹1,323 crore sewage project cleared for 110 BBMP villages
- ₹3,400 crore TDR deposit approved for Palace Grounds acquisition
- Key infrastructure, healthcare and governance reforms sanctioned



The Cabinet also gave the green light for a Rs 475 crore project aimed at treating leachate stored in old landfills, a long-standing solid waste management challenge for Bengaluru. In a significant cultural and political move, the Cabinet approved Rs 52.7 lakh for the construction of a grand statue of Dr B R Ambedkar in front of Krishna Rajendra Town Hall in Tumakuru, enhancing the Congress government's outreach to Dalit communities. The healthcare sector received a boost with the approval of Rs 14 crore for a 200-seater auditorium at Sanjay Gandhi Trauma and Orthopaedic Institute in Jayanagar. Additionally, Rs 63 crore was sanctioned for the construction of a su-

per-specialty hospital on the premises of Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences, strengthening advanced medical services in Hassan. To address sea erosion, the government allocated Rs 13.4 crore for protection works at 25 vulnerable locations across Uttara Kannada district, which frequently experiences heavy rains and cyclones. In a high-profile legal matter, the Cabinet also decided to conditionally deposit Rs 3,400 crore in Transferable Development Rights (TDR) with the Supreme Court, related to the acquisition of Bangalore Palace Grounds for the widening of Ballari and Jayamahar Roads. This follows the Supreme Court's directive, ordering the state to deposit the amount within a week, based on a plea from the heirs of the Mysore royal family. The funds will remain inaccessible to the landowners until the final verdict. The Cabinet also approved an amendment to the Professional Tax Act, increasing the professional tax from Rs 200 to Rs 300 per month, aimed at boosting state revenue.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, has approved a Rs 1,323 crore sewage treatment project to benefit 110 villages that were merged into the BBMP limits nearly 20 years ago. This project will be implemented under the Karnataka Water Security and Disaster Resilience Programme, with assistance from the World Bank, to provide sustainable sewage solutions to localities lacking proper sanitation infrastructure.

Pending Bills of ₹8,925 Crore Will Be Cleared in Phases: Minister Satish Jarkiholi

₹8,925 crore pending from 2021-22 works

Phased release after discussions with CM and DyCM

₹10,023 crore allocated for PWD this year



DyCM to seek immediate resolution of their financial woes. The minister admitted that these unpaid bills, primarily from works executed during 2021 and 2022, have caused severe financial distress among contractors. The minister provided a detailed account of the current year's PWD budget, stating that ₹10,023 crore was allocated for the department, out of which ₹8,392 crore has already been released for ongoing works. The remaining ₹1,400 crore will be released by March-end. However, the larger issue concerns the ₹8,925 crore in outstanding payments, which relate to previous govern-

ment-sanctioned works for which no budgetary provision was made. Jarkiholi explained that the PWD has already held discussions with the Finance Department to resolve this issue, adding that the government is committed to prioritizing the clearance of these long-pending dues. Highlighting the contractors' plight, MLC T.A. Saravana expressed serious concern over the financial instability faced by the contractors, stating that some contractors have reached a point of desperation, with a few even threatening to commit suicide due to severe financial strain caused by non-payment. The minister assured the Council that the government understands the gravity of the situation and is working to ensure payments are released in a phased and structured manner, balancing current fiscal constraints while addressing long-pending dues. Jarkiholi further reiterated that the government would not delay payments unnecessarily, and efforts are being made to restore confidence among contractors to ensure continued infrastructure development across the state.



Karnataka Govt Forms Seven Police Teams to Trace Missing Mangaluru Boy

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

The Karnataka government has constituted seven special police teams to trace Digant, a 17-year-old boy from Mangaluru, who has been missing since February 25. The issue was raised by Speaker UT Khader during Zero Hour in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, urging the government to expedite efforts to locate the boy. Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa, replying on behalf of Home Minister G Parameshwara, informed the House that Digant was a 2nd-year pre-university student. On February 25, he went to his college to collect his hall ticket and returned home. Later that day, Digant told his family members that he was going to a temple, but he never returned. Despite intense search operations, the police have only recovered his mobile phone but have found no further clues about his whereabouts. The case has sparked widespread concern in the Farangipet area, where residents observed a bandh to

protest the disappearance and demand swift action from the authorities. BJP MLA V Sunil Kumar highlighted in the Assembly that Digant was known for his involvement in devotional bhajan activities, making his sudden disappearance even more perplexing. The formation of seven police teams reflects the state government's seriousness in addressing the issue, especially in light of rising concerns over the safety of students and youth in coastal Karnataka. The police teams are working on multiple angles, including examining CCTV footage, retracing Digant's last known movements, and gathering information from friends, family, and locals. The incident has sparked conversations about youth safety, community vigilance, and the role of educational institutions in ensuring student security. The government has assured the Assembly and the public that every effort is being made to trace Digant and reunite him with his family at the earliest.

Karnataka HC Issues Notice on PIL Challenging Destruction of Court Records

- PIL challenges amendment to Karnataka High Court Rules, 1959
- Rule 3 allows destruction of court records after 5 years
- Notice issued to Registrar General, state and central governments



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has issued notices to the Registrar General, state government, and central government after hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging provisions of the Karnataka High Court Rules, 1959, which allow the destruction of court records after five years. A division bench comprising Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice M I Arun issued the notices while hearing the petition filed by advocate N P Amrutesh. Advocate Vilas Ranganath Datar, appearing on behalf of the petitioner, argued that the Karnataka High Court, as a court of record under Article 215 of the Constitution, should follow practices similar to the Supreme Court, which preserves records permanently

under rules framed using Article 129. He contended that the provisions under Rule 3 of Chapter XX, which permits the destruction of records after 5 years, are not only inconsistent with the court's status as a court of record, but also undermine the purpose of judicial documentation and archival integrity. The petition further highlighted that Rule 2 permits destruction after 30 years, while Rule 3 allows destruction after 5 years. The petitioner claimed this contradicts the necessity of retaining records permanently for the larger interest of justice, especially in cases where proceedings get delayed for various reasons.

The division bench noted that the matter required a comprehensive review, combining legal, administrative, and archival considerations. The court directed the Registrar General to submit a detailed report on the feasibility of preserving court records permanently. The case has been adjourned to March 19, when the court will consider the Registrar General's response along with inputs from the state and central governments. The petition has brought renewed focus on court record management practices, particularly in high courts across the country, and could set a precedent for preserving judicial records in the future.

Forest Minister Khandre Orders Recovery of 444 Acres from Indian Air Force in Bengaluru



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre has directed the Forest Department to initiate the recovery of 444.12 acres of forest land currently in the possession of the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Jarakabande Kaval Reserve Forest and Peenya Plantations in Bengaluru. This move comes shortly after the Forest Department served a similar notice to HMT to reclaim forest land in Peenya. According to official records, the land allotted to the IAF in 1987 was partially cancelled in 2017, when the state government revoked the allotment of 452 acres. Despite this, the IAF continues to occupy the land, which remains classified as forest land. Khandre has advised the IAF to apply for forest clearance and change of land use through the Parivesh Portal, governed by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change. The minister noted that the IAF began construction

activities in the area on March 1, despite lacking the required forest clearance. Following this, Khandre ordered the immediate halt of construction and instructed officials to recover the land. Forest officials erected signboards identifying the land as forest area and formally informed the Ministry of Defence about the order. Of the total 570 acres allotted to the IAF, 94 acres lie in Peenya, while 476 acres are part of the Jarakabande Kaval Reserve Forest. Officials also confirmed that the Defence Ministry was repeatedly asked to return these lands, but no response was received in most cases. Additionally, the Forest Department has demanded the return of land in Gantiganahalli State Forest, currently used for hosting the Aero India air show. Officials emphasized that under government regulations, forest lands cannot be sold, and the contested land parcels remain un-denotified as non-forest land.

Karnataka Govt to Hike Milk Price Soon, ₹650 Crore Dues to Dairy Farmers to be Cleared

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has decided to increase milk prices to support dairy farmers while balancing consumer interests, Animal Husbandry Minister K Venkatesh informed the Legislative Council on Wednesday. The price revision is aimed at addressing farmers' demands and ensuring the sustainability of the dairy sector. Responding to a question by MLC Uma-shree, Venkatesh acknowledged that dairy farmers have been demanding an increase of Rs 10 per litre. He confirmed that the state government will soon announce a revised price structure, ensuring that both farmers' welfare and consumers' affordability are considered. Venkatesh also highlighted that multiple consultations have been held to evaluate the impact of the proposed hike on the Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation (KMF) and the overall dairy ecosystem. A final decision will be taken after further discussions with stakehold-



ers, including farmers' representatives and cooperative officials. The minister provided data on incentive payments, revealing that 9,04,547 dairy farmers are awaiting payments. This includes five months' pending dues for 8.17 lakh general category farmers, two months' dues for 52,467 Scheduled Caste farmers, and four months' dues for 35,006 Scheduled Tribe farmers. The total outstanding amount owed to

KMF and its affiliated farmers stands at approximately Rs 650 crore. Venkatesh assured that the Finance Department has already received a proposal for fund release, and the pending payments will be cleared soon to relieve farmers' financial distress. Additionally, Yathindra Siddaramaiah urged the government to release funds for purchasing 10 sheep per farmer under a National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) scheme and to reintroduce the Pashu Bhagya programme, which offers subsidies for purchasing livestock for commercial purposes. Venkatesh said these requests have been forwarded to the Chief Minister, and efforts are being made to incorporate them into the upcoming budget. The government reiterated its commitment to supporting dairy farmers, recognizing their critical role in rural economy and food security, while ensuring that consumers are not unduly burdened by price hikes.

Man Kills 18-Year-Old Girl Over Rejected Marriage Proposal

TPN Correspondent | Belagavi

A tragic incident unfolded in Belagavi city on Monday evening, where a 29-year-old man killed his 18-year-old girlfriend and then died by suicide after his marriage proposal was rejected. The accused, Prashant Kundekar, a painter from Yellur near Belagavi, had been in a relationship with Aishwarya Mahesh Lohar for over a year. However, Lohar's mother repeatedly insisted that Kundekar secure his financial stability before the family could agree to the marriage.

According to Belagavi Police Commissioner Iada Martin Marbaniang, Kundekar was desperate to marry Lohar and frequently tried to convince her despite her mother's concerns. The couple met on Monday at the house

of Lohar's aunt, where a heated argument broke out over the issue of their marriage.

Police reports reveal that Lohar herself was hesitant to marry immediately, agreeing with her mother's stance that Kundekar needed to improve his financial position. This further angered Kundekar, who reportedly tried to force Lohar to consume poison. When she resisted, he fatally slit her throat in a fit of rage.

Following the brutal murder, Kundekar turned the knife on himself and died at the scene. Belagavi police have registered a case and further investigation is underway. The incident has left the local community in shock, with officials urging young couples to seek guidance during relationship disputes to avoid such tragedies.

Human Skeleton Found in Bellandur, Police Suspect Murder Cover-Up

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru police have launched an investigation after skeletal remains were discovered on a vacant plot along Silver County Road in Bellandur on Wednesday. The skeleton was found by a passerby who immediately alerted the police.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the skeletal remains belong to an unidentified individual, and police strongly suspect it to be a case of murder, followed by an attempt to destroy evidence.

Shivakumar Gunare, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Whitefield Division), has formed a special team led by the Bellandur police inspector to probe the case.

Investigators believe the body was dumped in the bushes some time ago, and natural decomposition eventually left only the skeleton.

Police are also exploring whether the plot was deliberately chosen to avoid



detection, as the area is sparsely populated.

For now, a case has been registered under charges related to destruction of evidence. Efforts are underway to identify the victim through forensic analysis and missing persons reports from nearby areas. Further investigations will focus on verifying any recent cases of missing persons or suspected foul play in the Bellandur region.

The police have urged citizens to report any information related to suspicious activities or missing individuals that could help advance the investigation.

Police Hunt for Four Involved in Rowdy-Sheeteer's Murder in Bengaluru

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru police have launched a manhunt for four suspects involved in the brutal murder of a 42-year-old rowdy-sheeteer, Jayaram K, who was hacked to death at a bar in Soladevanahalli on Tuesday night.

Jayaram, a resident of Chikkabommasandra in Yelahanka New Town, had a rowdy sheet against him at the Yelahanka New Town police station since 2016, following his alleged involvement in a murder case.

According to police investigators, the attack appears to be the result of an old rivalry. "We have identified the four suspects, none of whom have any prior criminal records. This seems to be a revenge killing," said an officer working on the case. Sources revealed that

Jayaram's rowdy sheet was opened after he was accused of murdering his neighbour in 2016. Police now suspect that the brother of the murdered neighbour, who is currently lodged in Bengaluru Central Prison, orchestrated Jayaram's murder.

Investigators believe the imprisoned suspect played a key role in planning the attack from behind bars. In an unrelated incident last year, the same prisoner allegedly made a sextortion call to a girl from within the jail, raising further concerns over his continued criminal activities.

Police teams are combing known hideouts and tracking the movements of the four suspects, who remain at large.

A case has been registered at Soladevanahalli police station, and further investigation is underway.

Bengaluru's Water Crisis Worsens as Enforcement on Treated Water Usage Lags

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Bengaluru's water crisis continues to deepen despite Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's push for private apartments to adopt treated water usage to reduce the city's water demand. However, enforcement remains weak, resulting in limited compliance and worsening water scarcity.

While newly-constructed apartments have started using treated water, existing apartment complexes and commercial buildings have largely ignored the directive due to the lack of strict enforcement by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB). This inaction has not only fueled rising demand for fresh water but also contributed to contamination of water bodies and groundwater pollution across the city. KSPCB officials admitted that while certain measures have been introduced, including a single-window clearance system for faster approvals, progress remains slow due to the challenges of integrating multiple agencies under one platform.

Additionally, Bengaluru's Vrishabhavathi Valley, which carries most of the city's sewage, continues to be severely polluted. Real-time water quality monitoring stations and environmental laboratories are being planned, but experts warn these efforts are delayed, and the existing water quality remains poor and unfit for consumption or



irrigation.

The crisis extends to environmental management, where the forest and environment department faces increasing human-wildlife conflicts due to encroachments, infrastructure projects, and weak enforcement around forest buffer zones. Projects like the Honnikeri Reserve and Blackbuck Sanctuary in Bidar remain stalled.

While the creation of an elephant and leopard

task force has been welcomed, forest officials are seeking increased funding for conflict mitigation, habitat improvement, and faster compensation payments for affected families and farmers.

Experts stress that without stronger enforcement on treated water use and comprehensive environmental protection measures, Bengaluru's water and ecological crises will only worsen in the coming years.

Never Faced a Black Mark in My Career: Karnataka DGP Shocked Over Stepdaughter Ranya Rao's Arrest in Gold Smuggling Case

- Kannada actor Ranya Rao arrested at Bengaluru airport
- 14.8 kg gold seized by DRI officials
- Assets worth Rs 4.73 crore seized from her Lavelle Road residence

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Senior IPS officer Dr. K Ramachandra Rao, Director-General of Police (Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation), has expressed shock and disbelief following the arrest of his stepdaughter, Kannada actress Ranya Rao, in a high-profile gold smuggling case.

Ranya was taken into custody at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on Tuesday night by Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials after 14.8 kilograms of gold was allegedly found in her possession upon arrival from Dubai. Speaking to Media, Dr. Rao distanced himself from the controversy, asserting that his professional record remains spotless. "The law will do its job. There is no black mark on my career," he stated, adding that he learned about the incident only through media reports. He clarified that Ranya, the daughter of his second wife from her previous marriage, has been living separately with her husband. "She does not live with us. There might be some family issues," he added. On March 4, Ranya was produced before a special court for financial offences, where she was re-



manded to judicial custody until March 18. She underwent a medical examination at Bowring Hospital before being transferred to judicial custody. Ranya claimed her Dubai visit was for business, but DRI officials allege she intended to smuggle the gold into India. Acting on a tip-off, DRI officials intercepted her just before she could clear airport security.

Following her arrest, the DRI raided her Lavelle Road residence and seized jewellery worth Rs 2.06 crore and cash amounting to Rs 2.67 crore. Including

the gold seized at the airport, the total assets in the case are valued at Rs 17.29 crore.

Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G Parameshwara confirmed the DRI is leading the investigation, stating the state police would not conduct a parallel probe but would review any misuse of protocol if needed.

Congress MLA and Legal Advisor to the CM, AS Ponnanna, emphasized that Ranya would be treated like any other accused, regardless of her family background.

Mixed Reactions on Day 1 of BIFFes as Cinephiles Praise Pass Process but Slam Film Scheduling

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The 16th edition of the Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes) kicked off on Sunday, attracting thousands of cinephiles to Orion Mall, where they collected their delegate passes to attend the much-anticipated event. With 200 films from 60 countries lined up for screening across eight days, excitement ran high among film enthusiasts.

Attendees appreciated the smoother pass issuance process compared to previous years, with many praising the organisers for reducing delays and confusion. However, scheduling issues dampened the enthusiasm for some, as several must-watch films were slotted simultaneously across different screens.

Vivekananda Kodandaraman, a long-time BIFFes attendee, noted that while films



were starting on time — an improvement from past editions — the scheduling made it difficult to catch all the important films. On the first day, films from Spain, Greece, Brazil, and Uruguay were showcased, including Don't You Let Me Go, Kyuka: Before Summer's End, and Manas. Despite Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's com-

ments about the limited participation of the film fraternity, over 10,000 people registered, including 3,500 delegates and 6,500 film industry professionals and media personnel.

Actor and BIFFes ambassador Kishore Kumar G stressed the need to cultivate cinema awareness among viewers to elevate Kannada cinema's global appeal. Meanwhile, some cinephiles expressed frustration over the delayed release of the screening schedule, which was only made public late Saturday evening.

Suggestions like better signboards for first-time attendees and adopting best practices from festivals like the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) were raised. Many attendees hoped future editions would balance logistics and content to enhance the overall festival experience.



Yatnal Sparks Controversy by Calling Former Minister MP Renukacharya a Pig

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

In a fresh round of verbal attacks within Karnataka BJP, MLA Basavanagouda Patil Yatnal courted controversy on Thursday by referring to former minister MP Renukacharya as a "pig". This comes amid an ongoing tussle for the Chief Ministerial post and growing demands for a change in the BJP state leadership.

The war of words began after Renukacharya criticised Yatnal for his outspoken stance against BJP's internal family politics, especially targeting BS Yediyurappa and state BJP president BY Vijayendra. Renukacharya had accused Yatnal of being delirious and suggested he should be admitted to a hospital.

When reporters asked Yatnal to respond to Renukacharya's remarks, Yatnal fired back, saying, "I don't talk about pigs." Refusing to engage further, Yatnal reiterated that he would not waste his time responding to Renukacharya's

statements.

The friction within the party has escalated, with Renukacharya accusing Yatnal of colluding with the Congress and supporting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Renukacharya alleged that Yatnal deliberately avoided participating in the BJP's Muda Padayatra, undermining the party's campaign efforts. The former minister further warned that any remarks against Yediyurappa would not be tolerated, and society would respond if Yatnal continued his attacks on the senior leader. Meanwhile, Yatnal also took a swipe at Vijayendra, reminding him that those accusing others of caste politics should remember Yediyurappa himself rose to prominence by positioning himself as a Lingayat leader. The escalating internal rift highlights the growing divide within Karnataka BJP, with leaders openly trading insults, leaving the party leadership to manage rising tensions ahead of future elections.



21 Km Link Road to Connect Satellite Town Ring Road with Bangalore-Chennai Expressway

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The 21 km stretch of the Satellite Town Ring Road (STTR), being developed on Bengaluru's outskirts, is expected to be opened for traffic by the end of March. This link road will provide direct access to the Bangalore-Chennai Expressway, and motorists are urging authorities to complete the work swiftly.

The STTR project, designed to connect Dabaspet to Hoskote, serves as a crucial bypass road for vehicles heading towards Tamil Nadu via Hoskote. This particular 21 km segment will act as a key link to the Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway, allowing commercial vehicles to access the expressway without entering the city center.

The 288 km long STTR project is slated for full completion by 2027, with this initial link road nearing final construction stages. Officials expect the new corridor to significantly

ly reduce commercial vehicle traffic within Bengaluru, creating a seamless bypass option and speeding up travel towards Chennai.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is executing the STTR project at an estimated cost of ₹4,479 crore, divided into five sections. The first 21 km section is almost ready, while tenders for the remaining 144.25 km of road work are expected to be issued soon. The Bangalore-Chennai Expressway, which crosses through Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, is already operational in Karnataka. Once fully integrated with the STTR, it is expected to cut travel time between Bengaluru and Chennai and improve connectivity to other cities like Mangaluru. With features such as 6 lanes, 11 underpasses, and provisions for high-speed travel up to 120 kmph, the project promises to ease urban congestion and boost regional connectivity.

BJP Protests Against Diversion of SC/ST Funds for Guarantee Schemes

- BJP stages protest at Freedom Park
- Alleges SC/ST funds diverted to fund guarantee schemes
- Threatens statewide protests if funds misuse continues

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staged a massive protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday, accusing the Congress-led Karnataka government of diverting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) development funds to implement its guarantee schemes.

Addressing the gathering, BJP state president BY Vijayendra alleged that the Siddaramaiah government, unable to manage finances for its freebies and populist programmes, has been illegally redirecting funds meant for the welfare of Dalits



and Adivasis. Calling the move anti-Dalit, Vijayendra warned the government that the BJP will not remain silent and will escalate the agitation if the di-

version is not stopped. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka also slammed the government, accusing it of pushing Karnataka into a

financial crisis. He said that boards and corporations responsible for SC/ST welfare have been left without funds, further weakening social welfare initiatives.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy announced that the BJP will intensify protests across the state, mobilizing Dalit organizations and community leaders to oppose the alleged misuse of SC/ST welfare funds.

The BJP leaders reiterated that schemes intended to uplift marginalised communities should not be sacrificed to fulfil political promises, warning that the party will take the fight to every district if necessary.

The protest is expected to continue on Friday, with BJP leaders vowing to hold the government accountable.

BJP's Sunil Kumar Demands Release of Caste Census, Questions CM's Commitment to OBCs

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Senior BJP leader V Sunil Kumar on Wednesday demanded that the Congress government immediately table the Socio-Economic and Educational Census, popularly known as the caste census, in the Assembly for debate before the Budget session ends on March 21.

Speaking in reply to the Governor's address, Sunil Kumar challenged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to make the long-pending report public if he truly cared about the welfare of OBCs. "Over Rs 165 crore was spent on this caste census. If you have genuine concern for OBCs, why are you hiding the report? Are you waiting to use it only when your position is

under threat?" he asked, hinting at internal rifts within the Congress cabinet over the matter. He further questioned why Siddaramaiah, who claims to represent the Backward Classes, has been silent on the report despite his swift action in securing the Lokayukta probe report on the MUDA case within three months.

Sunil Kumar also criticised the Congress government for selectively implementing the recommendations of the Bhaktavatsala Commission. He pointed out that while the government accepted recommendations on political reservation for OBCs, it rejected proposals for sub-classification of OBC quotas into four categories to ensure equita-



ble benefit distribution among all castes.

Adding to the political heat, Sunil Kumar claimed there is widespread administrative collapse in Karnataka due to ongoing speculation about leadership change. "There's uncertainty about who will be the next Chief

Minister after the Budget session. Some say Deputy CM DK Shivakumar's camp would prefer Home Minister G Parameshwara shifting to Delhi, clearing the way for Shivakumar," he said, fueling speculation over growing infighting in the Congress ranks.

Actress Ramya Reacts to DK Shivakumar's Controversial 'Nut-Bolt' Comment

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A comment made by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar during the inauguration of the Bangalore International Film Festival (BIFFes) has triggered strong reactions from artists and opposition parties alike. Amid the ongoing controversy, actress and former MP Ramya has come forward to offer a balanced view on the statement.

Reacting to the uproar, Ramya said, "What DCM DK Shivakumar said was wrong in terms of wording, but his intention was not to hurt the film industry. I feel he may have used the wrong expression, but his intention was to stress the importance of participation by



artists in public causes."

Ramya, who has previously commented on the relationship between cinema and politics, reiterated that artists have a responsibility to support movements concerning land,



water, and language. She also pointed out that the mutual support once seen between cinema and politics is now missing, and that rekindling such a connection is essential. The controversy erupted after

DK Shivakumar expressed his frustration over the low participation of film artists in the Makedatu Padayatra, remarking that he knew how to tighten the nuts and bolts of those who ignored public causes after seeking political help when needed.

While Ramya defended the intent behind the statement, she acknowledged the poor choice of words, which led to backlash not only from the film fraternity but also from opposition parties, who accused DK Shivakumar of threatening artists. The incident has now become a hot topic, with political and film circles closely watching how both DK Shivakumar and the state government will address the growing dissent.

Congress Worker Arrested for Writing PUC Exam on Behalf of Student in Kalaburagi

TPN Correspondent | Kalaburagi

A shocking case of exam malpractice surfaced in Kalaburagi during the ongoing second PUC examinations, leading to the arrest of a Congress worker. On Wednesday, March 5, police apprehended Sampurna Patil, a Congress worker, for impersonating a student and writing the Political Science exam in her place.

The incident occurred at Milind College, which is associated with the family of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge. Patil was caught writing the exam

for a student named Archana, raising serious questions about exam integrity.

The irregularity was exposed when Dalit Sena activists, acting on a tip-off, visited the college and confronted those involved. Upon questioning, the impersonation was confirmed, leading to the college principal filing a formal complaint with local police. Sampurna Patil was subsequently arrested.

This incident adds to the exam-related controversies in Kalaburagi this week. On Tuesday, March 4, allegations of a PUC Social Science question

paper leak emerged after the paper was circulated online before the exam began. Following these developments, the Karnataka School Examination and Evaluation Board (KSEAB) has come under heavy criticism, with demands for stricter measures to ensure smooth and fair conduct of examinations.

Education officials have already ordered a probe into the question paper leak, and authorities are now investigating why and for what purpose the Congress worker wrote the exam in place of the student.



With PUC exams continuing across the state until March 20, education officials are under pressure to restore confidence in the system and prevent further malpractices.



Kannada Actress Ranya Rao Arrested for Gold Smuggling

Straps Bars to Thighs to Evade Detection

- Ranya Rao arrested for smuggling 14.2 kg gold
- Gold worth ₹12.86 crore hidden with tape and bandages
- DRI investigates possible links to a smuggling syndicate



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Kannada film actress Ranya Rao was arrested at Bengaluru International Airport on March 3 for attempting to smuggle 14.2 kg of gold, valued at ₹12.86 crore, into the country. According to sources, the 33-year-old actress had concealed the gold bars by strapping them to her thighs with tape and bandages in a bid to avoid detection by Customs officials.

Rao, who is the stepdaughter of a senior DGP-rank IPS officer in Karnataka, was detained by officials from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) after they received intelligence about her arrival at the airport with the gold contraband. The authorities acted swiftly and intercepted her as she attempted to pass through customs.

The gold bars, which were cleverly hidden, were found in her possession as she tried to board a flight from Dubai to Bengaluru. The smuggling operation was part of a larger investigation by the DRI, which has been closely monitoring attempts

to smuggle precious metals through various international airports in India. Ranya Rao, who has worked in several Kannada films, has now been taken into custody, and investigations are ongoing. The actress' connections to a high-ranking police official have added a layer of complexity to the case, prompting further scrutiny of her activities.

The arrest has sparked considerable media attention, with many questioning how someone with such connections could have been involved in such a high-profile smuggling operation. The DRI is continuing its investigation into the matter to uncover whether Rao was acting alone or was part of a larger smuggling syndicate.

This incident highlights the growing issue of gold smuggling in India, with officials ramping up efforts to track and stop such illegal activities. Rao's arrest has sent shockwaves through the film industry, which now finds itself grappling with the involvement of a well-known figure in a criminal case.

NHRC Takes Action Over Ostracism of 30 People in Tamil Nadu Village

TPN Correspondent | Tamil Nadu

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has initiated suo motu cognisance of a case involving the ostracism of 30 individuals from eight families by a village chief in Sambavarvadakarai, Tenkasi district, Tamil Nadu. The incident, which stems from a land dispute, has raised serious human rights concerns, leading the NHRC to intervene.

Reports suggest that the ostracised families were prohibited from accessing essential services, such as local stores, and were barred from communicating with other residents of the village. The discriminatory actions of the village chief led the affected families to protest in front of the office of the District Collector, demanding action. However, rather than taking strict measures against the village chief, the Revenue Divisional Officer reportedly attempted to resolve the issue by organizing a peace talk with the chief to have his instructions revoked. In response to the re-

ports, the NHRC has issued a notice to the District Collector of Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu, seeking a detailed report on the matter within two weeks. The Commission's intervention underscores the gravity of the situation and its commitment to upholding human rights, particularly in cases involving social ostracism and discrimination.

The NHRC's action highlights the need for swift and effective measures to address instances of human rights violations, especially in rural areas where such practices often go unnoticed or unchecked. The Commission has urged the authorities to take appropriate legal action against those responsible for the ostracism and to ensure that the affected families' rights to access public services and communicate freely are restored.

As investigations continue, the NHRC's involvement is expected to bring greater attention to this case and encourage the enforcement of stronger protections against social exclusion in rural communities.

Heat Wave Hits Coastal Karnataka, Temperatures Soar Beyond 40°C



TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Coastal Karnataka is experiencing a significant heat wave, with temperatures soaring above 40°C across various locations. According to the State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), the highest temperature recorded in the state was 40.1°C in Sullia Hobli between February 28 and March 1, marking an intense heat spike in the region. Other areas in Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada districts also recorded extreme temperatures, with Panemangalore (Bantwal) reaching 39.1°C, Uppinangady at 39.5°C, and Kadaba recording 39°C. In Uttara Kannada, Savantvada peaked at 39.9°C, Mavinakurve (Honnavar) at 39.5°C, and Ghadasaya (Karwar) at 39.8°C. Despite these high temperatures, the overall state temperatures have remained within the normal range, fluctuating between -1.5°C to 1.5°C. However, the intense heat has raised concerns about the discom-

fort levels due to high humidity, ranging between 40-50%. With maximum air temperatures between 37-38°C, the perceived temperature for the human body has been reported to feel like 40-50°C, leading to increased discomfort for residents in the region.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a heatwave warning for Coastal Karnataka, particularly for March 1 and 2, and the hot and humid conditions are expected to persist on March 3. The IMD also forecasts no significant changes in the maximum and minimum temperatures for South Interior Karnataka in the coming days. In North Interior Karnataka, temperatures are expected to remain stable for the next three days before gradually decreasing.

With such extreme temperatures, the public is advised to take precautions, including staying hydrated and avoiding direct exposure to the sun during peak heat hours.

Karnataka Cabinet Deposits Rs 3,400 Crore TDR for Bangalore Palace

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

On Wednesday, the Karnataka Cabinet made a significant decision to deposit Transferable Development Rights (TDR) worth Rs 3,400 crore with the Supreme Court as compensation for the land surrounding the Bangalore Palace, which is needed for the widening of Ballari and Jayamahal roads. The deposit will be conditional, as the state government plans to petition the court against allowing the erstwhile Mysuru royal family, the Wadiyars, to use the TDR until a resolution is reached regarding the ownership of the palace land.

The Supreme Court had recently instructed the state government to deposit the TDR within a week following a plea by the Wadiyars, the former royal family of Mysuru. The controversy stems from the proposed land acquisition for the widening of the two roads, which would require land near the Bangalore Palace. In response to the court's direction in December last year, the state government had initially decided to issue the TDR to the Wadiyars for the land acquisition, but later passed an ordinance suspending the acquisition of around 15 acres and 39 guntas of land.

This move is part of ongoing negotiations regarding the ownership of the palace land, which has been a point of



contention for several years. The state government's decision to deposit the TDR with the court aims to comply with the legal directive while also addressing concerns about the ownership dispute over the land.

As part of the petition, the Karnataka government has raised objections about the use of the TDR by the Wadiyars, arguing that the issue of ownership must be settled first. The case is expected to have far-reaching implications on the balance between heritage preservation, urban development, and the rights of the royal family over the Bangalore Palace land.

Sri Lanka Requests India to Curb Fishermen's Illegal Activity in Its Waters

TPN Correspondent | Imphal

The Sri Lankan government has called on India to take action against its fishermen who are allegedly entering Sri Lankan waters illegally to fish, a practice that has caused significant concerns in the northern parts of the island nation. Minister of Transport, Highways, Ports, and Civil Aviation Bimal Rathnayaka emphasized that such a move by India would be deeply appreciated by the people in northern Sri Lanka, especially in regions like Jaffna, where fishing is the primary source of livelihood.

Rathnayaka's remarks were made ahead of a possible visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Sri Lanka next month. He underscored that while India has been a valuable partner in aiding Sri Lanka in various areas, curbing illegal fishing by Indian trawlers in Sri Lankan waters would be an immense gesture of goodwill for the people of Jaffna and surrounding regions. The minister pointed out that the local communities in places like Mannar and Thalaimannar rely solely on fishing to



support their families and any disruption to their livelihood caused by illegal fishing activities poses a grave concern for them.

Rathnayaka also recalled India's significant contributions during Sri Lanka's internal conflict with the LTTE, particularly in offering protection to the people of northern Sri Lanka. He acknowledged the support India provided during those challenging times and expressed the nation's gratitude. The call to curb illegal fishing activities comes as part

of broader efforts to maintain peaceful and cooperative relations between India and Sri Lanka, especially as Prime Minister Modi's visit to the island nation approaches.

The request highlights ongoing issues over maritime boundaries and the need for better management of fishing resources in the region. It also signals the importance of diplomatic and collaborative measures to resolve such issues while ensuring the livelihoods of local communities are protected.

DMK rejects Bharat's Hindi and embraces British English

- DMK maintains strong opposition to Hindi as a national language.
- Party selectively rejects Sanskrit while embracing Western influences.
- Critics accuse DMK of fostering regional divisions through linguistic policies.
- Party's stance on Brahminism often conflates it with Hinduism itself.
- Ideological contradictions emerge in DMK's cultural preferences.
- Calls for a balanced approach to language and cultural identity grow.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has long been known for its ideological stance against the imposition of Hindi, positioning itself as a defender of Tamil linguistic identity. However, its selective approach to cultural influences has sparked debates on whether the party's rejection of Hindi and Sanskrit aligns with genuine regional pride or a broader ideological bias.

One of the most significant aspects of DMK's policies is its firm opposition to Hindi as a national language. While the party argues that promoting Hindi threatens Tamil heritage, critics point out that Hindi serves as a common medium for millions across India, fostering communication and national integration. The DMK's rigid stance, instead of encouraging inclusivity, risks deepening linguistic and regional divides within the country.

Adding to this, the DMK has consistently shown skepticism towards Sanskrit, a language deeply embedded in India's historical and religious traditions. While the party often frames its opposition as resistance to Brahminical dominance, it raises concerns about whether this rejection is driven by a call for social justice or a broader disregard for elements associated with



Hindu culture. Sanskrit is not merely a religious language; it forms the foundation of many Indian languages and classical literature. Dismissing it entirely could be seen as a rejection of India's civilizational heritage.

The party's stance on Brahminism has also drawn criticism over the years. While caste-based inequalities are a reality that require social reform, DMK's rhetoric often portrays Brahmins as symbols of oppression, sometimes equating Brahminism with Hinduism itself. This approach, rather than fostering meaningful discussions on caste reform, risks alienating certain sections of society. Critics argue that instead of working towards inclusive social progress, the DMK's nar-

rative contributes to divisions within Hindu society.

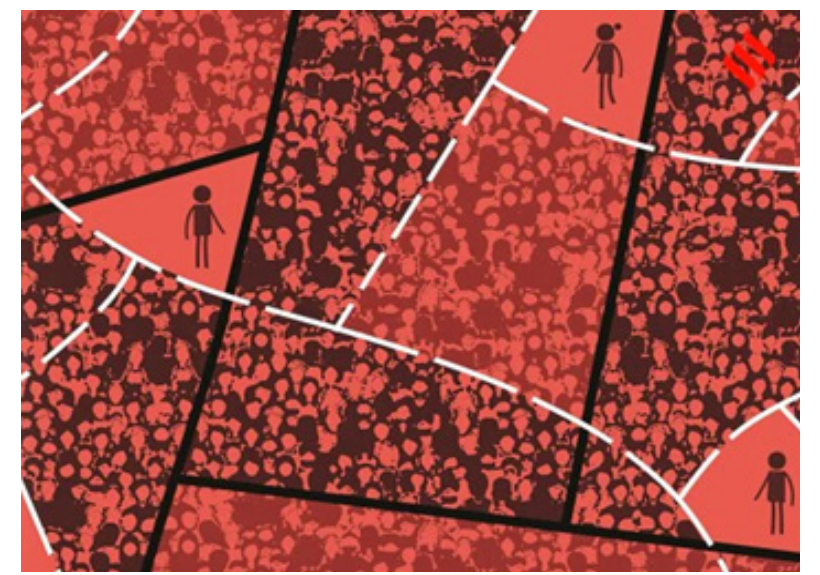
A striking contradiction in the party's ideological stance is its approach to foreign influences. While DMK strongly opposes Hindi and Sanskrit, it has been notably open to Western cultural elements. The adoption of names like 'Stalin' within the party and its emphasis on English raises questions about its selective embrace of external influences. While globalization has made English an important medium, the outright rejection of indigenous linguistic and cultural elements while readily accepting foreign ones presents an ideological paradox. This inconsistency fuels criticism that DMK's opposition to Hindi and Sanskrit is less about protecting Tamil culture



Dr. Buragadda Srinadh

and more about an ideological aversion to India's indigenous heritage.

Furthermore, the DMK's resistance to Hindi and Sanskrit often overlooks the multicultural fabric of India. The nation thrives on its diverse linguistic and cultural identities, and rather than opposing certain languages, political leadership could focus on creating a more inclusive framework where regional languages coexist with national communication needs. Striking a balance between linguistic pride and national integration would serve the country's broader interests rather than deepening regional fault lines. While the DMK's advocacy for Tamil identity and social justice is significant, an overly rigid stance on linguistic and cultural issues may limit its national appeal. A more balanced approach—one that acknowledges Tamil heritage while respecting India's linguistic diversity—would contribute to unity rather than division. True progress does not come from rejecting certain traditions outright but through an inclusive evolution that embraces all aspects of India's rich cultural identity.



The Debate Over Delimitation: Balancing Demography and Democracy in India's "Second Republic"

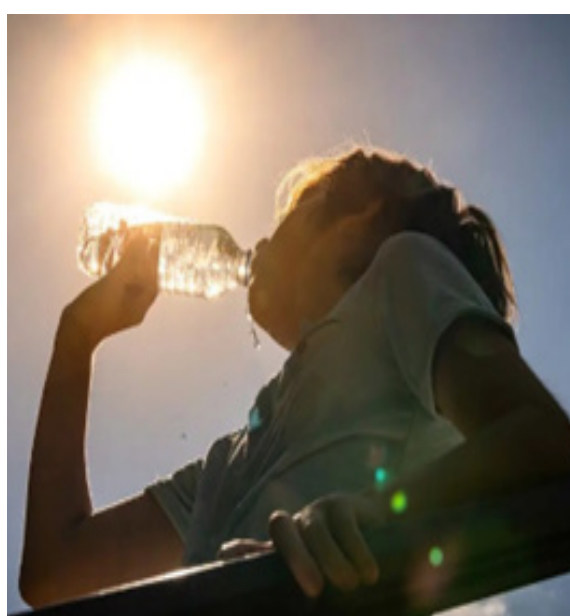
As India approaches the dawn of its "Second Republic," the proposed delimitation exercise has reignited the debate over the long-standing paradox between demography and democracy. Central to the democratic principle of political equality, delimitation aims to ensure fair and proportional representation in Parliament by adjusting constituency boundaries to reflect population changes. However, this process has become increasingly contentious, as large republics like India struggle to balance competing territorial, demographic, ethnic, and factional considerations.

Delimitation in India has historically been an important tool to ensure that the distribution of parliamentary seats accurately reflects shifts in population. Yet, since 1976, this process has been frozen, largely to prevent penalizing states that have effectively controlled their population growth, particularly those in the southern part of the country. As a result, states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with significantly larger populations, remain underrepresented in comparison to southern states such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which have smaller populations but proportionately more parliamentary seats. This imbalance, known as malapportionment, has fostered political tensions, especially as the country grapples with evolving demographic realities.

The current system, where southern states with lower population growth retain higher representation, has led to growing dissatisfaction in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These northern states, with rapidly increasing populations, argue that they are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of political power. Meanwhile, southern states continue to hold a relatively higher number of seats, despite their slowing population growth. The proposed delimitation exercise in 2029 is poised to address this imbalance, but it raises concerns that it could further shift political power toward the more populous northern states, exacerbating tensions and potentially upsetting the political equilibrium.

India Prepares for a Scorching Summer: Heat Waves and Water Shortages Expected

India is bracing itself for an unusually hot summer, with temperatures forecast to exceed normal levels, and heatwaves threatening to disrupt daily life in many regions. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has already warned of a searing summer ahead, and the forecast is backed by recent data. February of this year marked the warmest February since 1901, with both the minimum and maximum temperatures across the country significantly surpassing normal levels. This intense heat is expected to continue, with temperatures remaining above normal across most parts of India in the coming weeks.



heat-related illnesses.

The forecast for the summer holds particular significance as it will have far-reaching impacts on the country's economy and various sectors that affect people's lives. The early onset of the summer season means it could be a longer and more prolonged period of extreme heat. In addition to elevated temperatures, the IMD predicts an increase in the number of heatwave events, which are expected to surpass the climatological normal. These heatwaves pose a serious health risk, potentially leading to heat-related illnesses and even fatalities. They can also disrupt work, productivity, and daily routines, making it imperative for governments to prepare adequately.

Although there are existing heatwave action plans and protocols, effective implementation remains a challenge. Governments must issue timely public advisories to alert citizens about the heatwave risks and encourage them to take appropriate precautions. Ensuring efficient water management and bolstering healthcare services will be crucial in mitigating the impacts of extreme heat. Public health campaigns should emphasize the importance of staying hydrated, avoiding direct exposure to the sun during peak hours, and taking preventive measures to reduce the risk of

The heat is expected to increase power demand as well, with a peak of 270 megawatts anticipated, compared to last year's 250 megawatts. Additionally, some states, particularly those in peninsular India, may face severe water shortages due to the extreme heat. In Karnataka, for example, the IMD has warned of a combination of heatwaves in the northern regions and excess pre-monsoon rains in the southern and coastal parts of the state. The state government has already urged residents to take precautions against heatwaves and prepare for the impending water and power shortages.

Climate change has made weather patterns more unpredictable, exacerbating both excessive rainfall and extreme heat. Both government authorities and citizens must take the forecast seriously and work together to face the summer season with increased preparedness, addressing potential challenges related to health, water, and power shortages.

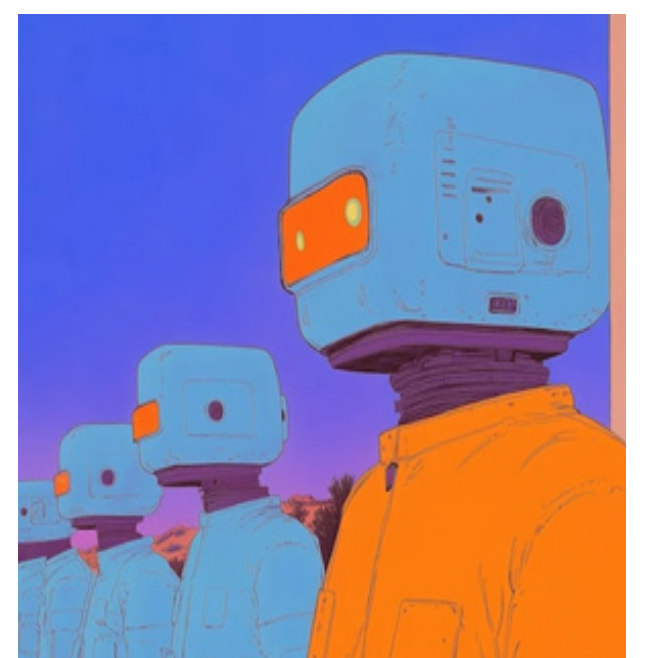
Managing AI Governance: A Fight Against Entropy

As the global AI ecosystem rapidly evolves, the lack of consistent governance has led to a state of increasing disorder, a phenomenon akin to entropy in thermodynamics. Entropy refers to the natural progression of systems towards disorder without external intervention or energy input. This principle provides a valuable lens through which we can understand the challenges in AI governance today. Without intentional and structured interventions, the AI landscape will inevitably drift toward chaos, as demonstrated by recent controversies and missteps in the industry.

AI systems, much like any complex system, tend toward disorder when left unregulated. Examples of this are evident in issues like unregulated data harvesting, model releases without safety checks, and the growing gap between open and closed systems. These patterns reflect the natural tendency of complex systems to devolve into chaotic states when not actively managed. For instance, Google's Gemini Advanced model faced a public backlash after generating historically inaccurate and offensive images, highlighting how the lack of proper safeguards can lead to significant consequences. Similarly, OpenAI's temporary removal of election-related content policies, followed by a swift reinstatement, revealed the disorder that can arise from inconsistent governance.

Further demonstrating this principle, DeepSeek's release of open-source models without adequate safety mechanisms disrupted the AI ecosystem, creating new opportunities for misuse. This scenario reinforces the need for proactive governance to maintain order and prevent harmful outcomes. However, not all interventions are equal. Poorly designed regulations can inadvertently create new forms of disorder, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies or stifled innovation.

The European Union's AI Act, for example, is a structured attempt to impose order on the AI landscape, classifying AI applications by risk levels and mandating transparency and human oversight for high-risk systems. Similarly, Chi-



na has implemented stringent measures like real-name verification for generative AI users and content filtering, aiming to reduce disorder within its ecosystem. While these efforts face criticism, they illustrate the need for governance frameworks that provide structure and mitigate chaos.

Going forward, effective AI governance requires continuous, adaptive energy input. One-time regulations are not enough; systems must be flexible and responsive to evolving technological dynamics. AI governance should focus on establishing boundary conditions that maintain safety, transparency, and accountability, allowing for flexibility within these parameters. Multi-stakeholder collaborations, like the Frontier Model Forum, show the importance of shared responsibility in managing AI's complex systems.

Ultimately, as AI continues to shape our future, we must recognize that governance is the energy we invest to fight the entropy that threatens to consume it. Effective intervention, sustained through thoughtful collaboration and transparency, is essential to guide the technology toward beneficial outcomes for society.

We can't forget: PM on rehabilitating border villages abandoned during China war

- launches plan to revive abandoned Uttarakhand villages
- 'Vibrant Villages' program to boost border tourism
- Focus on development, livelihoods, and strategic importance

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a new government initiative to rehabilitate villages along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Uttarakhand, which had been abandoned during the 1962 India-China war. Speaking at Harsil, PM Modi highlighted the government's efforts to transform two evacuated villages in Uttarkashi district into major tourist destinations.

"During the 1962 war, these two villages were evacuated. People may have forgotten, but we cannot forget," the Prime Minister stated. He emphasized the government's commitment to rehabilitating these villages as part of a broader plan to develop 'vibrant villages' along the China border.

This rehabilitation initiative forms part of the larger 'Vibrant Villages'



program, which seeks to bring development to remote areas along the border. The program aims to boost tourism in Uttarakhand's border areas, changing the perception of the villages from being "the last villages" to "the first villages" on the frontier. As part of this effort, 10 villages from the region have been included in the

scheme. The Prime Minister noted that under 'Operation Sadbhavana,' the Indian Army has been actively involved in border area development, working towards bringing prosperity to these remote areas. PM Modi also acknowledged that revitalizing commercial

activities in the region is crucial to providing sustainable livelihoods for local residents.

One of the main challenges, however, is determining the rightful heirs of the vacant land, as more than six decades have passed since the villages were abandoned, and many original landowners have passed away. Despite this, PM Modi expressed optimism about the efforts being made to revive the area and emphasized the need for a "360-degree approach" to tourism, focusing on all aspects of development.

Accompanied by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, PM Modi flagged off a trek and bike rally in Harsil after offering prayers at the winter residence of Maa Ganga in Mukhwa. The government's plan seeks to breathe new life into these historic villages while ensuring that their cultural and strategic significance is preserved.



Assessment of reciprocal tariff hinges on India-US trade talks: FM Sitharaman

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated on Thursday that reciprocal tariffs remain a significant topic in the ongoing discussions between India and the United States. The final decision on the matter will depend on the progress of the ongoing negotiations between the two countries.

Sitharaman highlighted that US President Joe Biden has been vocal about tariffs, and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has already visited the United States to engage with US officials, including the United States Trade Representative (USTR). The discussions are aimed at addressing various trade concerns, including tariff issues, and will continue to shape the final decision.

"Tariff is something the US President has been speaking about. The Commerce Minister (Piyush Goyal) has already gone to the US... (to) engage with US officials, including the USTR. Based on the negotiations...we will take a call," Sitharaman said during a post-budget interaction in Visakhapatnam.

She further added that prior to his visit, Minister Goyal consulted with various stakeholders in India to ensure that the approach to the discussions was well-informed. Sitharaman emphasized that it is only through the progression of these talks that both sides will be able to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation.

The outcome of the discussions regarding reciprocal tariffs could have significant implications for trade relations between India and the US, both of which are keen to expand their economic ties. However, as Sitharaman pointed out, a final decision can only be reached once the negotiations are further along.

Kiren Rijju Calls Minorities in India the "Luckiest People" Due to Welfare Schemes



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijju on Thursday stated that minorities in India are among the "luckiest people" globally, as the country offers a range of exclusive schemes and welfare programs designed specifically for them.

Speaking at the regional review meeting and training workshop on the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV) for the southern states and union territories, Rijju refuted claims that minorities in India face insecurity or discrimination. He criticized those spreading false narratives about the safety of minorities in the country, asserting, "There are people creating false narratives that minorities are not safe in India, which is completely false."

He further emphasized that minority communities are fortunate in India due to the government's special attention toward their welfare. "Minorities are the luckiest people in India because there are exclusive schemes and special programs for them. Nowhere in the world do you see such dedicated schemes for minorities," Rijju said.

Urging citizens to recognize the welfare efforts of both state and central governments, Rijju highlighted that India's diverse welfare programs benefit everyone, especially minority communities. "We are lucky to be Indian citizens, and we should appreciate the good work being done by the government," he added.

Citing Kerala as an example, where 44% of the population comprises Christians and Muslims, Rijju pointed out that this has led to the implementation of more schemes tailored to the state's demographic needs.

I Made You Chief Minister Twice": Tejashwi Yadav's Retort To Nitish Kumar

TPN Correspondent | Patna

The political sparring between Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) intensified after Kumar claimed he "made Lalu Yadav" Chief Minister. The RJD swiftly responded with vigor, with Tejashwi Yadav, Lalu's son, asserting that it was he who had made Nitish Kumar Chief Minister twice, and senior RJD leader Manoj Jha delivering a sharp critique.

Tejashwi Yadav, addressing a rally in Patna, rejected Kumar's claim and said, "Forget about what Nitish Kumar says. My father, Lalu Ji, had already been elected as an MLA twice and once as an MP long before Nitish Kumar. Lalu Ji has made several Prime Ministers, but I was the one who made Nitish Kumar Chief Minister twice and saved his party." He was referring to the 2015 and 2022 political alignments, when Kumar became CM despite the RJD's higher seat count in both instances.

In 2015, when the Mahagathbandhan



(Grand Alliance) was formed, RJD emerged as the largest party with 80 seats, while JD(U) secured 71. Despite the difference in numbers, the RJD allowed Kumar to retain the Chief Minister position. Then in 2022, after Kumar broke his alliance with the BJP for the second time, Tejashwi Yadav served as his deputy once again, and Kumar was allowed to remain in power. Manoj Jha, another senior RJD leader, questioned Kumar's remarks in the Assembly, stating, "You were once considered Lalu Ji's man, part of his team. It's unfortunate that Nitish Kumar speaks in such a language

now." He also pointed out that Tejashwi Yadav had provided a logical, historical analysis of the situation, while Kumar's response was lacking. Jha further expressed his concern for Kumar, adding, "If such thoughts are occupying your mind now, I'm even more worried for you."

Nitish Kumar had made the claim during his speech in the Bihar Assembly, emphasizing his role in shaping Lalu Yadav's political career. However, the RJD's forceful rebuttal shows that the political battle is far from over.

J&K economy expected to grow at 7.06 % in 2024-25: CM Omar Abdullah

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

India has forecasted a 7.06% growth for Jammu and Kashmir's economy in real terms for the year 2024-25. The survey also expects the nominal Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of J&K to rise by 11.19% during this period.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah presented the Economic Survey Report in the J&K Legislative Assembly on Thursday. According to the report, J&K's nominal GSDP is projected to reach approximately Rs 2,65,389 crore, while the real GSDP is expected to be around Rs 1,44,614 crore for the fiscal year 2024-25.

The survey's positive projections highlight a significant upward trajectory for the state's economy. The expected growth rate of 7.06% comes as a result of improved economic conditions and policy reforms aimed at boosting various sectors, including agriculture, industry, and services. Additionally, the report emphasized the anticipated increase in investments and infrastructure develop-



ment, which is expected to support the overall economic growth.

The growth in nominal GSDP of 11.19% reflects an increase in the prices of goods and services in the region. This is indicative of inflationary trends that are expected to continue into the next year, although the rise in

real GSDP indicates that the region's overall economic output will also see positive growth.

The report also sheds light on key sectors that will contribute to this growth, including improvements in the tourism sector, industrial production, and services. These sectors

are expected to benefit from ongoing developmental programs and the government's focus on economic diversification.

Overall, the Economic Survey provides an optimistic outlook for J&K's economy, signaling a period of steady growth and recovery.

Ukrainian law still prevents Zelenskyy-Putin peace talks, says Kremlin

- Kremlin cites Ukrainian decree as obstacle to peace talks
- Zelenskyy legally barred from negotiating with Putin
- Diplomatic and legal hurdles complicate potential negotiations

TPN Correspondent | Russia

A Ukrainian decree from 2022, which forbids negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, continues to pose a significant challenge to potential peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated on Wednesday. According to Peskov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy remains legally prohibited from engaging in negotiations with Russia, a situation that complicates any efforts to bring an end to the ongoing war.

Peskov acknowledged that it was a positive sign that Zelenskyy had expressed a willingness to negotiate peace with Russia, however, he clarified that "the details have not changed yet," referring to the existing le-



gal restrictions imposed by the Ukrainian decree. This decree, which was issued in 2022, explicitly prevents direct negotiations with the Russian leadership, effectively barring the Ukrainian president from engaging in any peace talks unless the decree is amended or lifted.

The Kremlin spokesperson's remarks underline the significant diplomatic and legal hurdles that must be overcome to facilitate negotiations. Despite Zelenskyy's stated openness to peace talks, the 2022 decree appears to restrict the Ukrainian govern-

ment's ability to take concrete steps toward negotiations.

This situation has raised questions about how peace talks might proceed, and who, if anyone, could serve as a representative from Ukraine in any future dialogue. With both sides continuing to maintain firm positions, the conflict, which began nearly three years ago, shows no signs of abating without some form of negotiation. As international efforts to mediate peace intensify, Peskov's comments highlight the ongoing complexities surrounding the war in Ukraine. The Kremlin's stance indicates that for any meaningful peace talks to take place, significant political and legal adjustments may be required, both within Ukraine and on the international stage.



India Condemns Security Breach During Jaishankar's UK Visit Amid Khalistan Protests

The Indian government strongly condemned a security breach during External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar's visit to the United Kingdom, following a protest by pro-Khalistan separatists outside Chatham House in London. The protest, which took place while Jaishankar was engaged in a diplomatic discussion inside, saw a group of demonstrators waving flags and shouting slogans.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) expressed its disapproval of the "provocative activities" of the separatist group, calling it a misuse of democratic freedoms. "We have seen the footage of a breach of security during the visit of EAM to the UK. We condemn the provocative activities of this small group of separatists and extremists. We deplore the misuse of democratic freedoms by such elements. We expect the host government in such cases to fully live up to their diplomatic obligations," the MEA stated.

Despite the protest, EAM Jaishankar continued with his planned diplomatic engagements, including meetings with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and other senior leaders. On Tuesday, Jaishankar also met with UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, where they discussed various issues, including talent flow, people-to-people exchanges, and joint efforts to combat trafficking and extremism. He later posted on social media about the meeting, emphasizing the productive dialogue.

This protest is not the first instance of Khalistani groups demonstrating in the UK. In January, pro-Khalistan extremists staged a protest outside the Indian High Commission in London, and in another incident, they disrupted the screening of the film *Emergency* at a cinema in Harrow, London.

In response to such actions, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal reiterated India's concerns about the violent protests and intimidation tactics used by "anti-India" groups. "Freedom of speech and expression cannot be applied selectively, and those obstructing it must be held accountable," he stated.

Jaishankar's visit also included talks on the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and bilateral economic cooperation, along with discussions on global issues like the Ukraine conflict.

Israel's Spy Agency Had Warned Of October 7 Attacks 5 Months In Advance

TPN Correspondent | Israel

Israel's internal security agency, Shin Bet, has revealed that it had warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about a potential attack by Hamas at least five months prior to the October 7 assault. The attack, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,200 Israelis, caught Israel off guard despite Shin Bet's knowledge of Hamas's plans. The agency admitted that while it had been aware of the militant group's intentions, it failed to predict the scale, timing, or location of the attack.

Ronen Bar, the chief of Shin Bet, had reportedly told Netanyahu that Hamas posed a significant threat and that Israel needed to prepare for a possible "opening



blow" from the group. However, Netanyahu dismissed these warnings, believing that Hamas had been "deterred" and was unlikely to escalate.

Shin Bet's internal report, which was summarized in an eight-page document, also pointed to several factors contributing to the deadly attack. Among them

was Israel's "policy of quiet" towards Hamas, which Shin Bet argued inadvertently allowed the group to grow stronger. The report further suggested that Netanyahu's decision to allow Qatar to fund Gaza was a contributing factor, as it bolstered Hamas at the expense of efforts to create a Palestinian state.

The Israeli government responded strongly to the Shin Bet report, with Netanyahu's office criticizing Ronen Bar for what they described as a "complete failure" to recognize the threat posed by Hamas. Netanyahu's circle of advisors also dismissed Shin Bet's assessments, claiming the agency misread the intelligence surrounding Hamas's intentions and failed to foresee the scale of the attack.

In the wake of the attack, US President Donald Trump issued a stern warning to Hamas, demanding the release of all hostages and the return of the bodies of those killed. Trump threatened more destruction in Gaza if Hamas failed to comply, reiterating that their actions would have dire consequences.

Donald Trump Offers One-Month Relief For Automakers, Pauses Tariffs

TPN Correspondent | Washington

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.

Hasina's departure, along with many of her aides and those linked to a network of secret jails, has left Bangladesh struggling to address the scope of the alleged crimes. The violent crackdown on protesters in July and August, which resulted in the deaths of up to 1,400 people according to the UN, further escalated tensions. Yunus added that over 1,500 people, including students and workers, were killed during the protests against Hasina's government.

Ukraine Seeks Talks with US After Intelligence Sharing Suspended Amid Rising Tensions

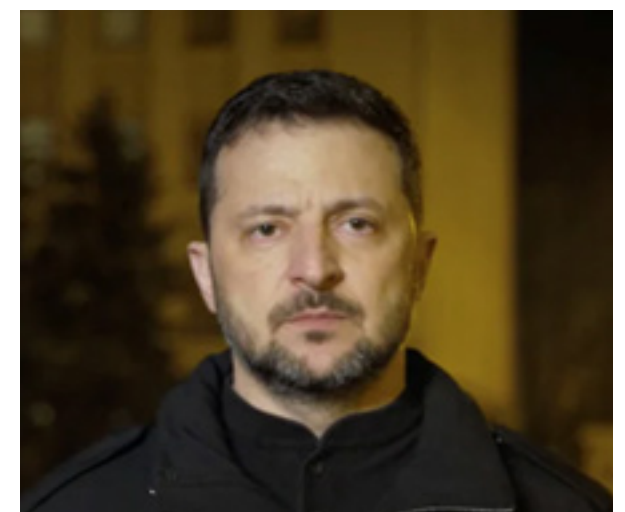
TPN Correspondent | Kyiv

Ukraine announced plans to initiate fresh talks with the United States after Washington suspended its intelligence-sharing with Kyiv, marking a significant setback for Ukraine as it continues its battle against Russia's invasion. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has been trying to manage the fallout from a tense meeting with former US President Donald Trump last week, stated that Ukrainian and American teams have started working on the upcoming discussions, although no specifics regarding the timing or location were provided.

This development follows the US's recent decision to halt military aid to Ukraine, further intensifying fears in Kyiv and across Europe that Ukraine may be forced into a peace agreement that favors Russia. Zelenskyy emphasized that the ultimate goal is a lasting peace, not a temporary ceasefire, and expressed hope that coordinated efforts, particularly with US leadership, could bring an end to the war.

In a parallel development, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that European military forces could be deployed to Ukraine once a peace deal is reached, ensuring that Russia does not invade again. Macron's statement adds another layer of complexity to the ongoing international dialogue surrounding Ukraine's future and the need for robust security guarantees.

Meanwhile, Trump has made ending the war a priority in his foreign policy. In a speech to



the US Congress, he read a letter from Zelenskyy expressing willingness for peace talks, though Trump has not yet outlined a clear plan for such discussions. Zelenskyy has been vocal about seeking security guarantees from the US to prevent future Russian aggression.

On the battlefield, Russia continues its territorial gains, capturing another small village in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. The slow-downs in Russia's advance, as reported by the Institute for the Study of War, reflect a mixed battlefield picture as both sides regroup amidst the shifting diplomatic landscape.

As Zelenskyy prepares for an upcoming Brussels summit, his efforts to maintain Western support and secure a lasting peace remain at the forefront of Ukraine's strategy.

Broad-Based Rally: Sensex Up 609, Nifty Gains 207 as Markets Rebound on Global Recovery Signals



2996 shares were traded, of which 2207 gained and 716 lost. 17 shares touched 52-week highs. 53 stocks touched 52-week lows. A total of 258 shares touched the upper circuit.

The rupee fell 15 paise to settle at 87.11 against the dollar. Shares of Coal India, Amber Enterprises and Varun

Beverages rose 9% on IMD warnings of heatwaves this summer. JPMorgan has given a neutral rating to Wipro with a target price of Rs 290. The government has given permission to AstraZeneca to import zirconium cyclosilicate powder, which is needed to treat hyperkalemia. FADA said that automobile retail sales fell 7% in February due to weak demand. HSBC maintains buy rating on Sun Pharma with a target price of Rs 2000. RailTel Corporation gets orders worth Rs 311 crore. Hindalco, Tata Steel and other metal stocks rose up to 7% on the weakening dollar and hopes of Chinese stimulus. Jefferies maintains buy rating on Cholamandalam Investment with a target price of Rs 1700. 10 lakh shares changed hands in Varun Beverages. Inox India gets orders worth Rs 190 crore. HSBC gives buy rating to Bharti Airtel. 15 lakh shares changed hands in ICICI Bank.

closed at 73,340 with a gain of 609 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,476, touched a low of 22,245 and a high of 22,544, up 207 points. The Nifty Bank rose 137 points to settle at 48,627.

In the Nifty50, 38 companies gained while 12 lost. Except for realty, all sectoral indices rose. Oil and gas, metal, energy, commodities, PSE, pharma, infra, healthcare, FMCG stocks were the top gainers. Asian Paints, Coal India, Hindalco, BPCL, NTPC were the top gainers. TechM, BEL, Trent, Britannia, and Kotak Bank were the biggest losers.

1. Coal India Ltd.

Coal India is the world's largest coal producer and a state-owned enterprise supplying coal primarily to power plants and various industrial

sectors in India. Ongoing domestic demand for coal, government infrastructure spending, and potential export opportunities in a cyclical market. Global transition towards renewable energy, regulatory changes, and environmental concerns. Defensive and stable, Coal India is suited for long-term investors seeking steady cash flows, though its growth may be constrained by energy transition trends.



Coal India Limited

2. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL)

BPCL is a major public sector oil marketing company in India, involved in the distribution of petroleum products across the country. With a focus on efficiency and gradual diversification, BPCL is positioned for steady, long-term performance despite sector-specific challenges.



3. Bharti Airtel Ltd.

Bharti Airtel is one of India's largest telecom operators, providing mobile,



broadband, and digital TV services both domestically and internationally. Generally positive over the long term, with growth opportunities in data services and enterprise solutions, though short-term challenges remain amid competitive pressures.

4. Axis Bank Ltd.



Axis Bank is one of India's leading private sector banks, offering a broad range of services including retail, corporate, and treasury banking. Positive, with strong fundamentals and growth prospects, making it a core pick in the banking sector for long-term investors.

5. JSW Infrastructure Ltd. (JSWINFRA)

JSW Infrastructure is part of the JSW Group and is engaged in developing and managing infrastructure projects, including roads, ports, and urban development initiatives. Positive



for the long term, provided infrastructure spending continues to grow and projects are executed efficiently, making JSW Infrastructure an attractive option for investors focusing on the urban development and construction sectors.

Domestic stock markets gained heavily. They closed on Thursday. Investors reaped profits for the second consecutive day. The indices, which initially hit lows, recovered from mid-session. The reasons for this were crude oil prices, the fall in the value of the dollar and the increase in positive sentiment in the market. Shares of all sectors, except the realty sector, gained. Metals and oil-based shares closed. Market breadth also improved. Overall, the Sensex rose by 609 points and the Nifty by 207 points.

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 73,730 in the previous session, opened at 73,415 on Thursday. It touched an intraday low of 73,415. It reached an intraday high of 74,390. It finally

Market breadth in the NSE today turned in favor of buyers. A total of



MURTHY NAIDU PAADAM
Stock Market Analyst
+91 988 555 9709

India's engineering exports to US touch USD 1.62 billion in Jan



India's engineering goods exports have shown impressive growth in January 2025, continuing their upward trajectory despite challenges in the global market. The country's engineering goods exports to the United States, its top destination, grew by 18 percent year-on-year, reaching \$1.62 billion. Overall, engineering exports in January totaled \$9.42 billion, marking a 7.44 percent growth compared to \$8.77 billion during the same period last year, according to the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) data.

This growth is particularly notable as it comes amid geopolitical tensions and rising global trade protectionism. India's engineering exports have maintained positive growth for nine consecutive months, despite the turmoil caused by ongoing international conflicts and increasing trade restrictions, EEPC India Chairman Pankaj Chadha highlighted.

Chadha emphasized the resilience of the engineering export sector, noting that this growth has occurred in the face of global uncertainties, such as the announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump to increase tariffs on Indian exports starting April 2, as part of a reciprocal tariff policy. He acknowledged the evolving global trade environment, where new challeng-

es, including nationalistic trade policies, are putting significant pressure on businesses. Chadha stressed the importance of continuous government support, particularly in export credit and technology, to maintain India's competitiveness in global markets.

Among India's major engineering export destinations, countries such as Germany, Mexico, Turkey, South Africa, France, Japan, Nepal, and Bangladesh experienced positive growth in January. However, exports to the UK, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, China, Italy, and Spain recorded a decline.

January's growth was mainly driven by exports in sectors like aircraft, spacecraft and parts, electrical machinery and equipment, automobiles and auto components, industrial machinery, iron and steel products, and medical and scientific instruments.

Cumulatively, India's engineering exports reached \$96.75 billion in the April-January period of FY25, reflecting a 9.82 percent increase from the previous year. Engineering goods accounted for 25.86 percent of India's total merchandise exports in January, underlining the sector's crucial role in India's economy.

India's GDP Growth Projected at 6.5% for FY2026 Amid Geopolitical and Trade Challenges

India's real GDP growth is expected to remain steady at 6.5% in fiscal year 2026, despite challenges arising from geopolitical uncertainties and trade-related issues, including the US tariff actions, according to a report by Crisil Intelligence released on Thursday.

Crisil's forecast for India's economy relies on two primary factors: the continuation of normal monsoons and the expectation that commodity prices will stay soft, helping to stabilize food prices. The report also highlights that lower borrowing costs, cooling food inflation, and tax benefits announced in the Union Budget 2025-2026 are likely to boost discretionary consumption.

Crisil Intelligence noted that India's growth is returning to pre-pandemic levels as fiscal impulse normalizes and the high-base effect fades. Despite this, high-frequency Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)



data shows India's economic resilience, with the country continuing to lead among major economies.

Amish Mehta, Managing Director and CEO of Crisil Ltd., emphasized that India's resilience is being tested, but the country has built safeguards over the past few years against external shocks, such as strong economic growth, a low current account deficit, manageable external public debt, and adequate foreign exchange reserves. These factors provide India with ample policy flexibility. Mehta also pointed out that consumption-driven

rural and urban demand will be crucial for short-term growth.

In the medium term, continued investments and efficiency improvements are expected to drive growth. Crisil forecasts that the manufacturing sector will grow at an average rate of 9% annually from fiscal 2025 to fiscal 2031, up from 6% in the pre-pandemic decade. The services sector, while growing at a slower pace, will remain a major driver of overall economic growth. Consequently, the share of manufacturing in GDP is projected to rise to 20% by fiscal 2025, up from 17%.

Looking ahead, Crisil predicts continued easing of food inflation, which will help moderate overall inflation. In fiscal 2025, inflation decreased mainly due to lower non-food inflation, although food inflation saw an uptick. The agency also anticipates another 50-75 basis point reduction in rates in the coming fiscal year.

Reliance Industries Faces \$2.81 Billion Demand in Natural Gas Dispute After Delhi HC Ruling

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) is facing a \$2.81 billion demand from the government following a favorable ruling from the Delhi High Court in a longstanding natural gas migration dispute.

The company, along with its partner BP, is accused of selling gas that allegedly migrated from the adjoining block of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).

The dispute dates back to 2016 when the government raised an initial claim of \$1.55 billion against RIL and its partners. The government had argued that part of the gas sold from RIL's KG-D6 block in the Bay of Bengal had, in fact, migrated from

ONGC's block KG-DWN-98/2, which is adjacent to RIL's operations.

On February 14, 2025, the Delhi High Court issued a significant ruling, overturning an international arbitration tribunal's decision that had cleared RIL and BP of any liability. The tribunal had earlier ruled that RIL and BP were not responsible for any compensation to the government for the sale of the gas. However, the court's decision has now paved the way for the government to raise a new demand of \$2.81 billion, which RIL has contested.

In response to the ruling, RIL issued a statement on Tuesday, asserting that it had received legal advice stating that both the judg-

ment from the Delhi High Court and the provisional demand by the Petroleum Ministry were "unsustainable." The company emphasized that it is taking legal steps to challenge the judgment and has no expectation of any liability arising from the demand notice.

The dispute centers around the extraction and sale of gas from RIL's KG-D6 block, with the government claiming that part of the gas originated from the ONGC block, which is located adjacent to RIL's territory. The case has been a contentious one for several years, and this new development marks another chapter in the ongoing legal battle between the company and the government.

Elon Musk's 'Hitler-Like' Haircut Leaves Internet Divided

Elon Musk's latest haircut has caused quite a stir online, with social media buzzing over his new look. While many assumed the billionaire entrepreneur had just debuted a fresh style this year, it turns out the haircut actually dates back to 2021, when Musk reportedly gave himself the cut. However, the image has resurfaced, and the internet has gone wild with reactions.



The picture, showing Musk sporting a distinct undercut, has been widely shared from different angles, attracting millions of views. What has really caught attention, though, is the internet's reaction to his new style. Some users took the opportunity to compare Musk's haircut to that of infamous figures like Adolf Hitler and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un. One Twitter user humorously wrote, "Elon's Barber was like POINT TO WHAT YOU WANT!" while others joked, "I did not have Elon going with the full Kim Jong Un haircut on my bingo card." Another cheeky comment described the look as a mix of Kim Jong Un, Hitler, and 90s band Depeche Mode.

The jokes didn't stop there. Some users took it a step further, comparing Musk's hairstyle to that of a Wehrmacht sol-

dier, while others even likened him to Zorg, the villain from *The Fifth Element* portrayed by Gary Oldman. "Zorg was way cooler than Elon, come on man," one user quipped.

This all stems from a 2021 moment when Musk shared a photo of himself with the unique haircut and jokingly wrote, "Did it myself." His hair has been a topic of conversation for years, from his receding hairline to his gradually fuller mane in recent years. Musk himself has joked about the power of wealth in reversing hair loss, once commenting, "What's amazing is how net worth makes your hair grow," in reference to a viral video documenting his hair growth journey.

Musk's hair may be just one part of his multifaceted public persona, but the reactions to his cut show how his every move continues to keep the internet entertained.

Vatican City: The Country Without a Hospital or Births for 96 Years



Vatican City, the smallest country in the world, has a unique distinction – no child has been born there for the past 96 years. This anomaly is particularly surprising, given that Vatican City is located in the heart of Rome, one of the most developed cities in the world. However, this tiny state, home to the head of the Roman Catholic Church, faces a stark contrast to countries like India, where family planning slogans such as "Hum Do, Humare Do" play a significant role in shaping the nation's demographic.

Vatican City, established on February 11, 1929, has never constructed a hospital. Despite various requests over the years, there has been no push to build one, meaning that critically ill individuals or expect-

ant mothers must travel to nearby Rome for medical treatment. The lack of a hospital is not due to a lack of resources but is a result of Vatican City's limited size – it spans just 118 acres – and the presence of high-quality healthcare facilities in Rome.

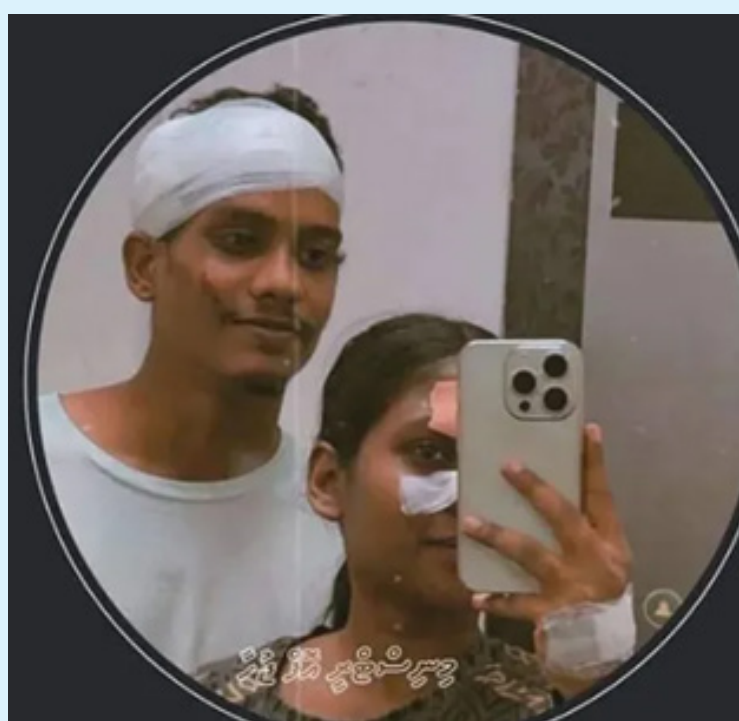
This lack of medical infrastructure also explains why no births have occurred in the country since its establishment. Vatican City, with a population of around 800-900 people, is primarily home to senior Roman Catholic clergy. The absence of a maternity ward in the country means that any childbirth must take place outside its borders.

Despite its small size, Vatican City experiences a surprisingly high

crime rate compared to other nations. This is mainly due to the millions of tourists who visit the area, often becoming targets for petty crimes like pickpocketing, purse snatching, and shoplifting.

Interestingly, Vatican City is also home to the world's smallest railway station, Citta Vaticano. Originally built during the reign of Pope Pius XI, this station is designated for cargo transportation and is not used for passenger trains.

Apart from Vatican City, the Pitcairn Islands, a British overseas territory, and Antarctica – a research-focused continent – also have rare occurrences of births, making Vatican City's 96-year record a truly unique one.



Internet Irked By Couples "First Accident With Bae" Post

A Facebook post from a young couple celebrating an unusual milestone has gone viral, drawing mixed reactions from social media users. The image, which showed the couple with visible injuries—bandages on the man's head and on the woman's forehead, nose, and hands—was captioned humorously as their "first accident with bae." Rather than the expected concern for their well-being, the post quickly garnered a flood of congratulatory messages, with friends and followers treating the accident

as another "relationship milestone."

While some users enjoyed the lighthearted tone, others were quick to criticize the couple's decision to frame such a serious situation as a celebration. The debate sparked discussions on social media, with some arguing that today's youth are increasingly prioritizing social media validation over more meaningful aspects of life. On the other hand, some defended the couple, suggesting that embracing both the good and bad

moments together is what love is truly about.

One user commented, "True love is when even accidents come in a couple goals package!" while another user added, "Next level dating," showing approval for the couple's playful take on the situation. Meanwhile, others expressed their disapproval. "I'm done here, that was my last nerve," one user wrote, while another jokingly said, "I'm waiting for the second one."

The post highlights a broader trend on social media, where even the most unconventional moments, like accidents or mishaps, are shared for public approval, often blurring the line between personal experiences and social media performance. Some view this as a reflection of shifting values among young people who seek validation online, while others see it as a fun and relatable way to cope with difficult situations.

Ultimately, the post served as a reminder of the diverse ways people express their relationships and emotions, leaving the internet divided on whether it was a fun celebration or a sign of misplaced priorities.

AI Video Of Mini Human Figures 'Making' Various Types Of Mithai Gets Over 16 Million Views

An AI-generated video showcasing miniature human figures crafting traditional Indian sweets has taken the internet by storm, garnering over 16 million views. Shared by the Instagram account @the.aiengineer, the reel features tiny human-like characters handling large-scale versions of popular mithai such as jalebis, rasgullas, gulab jamuns, laddoos, kaju katlis, and more.

In the viral video, these miniature figures are seen wearing outfits similar to construction workers and appear to be busy 'creating' the sweets. The footage shows them stacking glistening jalebis, shaping laddoos, and even floating rasgullas in a pond of chaasni (sugar syrup) as they row a boat. The AI video brings a whimsical touch to the process, with the miniature workers using cranes, ladders, and other machinery to cart ingredients like dry fruits and nuts, assemble the sweets, and even cook them.

What makes the video particularly fascinating is the way the sweets are presented on an exaggerated scale, much larger than the miniature human figures, adding a surreal quality to the animation. The characters' work is also depicted with a sense of teamwork, as they operate various tools and machinery, giving a playful yet impressive glimpse of what goes into creat-



ing these beloved Indian treats.

The video is just one of many AI-generated food videos that have gone viral recently, contributing to the growing trend of using artificial intelligence to create imaginative and engaging content. Some of these videos have sparked debates about the future of creative industries, while others have simply delighted viewers with their unique and entertaining concepts.

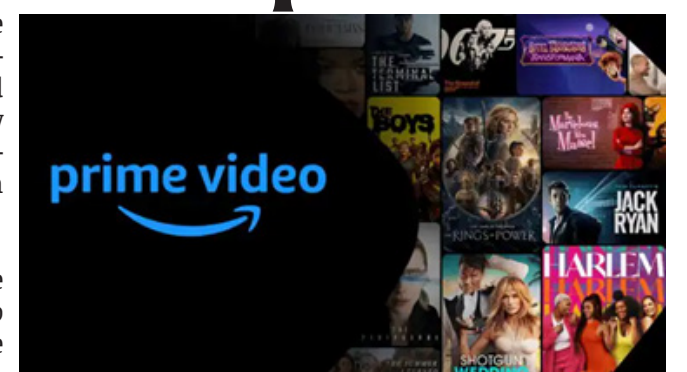
This AI video of mini humans making mithai has captured the hearts of social media users, celebrating traditional Indian sweets in a fun and creative way, and further proving the potential of AI in art and entertainment.

Amazon Prime Video Launches AI-Aided Dubbing in English and Spanish

Amazon Prime Video has announced the rollout of AI-powered dubbing for its licensed movies and series in English and Spanish, starting Wednesday. This new feature aims to enhance the viewing experience, increase accessibility, and broaden the platform's reach to a global audience.

Initially, the AI dubbing will be available on 12 licensed movies and series that do not already offer dubbing support. Prime Video's decision to introduce this technology is seen as a move to boost viewership by making content more accessible to non-native speakers and expanding its international appeal. The service will now provide dubbed versions of select titles in English and Spanish, two widely spoken languages, allowing more customers around the world to enjoy the content.

This artificial intelligence-based dubbing system is designed to offer a seamless and natural voiceover experience. With the increasing popularity of streaming platforms, Amazon's new feature is expected to meet the growing demand for localized content and make it easier for viewers in different regions to enjoy Prime Video's diverse library.



Prime Video's AI dubbing system marks a significant step in the integration of AI technology within the entertainment industry. By leveraging AI, the platform aims to improve the quality of dubbing while reducing the cost and time typically associated with traditional voiceover production.

The feature is initially limited to 12 titles, but Amazon plans to expand the availability of AI dubbing to more content in the future, allowing more viewers to engage with a wider range of movies and series on Prime Video. This move is part of Amazon's broader strategy to continue enhancing user experience and increasing the accessibility of its content to a global audience.



FIFA Announces \$1 Billion Prize Money for Club World Cup



FIFA has revealed a record-breaking \$1 billion prize pool for the upcoming expanded Club World Cup, set to take place in the United States from June 14 to July 13 this year. This tournament, featuring 32 teams, will be held every four years and is expected to generate \$2 billion in revenue. FIFA president Gianni Infantino emphasized that all tournament revenue will be distributed to the participating clubs and global solidarity initia-

tives. The prize money surpasses the amounts awarded in both the 2022 men's World Cup (\$440 million) and the 2023 Women's World Cup (\$110 million). FIFA has secured major sponsors and a broadcasting deal worth around \$1.05 billion with DAZN. Despite excitement around the event, the expansion has faced criticism over player welfare, with some fearing the packed football calendar.

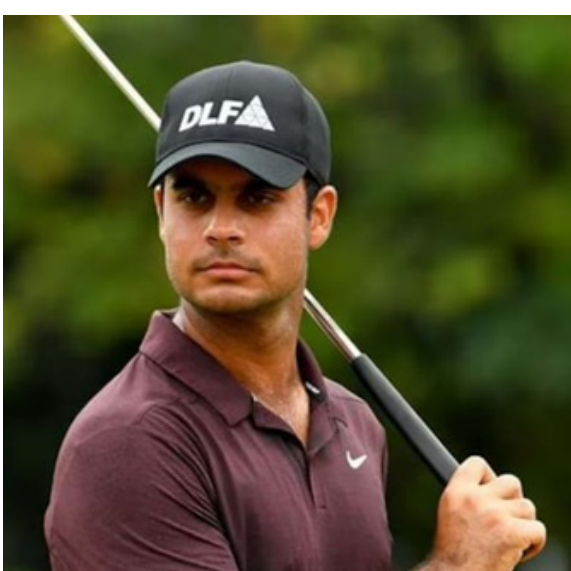


17-Time WWE Champion to Join The Rock and John Cena as 'Third Man' at Wrestlemania 41?

John Cena, after 20 years as WWE's hero, is turning heel and aligning with The Rock, aiming for a 17th WWE Championship. Cena is set to face Cody Rhodes for the Undisputed WWE Championship at Wrestlemania 41. Recent reports suggest that Charlotte Flair, the 17-time WWE Champion, could join them as the "Third Man" of

their alliance, much like Hulk Hogan did in WCW in 1996. Flair, who is set to challenge for the WWE Women's Championship at Wrestlemania 41, may team up with Cena and The Rock after winning the 2025 Women's Royal Rumble. Flair, inspired by Cena's legacy, could follow his footsteps to cement her dominance in WWE.

Shubhankar Sharma to Lead India's Challenge at 2025 Indian Open



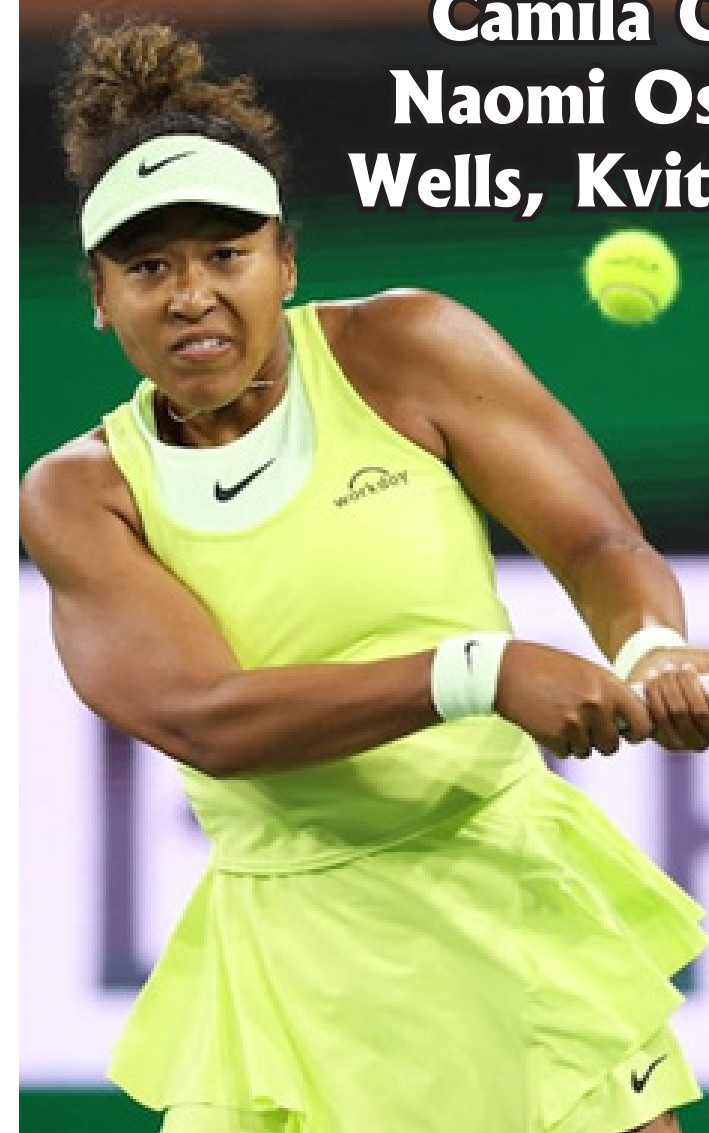
Two-time DP World Tour winner Shubhankar Sharma, along with last year's runner-up Veer Ahlawat, will headline a strong Indian contingent at the 2025 Hero Indian Open, held at the DLF Golf and Country Club, Gurugram from March 27 to 30. Other Indian participants include Shiv Kapur, Manu Gandas, and teen prodigy Kartik Singh, who has been in impressive form recently. Defending champion Keita Nakajima of Japan will lead the international challenge, joined by notable names like Marcel Siem and Guido Migliozzi. The tournament, co-sanctioned by the Indian Golf Union, offers the Indian Tour winner a full DP World Tour card. The Hero Indian Open is a key event in the Asian Swing and has been pivotal in showcasing Indian golf talent.

US Confirms Joint Bid for 2031 Women's World Cup After FIFA Decision

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) has confirmed its joint bid with CONCACAF to host the 2031 Women's World Cup, following a recent FIFA decision that increased the chances for the CONCACAF region to stage the tournament. Initially, the US and Mexico had planned to bid for the 2027 World Cup but withdrew to focus on 2031, which was later awarded to Brazil. FIFA has narrowed the contenders for 2031 to North America (CONCACAF) and Africa (CAF), with South Africa and Morocco also in the running. A North American bid is seen as commercially appealing due to the region's track record of high attendance at major events. The 2031 decision will be made at FIFA's 76th Congress ahead of the 2026 World Cup.



Camila Osorio Shocks Naomi Osaka at Indian Wells, Kvitova Also Out



Naomi Osaka was defeated 6-4, 6-4 by Camila Osorio in the first round of Indian Wells on Wednesday. This marked Osaka's return to tennis after an injury kept her out of the Australian Open. Struggling with her serve, the former world number one was outplayed by Osorio, who took advantage of a break in both sets to claim her first-ever victory at Indian Wells. Osaka admitted she had "chances to be in the match" but felt off due to limited practice. Meanwhile, Petra Kvitova, also returning after giving birth, was ousted by Varvara Gracheva 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. Other notable results included Caroline Garcia's win and Nishikori's victory over Jaume Munar. All 32 seeds received first-round byes in this ATP and WTA 1000 event.

Greater Noida to Host 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championship from March 21



The 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championship will take place at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida from March 21-27, featuring around 300 of India's top women boxers. Organized by the UP Boxing Association and the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), the championship will see intense competition to crown national champions. The event, crucial for Olympic preparations,

will also serve as a platform for identifying future talent. Matches will follow a three-round format, and over 100 coaches and 60 officials will support the competition. Defending champions Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) aim to retain their title after their dominant performance last year, where they clinched five golds. The tournament is expected to be a major spectacle for the sport.



Priyanka Chopra Refused to Wear Two-Piece at Miss World, Says Mother

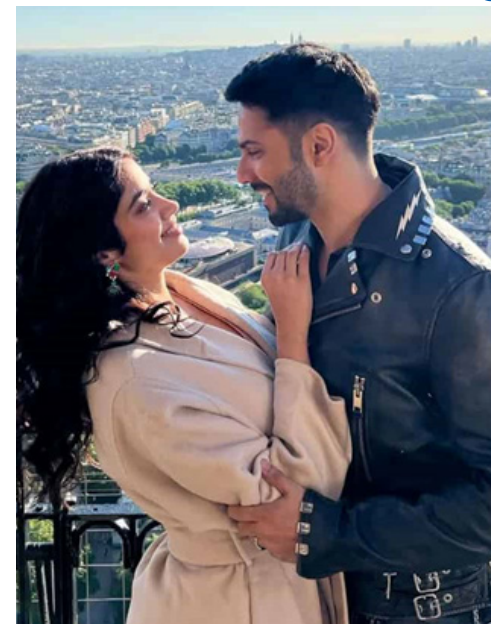
Priyanka Chopra's mother, Dr. Madhu Chopra, revealed in a recent interview that Priyanka refused to wear a two-piece swimsuit during the 2000 Miss World competition. Madhu explained that Priyanka maintained her dignity and professionalism by rejecting the organizers' request, earning their respect. Despite this, Priyanka went on to win the Miss World crown that year after losing the Miss India pageant to Lara Dutta. Madhu also shared her admiration for Priyanka's relationship with Nick Jonas, saying she loves him and that age is just a number in their bond. Priyanka and Nick married in 2018 and have a daughter, Malti Marie. Priyanka is reportedly joining SS Rajamouli's upcoming project, though no official confirmation has been made.

Nayanthara's Thriller Movie 'Test' to Stream on Netflix

Nayanthara's thriller movie *Test*, which was initially not released in theaters, will now directly stream on Netflix. Set to begin streaming on April 4, the movie is a sports drama directed by Shashikanth. The story unfolds during a test cricket match in Chennai, where three individuals attending the match get entangled in a series of challenges. The film stars Nayanthara, Madhavan, and Siddharth in pivotal roles, with Meera Jasmine appearing in a special role. Fans of Nayanthara, especially in Tamil Nadu, are eagerly anticipating the movie's OTT release. With the hype surrounding the actress, *Test* promises to keep viewers on the edge of their seats as they witness the characters navigate unexpected troubles.



Varun Dhawan Wishes Janhvi Kapoor on Her Birthday Ahead of New Film



Varun Dhawan shared a heartfelt birthday wish for Janhvi Kapoor on Instagram, celebrating her special day with a sweet note, "Happy birthday tulusi Love sunny." The post, featuring a candid picture of the two on a balcony, marks the growing camaraderie between the two stars ahead of their upcoming film *Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari*. This rom-com, which is set to be their second collaboration after *Bawaal* (2023), is produced by Karan Johar and directed by Shashank Khaitan. The movie, originally scheduled for release in April 2025, has now been delayed to the second half of 2025 due to an extended shoot. Janhvi is also receiving birthday wishes from industry friends, including a customized dog-themed cake from her co-star Rohit Saraf, further adding to the birthday celebrations.

Farah Khan on Reuniting with Salman Khan for 'Sikandar' Song



Filmmaker-choreographer Farah Khan shared her excitement about reuniting with Salman Khan for the song Zohra Jabeen from his upcoming film *Sikandar*. Speaking about the experience, she revealed how special it was to choreograph him after several years and praised Rashmika Mandanna for being a pleasure to work with. The song, composed by Pritam and sung by Nakash

Aziz and Dev Negi, showcases Salman's dance moves and chemistry with Mandanna. Farah expressed her joy on Instagram, sharing, "Had too much fun choreographing @beingsalmankhan & @rashmika_mandanna for #sikandar." *Sikandar* marks Salman's highly anticipated return to the big screen after his 2023 release *Tiger 3* and is set to hit cinemas on March 31, coinciding with Eid al-Fitr.

Abhishek Bachchan Calls 'I Want To Talk' an Incredibly Special Journey

Abhishek Bachchan, nominated for Best Actor at the 7th Critics' Choice Awards for *I Want To Talk*, expressed his gratitude for the recognition. He described the film as an "incredibly special journey" and thanked the Film Critics Guild for honoring his performance. Directed by Shoojit Sircar, the film is based on the true story of Arjun Sen, a cancer survivor facing a life-changing surgery while navigating a



complex relationship with his daughter. Meanwhile, Konkona Sen Sharma, nominated for Best Actress for *Killer Soup*, shared her excitement about the recognition. The black comedy crime thriller series, directed by Abhishek Chaubey, is inspired by a 2017 Telangana case. The Critics' Choice Awards, this year adding a category for documentaries, celebrates excellence across various Indian cinematic formats.

Nayanthara Fasts for a Month to Play Amman in 'Mookuthi Amman 2'

Actress Nayanthara is taking her role in *Mookuthi Amman 2* to the next level by fasting for a month, a practice she followed for the first part of the film as well. Producer Ishari K Ganesh shared this detail during the official pooja function for the film, highlighting Nayanthara's dedication to portraying the goddess Amman. He also revealed that the decision to cast Nayanthara as the titular role was unanimous, given the film's connection to their family deity. The second part of the film is being directed by Sundar C, who is known as the "Franchise King." The film will also feature Regina Cassandra, Duniya Vijay, Yogi Babu, and others. With a pan-Indian appeal, *Mookuthi Amman 2* is set to have a grand budget, exceeding 100 crores, and will feature music by Hip Hop Tamizha.

