



Weather Forecast

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

CM Siddaramaiah Presents ₹4.09 Lakh Crore Karnataka Budget For 2025 - 2026

₹4.09 lakh crore total budget outlay for 2025-26

₹51,034 crore allocated for five guarantee schemes

₹45,286 crore for education sector initiatives

Puttur to get government medical college

New fisheries policy announced for sustainable fishing

EV infrastructure expansion and green hydrogen project delayed



though several ambitious targets from the previous year remain unmet.

A key allocation of ₹51,034 crore has been set aside for the government's five flagship guarantee schemes, slightly reduced from ₹56,000 crore in 2024-25. The Gruha Lakshmi scheme, providing ₹2,000 monthly assistance to women heads of families, received ₹28,068 crore, benefiting 1.22 crore households. The Gruha Jyothi free electricity scheme's outlay rose to ₹10,100 crore, while the Shakti free bus travel scheme for women received ₹5,500 crore. In the education sector, ₹45,286 crore has been earmarked — nearly 10% of the total budget — highlighting the state's focus on improving schools, colleges, and higher education infrastructure. The long-pending demand for a government medical college in Puttur, Dakshina Kannada, was also approved, with plans to upgrade the existing 100-bed Taluk Hospital to support the new institution. Around 40 acres in Bannur have been reserved for the project. The energy sector, however, saw slow progress in key ar-

reas. Karnataka continues to lead in public EV charging stations, but plans to expand charging infrastructure across highways and key hubs faced delays due to land availability issues and low private participation.

The much-publicized green hydrogen project, aimed at boosting renewable energy storage, also failed to take off due to high costs and technical hurdles.

In the renewable energy space, moderate progress was seen under the Kusum B and C schemes, which promote solar-powered irrigation pump-sets. However, the ambitious target to solarise 4.30 lakh pump-sets fell short, partly due to reduced demand following a good monsoon. To accelerate solar capacity, tenders were floated for 100 MW floating and ground-mounted solar projects in Raichur and Ballari, with Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) partnering with Tehri Hydro Development Corporation India Limited. The fisheries sector received a boost with the announcement of a new Fisheries Policy, promoting sustainable fishing and marine resource protection. A budget of ₹3,977 crore was allocated to animal husbandry and fisheries, including ₹30 crore for fishing link roads, relaxed boat length norms for deep-sea fishing, and plans for a hi-tech Matsya Darshini in Mysuru to promote fish delicacies. Revenue generation targets include ₹1.2 lakh crore from commercial taxes, ₹40,000 crore from excise, and ₹28,000 crore from stamps and registration. The fiscal deficit for 2025-26 stands at ₹90,428 crore, or 2.95% of GSDP, with total liabilities at ₹7.64 lakh crore.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented the Karnataka Budget 2025-26 with a total outlay of ₹4.09 lakh crore, balancing welfare initiatives, rural infrastructure, renewable energy goals, and fiscal discipline. This marks Siddaramaiah's 16th budget, focusing heavily on welfare, education, and energy transition,

Lokayukta Raids Expose Rs 36.53 Crore Disproportionate Assets Across Karnataka

- Raids at over 40 locations statewide
- 8 government officials found with massive DA
- Bengaluru officials among top accused

In Bengaluru, T D Nanjundappa, Chief Engineer, Panchayat Raj Department, was found with DA worth Rs 8.46 crore, including nine sites, three houses, 1.20 crore worth of agricultural land, ornaments worth Rs 56 lakh, and vehicles valued at Rs 39.40 lakh. Another Bengaluru official, H B Kalleshappa, Executive Engineer, BBMP, was found in possession of Rs 6.50 crore DA, including two sites, two houses, agricultural land, Rs 70 lakh worth household articles, and vehicles worth Rs 35.15 lakh. Nagaraj G, Assistant Engineer, BESCOM, was found with Rs 2.18 crore DA, including two sites, a house, 10 acres and 30 guntas of agricultural land, and movable assets worth Rs 60.98 lakh, including ornaments worth Rs 20 lakh. In Kalaburagi, Jagannath, Project Implementation Unit, State Highway Development Project, was allegedly found with Rs 4.55

crore DA, including two sites, two houses, 48 acres of land, and ornaments worth Rs 72 lakh. In Davanagere, Dr. Nagaraj J S, Designated Officer, Food Safety Department, possessed Rs 6.14 crore DA, including four houses, a site, three acres of land, and ornaments worth Rs 94.20 lakh. In Tumakuru, Dr. Jagadeesh P, Medical Officer, Tavarekere PHC, allegedly held Rs 3.11 crore DA, including five sites, four houses, 14 acres and 30 guntas of land, and ornaments worth Rs 87.56 lakh. In Bagalkote, Mallappa Sabanna Durgad, FDA, Panchayat Raj Engineering Unit, had Rs 1.92 crore DA, while in Vijayapura, Shivanand Shivashankar Kembavi, FDA, Karnataka Housing Board, possessed Rs 3.64 crore DA. Lokayukta officials have filed cases against all accused and further investigation is underway.

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

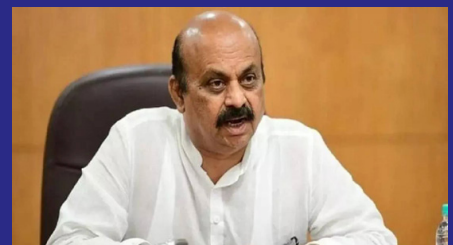
The Karnataka Lokayukta police, in a major statewide operation, conducted simultaneous raids at over 40 locations across Karnataka on Thursday, exposing disproportionate assets (DA) worth Rs 36.53 crore held by eight government officials across multiple districts, including Bengaluru, Kalaburagi, Davanagere, Tumakuru, Bagalkote, and Vijayapura.

Bangalore City University to be Renamed After Former PM Manmohan Singh: CM Siddaramaiah



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Karnataka Budget Imposes Financial Burden on People: Former CM Basavaraj



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BJP Walks Out as Karnataka Assembly Passes Bangalore Palace Bill

- Bill avoids issuing ₹3,400 crore TDR
- Government cites costliest road risk
- BJP alleges vendetta against royal family

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Friday passed the Bangalore Palace (Acquisition and Transfer) Bill, 2025, amid a walkout by BJP legislators. The Bill empowers the state government to drop portions of land required for road widening projects on the disputed Bangalore Palace property, following a Supreme Court directive to issue Transferable Development Rights (TDR) worth ₹3,400 crore to the erstwhile Mysuru royal family. The Bill was introduced by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil, on behalf of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who justified the move, stating that complying with the Supreme Court order would make Bengaluru's road widening projects the costliest in the world.

"The court wants us to issue TDR at ₹200 crore per acre. This would make future infrastructure development unsustainable and hinder Bengaluru's growth," Siddaramaiah said. He further cited Article 39(c) of the Constitution, stressing that such a concentration of wealth would go against the common good.

The TDR certificates pertain to 15 acres of land earmarked for widening Ballari Road and Jayamahall



Road. To bypass the financial and legal complications, the new Bill grants the government the authority to drop disputed land parcels from infrastructure projects within the palace premises.

The BJP strongly opposed the move, with leaders like Arvind Bellad and B Y Vijayendra accusing the government of vendetta politics against the royal family, particularly targeting BJP MP Yaduveer Wadiyar.

In response, Labour Minister Santosh Lad pointed out that the previous BJP government had also dropped a proposal to issue TDR to the royal family. A S Ponnana, the Chief Minister's legal advisor, further revealed that the BJP cabinet had taken a similar stand during its tenure.

Following an hour-long debate, the BJP staged a walkout before the Bill was passed.

This development came a day after the Karnataka cabinet agreed to conditionally deposit ₹3,400 crore worth of TDR in the Supreme Court.

Karnataka HC Criticises NWKRTC for Contradictory Stance in Accident Case

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has strongly criticised the North Western Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) for adopting contradictory positions in a case involving its own driver, Hussainsab, who was accused of negligent driving in a fatal road accident.

The case dates back to March 24, 2013, when Hussainsab, while driving a bus between Belagavi and Hubballi, was allegedly responsible for the death of a motorcycle rider due to rash and negligent driving. Following the incident, NWKRTC initiated disciplinary proceedings against him, ultimately leading to his dismissal from service.

However, during parallel proceedings before the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Tribunal (MVACT), NWKRTC defended the driver, arguing that he was driving properly and was not at fault for the accident. This contradictory stance — defending the driver in the tribunal while dismissing him in disciplinary proceedings — drew strong criticism from the High Court.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj, dismissing



NWKRTC's petition challenging the Labour Court's order reinstating the driver, observed that a government entity like NWKRTC is expected to act as a model litigant. He noted that taking two contradictory positions in separate proceedings — one absolving the driver and the other blaming him — was legally unsustainable and indicative of mala fide intent.

The Labour Court had ruled in favour of Hussainsab on September 25, 2019, leading NWKRTC to approach the High Court. However, the High Court upheld the Labour Court's order, holding that NWKRTC's approach violated principles of fairness and transparency expected from public institutions.

MUDA Scam Case: Karnataka HC Quashes ED Summons to CM Siddaramaiah's Wife

- HC quashes ED summons in MUDA case
- Siddaramaiah and wife given clean chit by Lokayukta
- Allegations linked to 2020-21 BJP tenure



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
The Karnataka High Court on Friday quashed the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) summons to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi B M and Minister B S Suresh in connection with the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam case.

In February 2025, the Karnataka Lokayukta police gave a clean chit to both Siddaramaiah and Parvathi B M, citing lack of evidence in the alleged land scam. The case stems from complaints filed by anti-corruption activists — T J Abraham, Snehamayi Krishna, and Pradeep Kumar — who alleged that 14 housing sites in Mysuru were illegally allotted to Parvathi B M under MUDA's

50:50 scheme in exchange for 3.16 acres of land allegedly acquired illegally. The scheme, introduced in 2020, was intended to compensate landowners whose lands were taken without proper notification. The Congress party and Siddaramaiah have denied all allegations, pointing out that the scheme and land allotment decisions took place during BJP's tenure in 2020-21.

The activists' complaint questioned the original ownership of the 3.16-acre land parcel, which was acquired by Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law in 2004 and gifted to Parvathi in 2010, prior to MUDA's acquisition. With the ED summons quashed, Siddaramaiah received major legal relief, though activists continue to press for further investigation into land ownership records and MUDA's processes.

Proposal Sent to Centre to Develop Karnataka's Temples Under PRASHAD - Minister HK Patil

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has submitted a proposal to the Union Tourism Department under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme for the development of temples in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, Tourism Minister HK Patil informed the Legislative Council. A total of 16 proposals have been submitted, covering development of basic facilities such as cloakrooms, restrooms, tourist information centres, parking spaces, lighting, pathways, seating, drinking water facilities, helipads, craft centres, and even heritage walks and mobile app development at key religious sites.

Of these, three proposals have already been approved:

- Rs 18 crore for Sri Renuka Yellamma Temple at Sava-

datti in Belagavi

- Rs 20 crore for Papanash Shiv Temple in Bidar
- Rs 45 crore for Chammundeshwari Temple in Mysuru

Patil said around 12 more proposals are in the pipeline and will soon be sent to the Centre for approval.

Additionally, the state government will develop the Mata Manikeswari Temple in Yanagundi, Gurmitakal, into a tourist destination.

Highlighting the historical and spiritual significance of the site, Patil noted that Mata Manikeswari, a renowned yogini, had lived without food and water for nearly 40 years. Patil assured that adequate financial assistance will be provided and the government will focus on developing several other holy sites to promote religious and cultural tourism across the state.

In Karnataka Budget New Tech, Micro Irrigation, Renewed Focus on Agriculture Sector

TPN Correspondent | Kalaburagi

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented the 2025-26 state budget on Friday, placing strong emphasis on mechanisation, research, integrated farming and water management to boost the agriculture sector.

The budget earmarks Rs 428 crore to assist 50,000 farmers under the farm mechanisation scheme, while Rs 440 crore will benefit 1.81 lakh farmers adopting micro irrigation in rain-fed areas. An additional Rs 88 crore has been allocated to promote tur crop expansion through new technology adoption. Joida taluk in Uttara Kannada district is set to become the state's first organic taluk, encouraging sustainable organic farming. Other initiatives include developing integrated farming system plots across 10 agro-climatic zones, setting up 5,000 micro-food processing units, and constructing 12,000 farm ponds.

To enhance research capabilities, 58 agriculture laboratories will be upgraded with advanced equipment. A plant phenotyping facility will be established at Gandhi Krishi Vignana Kendra, Bengaluru, to develop drought and disease-resistant crop varieties. The government will partner



with sugar factories to promote integrated soil and water management across 3,000 hectares in Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Kalaburagi, and Mandya.

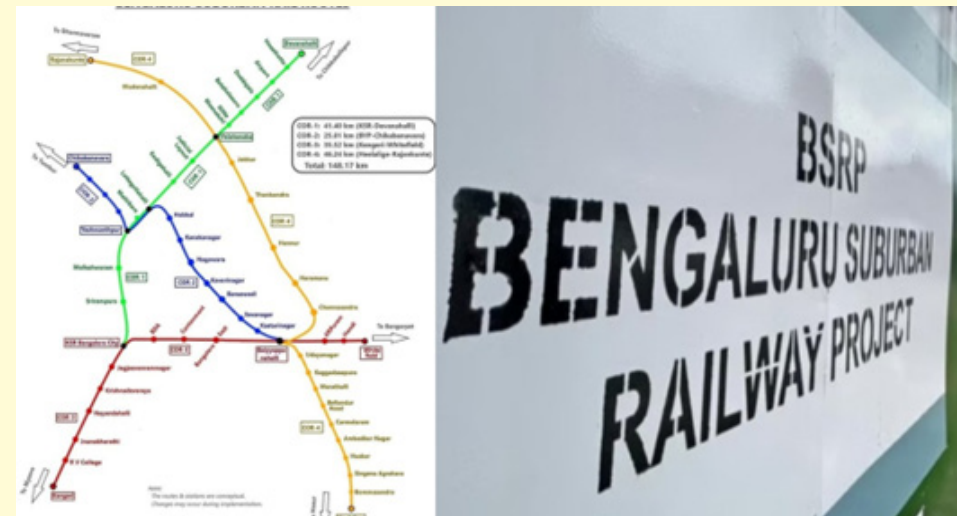
In horticulture, the Comprehensive Horticulture Development Scheme 2.0 will receive Rs 95 crore, while a seed bank will conserve 20 GI-tagged crops. A Knowledge Cell, supported by Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology and private players, will provide real-time data on crop health and market trends.

The budget also sets aside Rs 426 crore for micro irrigation, Rs 62 crore for arecanut leaf spot disease control, and funds for Byadagi chilli protection research.

In sericulture, Karnataka will establish a silk cocoon market in Mysuru, allocate Rs 55 crore for silk development, and take up Rs 250 crore projects for hi-tech silk markets at Ramnagar and Sidlaghatta.

Bengaluru Suburban Rail, Key Allocations for Railway Projects

- ₹15,767 crore for Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project
- ₹600 crore allocated for railway projects in 2025-26
- ₹50 crore for road overpasses/underbridges in congested areas



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, while presenting the state budget on Friday, gave special focus to Bengaluru's railway infrastructure, including the suburban rail project and key railway flyover works.

The Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project is being implemented at an estimated cost of ₹15,767 crore. This ambitious project will cover a total rail network of 148 km, connecting 58 railway stations across four corridors. The Chief Minister confirmed that work on two corridors is already

underway, while tender processes for the remaining two corridors will soon be completed, ensuring timely execution of the entire project.

In collaboration with the Indian Railways, the state government has taken up nine new railway projects, with funding split in a 50:50 ratio. The state will bear the entire cost of land acquisition for seven of these projects. The total cost of these projects stands at ₹16,235 crore, with the state government contributing ₹9,847 crore. An allocation of ₹600 crore has been earmarked for these works in the 2025-26 budget. Additionally, ₹50 crore has been allocated for building road overpasses and underbridges at high-traffic

level crossings in Bengaluru to ease congestion. These works, already approved, will replace existing railway level crossing gates in busy areas.

The budget also includes ₹812 crore for the double-laning of 70 km of railway tracks, covering the Baiyyappanahalli-Hosur and Yeshwantpur-Channasandra routes. The state government will contribute ₹406 crore, with both projects expected to be commissioned for public service this year.

Through these allocations, the government aims to enhance Bengaluru's rail connectivity, ease traffic congestion, and ensure seamless urban mobility.

Kannada Film Industry Granted Official Industry Status

- Kannada film industry gets official recognition
- Ticket prices capped at Rs 200 across theatres
- Dedicated OTT platform and Film City planned



addressed. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in his 2025-26 state budget speech, announced that the Kannada film sector will now enjoy industry status, with all facilities and incentives under the Industrial Policy extended to the film sector.

As part of the reforms, ticket prices across all theatres and multiplexes will be capped at Rs 200. However, it remains uncertain whether this cap will withstand legal scrutiny,

as a similar order during Siddaramaiah's previous tenure was challenged in court and could not be enforced.

The state budget also unveiled several initiatives to promote Kannada cinema. A dedicated OTT platform will be created to showcase Kannada films, giving filmmakers a state-supported digital avenue for their work.

In a major infrastructure push, 150 acres have been transferred to the Depart-

ment of Information and Public Relations for developing an international-standard Film City in Mysuru, to be built at an estimated cost of Rs 500 crore under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

To preserve the state's cinematic heritage, the government will also create a repository of Kannada films in both digital and non-digital formats, at a cost of Rs 3 crore, focusing on films showcasing social, historical, and cultural themes.

Further, plans are underway to develop a multiplex under the PPP model on 2.5 acres of land owned by the Karnataka Film Academy at Nandini Layout, Bengaluru, offering modern facilities for screening and entertainment.

Complete Land Acquisition for Mudigere Road by March-End: Kota Srinivas Poojary

TPN Correspondent | Chikmagalur

MP Kota Srinivas Poojary directed officials to complete land acquisition for the Mudigere-Chikkamagaluru National Highway project by March-end, enabling the handover of land to the National Highways Authority.

During a review meeting, the MP announced that the central government has approved a Rs 400 crore grant to widen the 26-kilometre stretch from Moogthalli to Mudigere. However, with land acquisition pending, the tender opening date has been postponed to March 21.

He emphasized that the process should be expedited to avoid further delays and asked officials to ensure compensa-

tion is paid to the 231 affected farmers.

Officials from the Revenue and Land Records Department informed that a joint survey has been completed, and all pending processes will be completed within the next 15 days.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Narayana Kanakareddy stated that the Horticulture Department is valuing the farmland, while Forest Department officials are assessing the value of trees on the land. After the valuation process, compensation will be disbursed to the farmers.

The MP stressed the importance of speedy completion, highlighting that this critical road-widening project would enhance connectivity and benefit residents of the region.



Studies Needed on Rising Dolphin Population Along Karnataka Coast

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The dolphin population along the Karnataka coast is witnessing a notable increase, despite challenges posed by rising sea temperatures, coastal erosion, and climate change impacting aquatic ecosystems.

According to marine experts and forest officials, dolphins have demonstrated an impressive ability to adapt to changing environments, resulting in increased sightings of humpback dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, and long-beaked common dolphins off Karnataka's shores.

The forest department, recognising the importance of scientific monitoring, has initiated a geo-tagging study to track and better understand the habitats and movements of these dolphins.

The demand for such studies has grown especially after Prime Minister Narendra Modi released India's first river dolphin report on March 3, documenting 6,324 Gangetic dolphins and three Indus river dolphins.

Though Karnataka has no river dolphins, the state supports a thriving population of oceanic dolphin species, said Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Subhash

Malkhade. Marine biologist Prof. J.L. Rathod, Chairman of the Department of Marine Biology at Karnatak University, Karwar, highlighted that rising dolphin populations have been observed not only off Karnataka but also along the coasts of northern Kerala, Goa, and Maharashtra. He emphasized the urgent need for detailed studies to determine the exact factors driving this increase and to enhance protection measures.

The forest department and researchers have proposed several unique methods to safeguard dolphins, including promoting awareness by referring to them as 'Devara Meenu' (God's Fish), as local fishermen observed that dolphins often drive fish towards the shore, assisting their catch. Experts noted that changing ocean temperatures and declining populations of pelagic fish like sardines, mackerel, and squid have also altered the dietary habits of dolphins. Prof. Rathod further shared that during a recent study, researchers spotted a rare school of 50 dolphins, emphasizing that a collective conservation effort across west coast states is crucial for ensuring the long-term survival of these intelligent marine creatures.

YouTuber Booked for 'Outraging Religious Feelings' Over Video on 2012 Rape and Murder Case

TPN Correspondent | Ballari

A suo motu case has been registered by Cowl Bazar police in Ballari city against YouTuber Sameer M D over a video uploaded on his channel Dhoota, where he questioned the investigation into a 2012 rape and murder case involving a 17-year-old girl in Dakshina Kannada.

The case has been filed under Section 299 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings by insulting religion or religious beliefs.

Sameer's video, titled 'Oorige Dhoddavare Kole Madidhavarava? (Is the head of the town the killer?)', has already crossed 1 crore views, triggering widespread debate on social media. The video revisits the rape and murder case of a student who went missing on October 9, 2012, and was later found dead near Dharmasthala.

The police initially arrested Santhosh Rao for the crime, but local suspicions pointed towards an influential family in Dharmasthala. The CBI took over the case, and in 2023, a special CBI court in Bengaluru acquitted Santhosh Rao.



Following the release of Sameer's video, several social media accounts questioned police handling of the case and possible influence of powerful individuals. Sameer confirmed on Thursday that he received a police notice and stated, "Everything I said in the video is backed by documents, which I am ready to produce before the police. I trust the legal system. I did not name anyone directly." He also revealed that after his video crossed 1 million views, he started receiving death threats and his personal contact information was leaked online. Sameer added that he later contacted activists fighting for justice in the case and emphasized, "My religion does not matter — I am only raising my voice for justice."

Bengaluru's 2nd Airport: Three Locations Finalized, Proposal Sent to Centre

- Three sites shortlisted for second airport
- Two sites on Kanakapura Road, one on Kunigal Road
- Proposal sent to Union Ministry of Civil Aviation

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government has made significant progress in the long-pending plan to develop Bengaluru's second international airport. After months of speculation and uncertainty over the location, the government has now finalized three potential sites and officially submitted a proposal to the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation for approval. According to Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil, two of the shortlisted sites are along Kanakapura Road, near Harohalli, while the third site is located along Kunigal Road, near Nelamangala. These sites were identified after detailed discussions and feasibility studies to identify locations that would serve Bengaluru's growing air traffic demand and ease pressure on the existing Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) at Devanahalli.

The two proposed sites on Kanakapura Road lie near the Bengaluru-Ramanagara border, with one location falling under Bengaluru



Urban district and the other within Ramanagara district. One of these locations, close to Harohalli, is approximately 10 kilometers away from a Metro Green Line station, ensuring better future connectivity. The decision to pursue a second airport was driven by the rapid increase in passenger traffic at KIA, which currently operates two terminals and continues to see significant growth. To address future needs and support Bengaluru's economic development, the state government has been actively working to secure land and initiate the approval process for this critical infrastruc-

ture project. Minister MB Patil emphasized that the second airport would play a vital role in boosting Karnataka's infrastructure, strengthening global connectivity, and positioning Bengaluru as a key aviation hub in South India.

With the proposal now submitted to the Centre, Karnataka is hopeful of receiving approval soon, allowing land acquisition and project planning to begin, paving the way for improved aviation infrastructure and better passenger convenience in the years ahead.

Forest Officials Use Tankers to Fill Dry Waterholes in Nagarhole National Park

TPN Correspondent | Mysuru

With rising temperatures and drying water sources across Nagarhole National Park, forest officials have begun filling waterholes using tankers to ensure wild animals have access to water during the peak summer months.

The park, covering the Dammanakatte and Veeranahosahalli forest ranges, has over 200 tanks, but nearly 80% of these smaller water bodies have already dried up. This has forced wildlife, including elephants, tigers, bison, sambar deer, and others, to venture out of the forest in search of water, raising concerns of increased man-animal conflict.

Forest officials, already on high alert for forest fires, are now prioritizing efforts to fill these waterholes to reduce the chances of animals straying into human settlements. Though the forest department has installed solar-powered borewells inside the park, they are insufficient to meet the rising demand for



water. To supplement this, more than six tankers have been deployed to fill critical water sources.

As the Dammanakatte and Veeranahosahalli ranges do not have any rivers, both ranges depend heavily on rainwater storage, which is proving inadequate

this summer. To address the issue in the long term, the forest department has prepared an action plan that includes desilting tanks and installing additional solar borewells to ensure sustainable water supply for wildlife.

Safari driver Siddu mentioned that tiger sightings near waterholes have become a daily occurrence, attracting increased tourist interest, with viral videos of wildlife encounters further boosting safari bookings.

Nagarhole DCF Seema confirmed that most ponds in both ranges have either completely dried up or have very little water left. She said the department will deploy additional tankers if necessary to prevent wildlife distress.

While she hoped that pre-monsoon showers would ease the crisis, officials confirmed that, so far, there have been no reports of animal deaths due to water scarcity, unlike in the 2015-16 drought period.

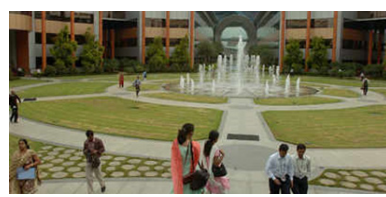
Infosys Revises WFH Policy; Employees Must Work from Office 10 Days a Month

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Infosys, India's leading IT giant, has revised its work-from-home (WFH) policy, asking employees to work from the office for at least 10 days every month. This new rule will come into effect from March 10, as communicated to employees through an official email on Thursday.

Since the Covid pandemic, Infosys had allowed employees to work remotely, with attendance being tracked through a mobile app. However, with increasing emphasis on hybrid work models, Infosys has now asked team leads at its Bengaluru campus to reduce the number of WFH days for their teams.

As per the new guideline, employees at the JL 5 level and below, including team leads, software engineers, senior engineers, system engineers, and consultants, must comply with the 10-day office attendance requirement. The company also specified that JL 6 and above employees, including managers, senior managers, delivery managers, and senior delivery managers, would also follow the rule



based on project requirements. However, vice presidents have been excluded from this new order, raising curiosity among staff.

The Infosys email stated:

"As you are aware, our hybrid work model expects employees to work from the office for at least 10 days a month or as per project requirements, whichever is higher."

This revision comes amid ongoing discussions across the IT industry regarding hybrid work policies. Several IT companies, including those in Bengaluru, had already introduced policies requiring 3 days of office attendance per week since early 2024. Infosys is now formalizing its hybrid approach, balancing work flexibility with the need for in-person collaboration.

With over 3 lakh employees globally, Infosys is one of the largest IT employers, and this policy change is expected to impact a significant section of its workforce.

Kannada Actress Ranya Rao Travelled 27 times to Dubai in One Year Secretly smuggled gold biscuits using custom-designed clothes

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Sensational details have come to light in the case of Kannada actress Ranya Rao, who was caught smuggling gold from Dubai. Investigations revealed that Ranya Rao travelled to Dubai 27 times last year, smuggling kilos of gold biscuits each time. Officials found that Ranya Rao received a commission of ₹1 lakh per kilogram of gold smuggled. She used specially designed jackets and waist belts with hidden compartments to conceal the gold. Each time, she wore the same outfit, which raised suspicion among airport officials. Authorities discovered that a constable at Bengaluru airport helped her pass through customs without checks. Following suspicions over her frequent Dubai trips and repeated outfit, officials decided to closely monitor her movements. On her latest trip, when Ranya Rao returned to Bengaluru on Sunday night, customs officers conducted a thorough search and discovered gold biscuits hidden in her clothes. Both Ranya Rao and the constable who assisted her were arrested.

Investigators revealed that Ra-



nya Rao was lured into smuggling by a smuggler who hoped to use her father's influence as a police officer to avoid detection. Officials also indicated the involvement of a political leader, whose identity is expected to be revealed soon. There are suspicions that other airport officials may have also cooperated in the smuggling racket.

The surveillance on Ranya Rao intensified after an incident at Bengaluru airport, where she had an altercation with a customs official, claiming special privileges through a close relative. The incident led the official to investigate her frequent Dubai visits. When it was found that she had no business interests in Dubai, suspicions grew. Based on this, customs officials planned a special search operation, which ultimately led to her arrest and the seizure of smuggled gold biscuits.



This is the Last Budget for Congress Govt In Karnataka - Basanagouda Yatnal

**BJP MLA Yatnal predicts end of Congress rule
Points to ongoing internal rift in Congress
Says BJP will return to power soon**

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Senior BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal has stated that the 2025 Karnataka Budget will not only be the last budget of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, but also the final budget of the Congress government.

Speaking to the media on Friday, Yatnal remarked that the infighting within the Congress party is intensifying, which could bring down the government before its full term. "I will not say this is just Siddaramaiah's last budget, but I will certainly say this is the last budget of the Congress government in Karnataka," Yatnal asserted.

The BJP MLA's comments come amid growing reports

of internal differences within the state Congress leadership, raising speculation about the stability of the ruling government.

Yatnal expressed confidence that the BJP will return to power soon, stating that the public is disillusioned with the Congress' governance and broken promises.

He further added that the current government's failure to address farmers' issues, infrastructure problems, and rising corruption will ultimately lead to its collapse.

Yatnal's sharp remarks are seen as part of the BJP's strategy to step up political pressure on the ruling party ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections and possible mid-term polls.

Constituency Redistribution BJP Plot to Gain Control Over South India - Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

The central BJP government, frustrated by the economic and developmental success of South India, is now planning to implement constituency redistribution to reduce the political representation of southern states, alleged Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Livelihood, and Raichur District In-charge.

Speaking to reporters at Vidhana Soudha, Dr. Patil criticized the proposed population-based delimitation, calling it unfair to South India, especially states like Karnataka, which have successfully implemented population control measures for several decades. In contrast, northern states have failed to control population growth, and yet the South is being punished for its success, he said.

Dr. Patil also accused the central BJP of cheating South India in tax distribution and now attempting to further weaken southern states' voice



in Parliament through this delimitation exercise. He said the BJP's limited support in South India has prompted this calculated attempt to reduce the number of constituencies in the region.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, along with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Kerala Chief Minister P. Vijayan, has already opposed the move and demanded fair representation. Dr. Patil warned that Karnataka's Lok Sabha seats could shrink from 28 to 26, a situation Kannadigas will not accept. He urged BJP and JDS MPs from Karnataka to stand up courageously and protect the state's interests, stressing that South Indian states will unite to block any unfair delimitation.

I'm Always Innovating, Working on New Techniques: Ravi Varman at BIFFes

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Renowned cinematographer S Ravi Varman, recently inducted into the American Society of Cinematographers, addressed movie enthusiasts at the V K Murthy Memorial Lecture on Cinematography held during the 16th Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes) on Thursday. Varman said his ultimate goal was to create cinematic works that remain relevant even after a decade, highlighting the importance of continuous innovation. He recalled how he had to improvise during the shoot of 'Anniyan'

(2005) by using a Handycam, resulting in one of the most iconic scenes in Indian cinema.

Rejecting the idea of a fixed personal style, Varman said sticking to the same techniques would make him stagnant, adding that constant experimentation helps him evolve. He cited the example of backlight techniques used in 'Barfi' (2012), inspired by the way luxury brands present their products in advertisements.

Varman likened the collaboration between a director and cinematographer to a marriage, saying that creative friction leads to the best outcomes. He

London Model Law and Order Implemented in Bengaluru: Home Minister G. Parameshwar

Stringent action taken against bike wheeling cases across Karnataka

Bengaluru Police following London Metro model for faster response

Focus on technology-driven policing with CCTV, AI, and cyber crime units

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Home Minister G. Parameshwar has revealed that London model law and order practices have been adopted in Bengaluru, ensuring faster police response and advanced crime monitoring systems across the city. He said that Hoysala vehicles, ASIs with revolvers, and a 24-hour beat system are all part of the strengthened system focused particularly on Bengaluru.

Explaining the law enforcement data, Parameshwar said

136 bike wheeling cases were registered across Karnataka so far in 2025, with 128 arrests. In 2024, 266 cases led to 179 arrests, while 2023 saw 68 cases and 147 arrests for hooliganism with deadly weapons. This year, 26 such cases have been registered with 86 arrests till February.

He emphasized that strict action has been taken against rowdy sheeters, with 44 Goonda Act cases in 2022, 53 in 2023, 34 in 2024, and 8 so far in 2025. To strengthen policing, 7,000 high-resolution CCTV camer-



as have been installed at 1,640 locations, with AI integration for real-time surveillance. Additionally, body-worn cameras have been distributed to police personnel.

Parameshwar rejected opposition claims about deteriorating law and order, citing a decline in murder cases, from 1346 in 2022 to 1208 in 2024, with 100 cases reported so far in 2025.

Highlighting the growing cyber crime threat, Parameshwar said a dedicated cyber crime unit led by a DG-rank officer is actively working to curb online fraud, as cybercriminals steal crores daily through data theft and bank fraud.

He assured that Karnataka Police are constantly evolving with technology to maintain peace and safety across the state.

Govt Initiatives Don't Benefit Us, Farmers Demand Effective Policies



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Despite repeated claims of promoting sustainable and profitable agriculture, farmers across Karnataka have expressed disappointment over the government's failure to meet their expectations. Many believe the 2024-25 state budget does not reflect the ground realities faced by farmers.

Farmer leader Kodihalli Chandrashekhara criticized the government, questioning why farmer suicides continue if the so-called pro-farmer policies are genuinely effective.

The state budget announced the creation of an Agriculture Development Authority, chaired by the Chief Minister, to ensure better coordination between the Departments of

Farmers express dissatisfaction with government schemes

Budget allocations fail to address core agricultural issues

Crop loss compensation remains inadequate

Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Fisheries, Cooperation, and Animal Husbandry.

However, farmers directly questioned Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, asking why adequate crop compensation is still not provided and why farmers are being pushed into debt, even when higher yields are achieved.

Low prices for produce, high input costs, and ineffective compensation mechanisms continue to plague farmers, leaving them with little hope despite big budget announce-

ments. Chandrashekhara highlighted that in 2023, the state government sought Rs 36,000 crore from the Centre for crop loss compensation but received only Rs 3,400 crore, leading to meagre payouts to affected farmers.

Krishik Samaj president Sidagouda Modagi added that the government's focus on funding the five guarantee schemes has severely impacted funds for agriculture schemes, leaving farmers without the support and policies they urgently need.

CM Siddaramaiah Has Presented an All-Encompassing Budget: Shivaram Hebbar

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

BJP rebel MLA Shivaram Hebbar has praised the 2025-26 Karnataka Budget presented by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, calling it an all-encompassing and comprehensive budget.

Speaking to the media in Bengaluru on Friday, Hebbar congratulated the Chief Minister for presenting an excellent budget that addresses the needs of multiple sectors.

He particularly appreciat-

ed the provisions made for Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, assistants, kitchen helpers, and media personnel. "The increase in honorarium and salaries for these essential workers is a very good move, and I commend the Chief Minister for his sensitivity towards their welfare," Hebbar said.

Hebbar, known for differing views from his party leadership, has increasingly shown support for welfare-oriented policies, irrespective of party lines. His praise for Siddara-

BJP rebel MLA praises Karnataka Budget 2025

Appreciates increased honorarium for Anganwadi and ASHA workers

Says CM has done good work for media and support staff

maiah's budget has drawn attention amid ongoing political realignments in the state.

The rebel MLA emphasized that welfare schemes and worker support should always be a priority, and in this regard, the current budget strikes

the right balance between economic development and social justice. Hebbar's comments are expected to trigger reactions from BJP leadership, given the political implications of a rebel MLA appreciating the ruling party's budget.

Woman Attempts Suicide by Climbing BBMP Office Building, Asks CM to Meet Her

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

A woman named Uma, a resident of Vijayanagar, created high drama at the BBMP council building in Bengaluru, by climbing the building and threatening to commit suicide.

Uma has been visiting the BBMP health department for several months, seeking financial assistance after undergoing a critical brain surgery. Despite her repeated pleas, she alleged that BBMP officials, including Health Officer Nirmala Buggi, ignored her requests, leaving her with no option but to stage the extreme protest.

According to sources, Uma's health issues began in October 2024, when she visited Dasarahalli BBMP hospital for a persistent headache. She was given painkillers, but her condition worsened. Later, at KC General Hospital, doctors diagnosed a tumor that required immediate surgery. Post-surgery, Uma, who has no husband and a dependent son, has been unable to resume work, leaving her in severe financial distress. Desperate for help, Uma approached BBMP's health department, hoping to access corporation welfare funds. However, she accused



officials of apathy and arrogance, pushing her to climb the BBMP building at around 7 pm, demanding the Chief Minister's intervention.

The Halasuru Gate police, alerted to the situation, rescued Uma safely and provided her with counselling before sending her home. The incident has once again raised questions about BBMP's handling of public grievances, especially those involving health emergencies and financial support.

Bangalore City University to be Renamed After Former PM Manmohan Singh: CM Siddaramaiah

- Bangalore City University to be renamed
- 2,000 vacant teaching posts to be filled
- Rs. 275 crore for college infrastructure development



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced during his budget speech on Friday that Bangalore City University will be renamed Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru University, in honor of the former Prime Minister and renowned economist. The Chief Minister stated that Government Arts College and Government RC College will be made constituent colleges of the newly renamed university, with the aim of developing it into a model university in the country. Earlier in the week, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had revealed that the government was planning to institute a permanent scheme in Dr. Manmohan Singh's name, recognizing his contributions to India's economic reforms and nation-building. Alongside this announcement, Siddaramaiah assured that the government will

fill 2,000 vacant teaching posts across government first-grade colleges and engineering polytechnics. He also announced the appointment of Professors of Practice, who are subject experts from professional fields, in 16 government engineering colleges. These appointments aim to enhance students' employability by providing practical knowledge and industry-relevant skills. The budget also earmarked Rs. 275 crore for providing essential infrastructure to government engineering polytechnics and degree colleges, improving laboratories, classrooms, and digital learning facilities. The government's focus on higher edu-

cation reforms is intended to strengthen the quality of education offered in state-run institutions and ensure students from rural and economically weaker sections have access to modern learning resources. The announcement triggered mixed reactions, with the ruling party highlighting it as a tribute to Dr. Manmohan Singh, while opposition parties criticized the renaming, terming it politically motivated. However, the government maintained that the changes are part of a broader effort to modernize education and enhance the reputation of state universities nationally.

Tamil Nadu to launch 100 'pink autos' in Chennai on Women's Day

TPN Correspondent | Chennai

In a significant move to enhance women's safety and mobility, the Tamil Nadu government is set to introduce 100 'pink autos' in Chennai on Women's Day. This initiative is a part of a larger plan to launch a total of 250 pink autos in phases, following the success of the pink buses previously introduced in the state. These pink autos will be exclusively driven by women and will serve female passengers, providing a safe and reliable transportation option. Each pink auto will be equipped with a GPS system linked to the nearest police station, ensuring real-time tracking and offering an additional layer of security for women commuters. This technology aims to enhance safety, allowing authorities to monitor rides and respond promptly if needed. Tamil Nadu's Minister for Women Empowerment, P. Geetha Jeevan, also an-

nounced the development of a dedicated app for booking the pink autos. The app, which is expected to be operational in a few weeks, will allow passengers to book rides without incurring any extra commission charges for drivers, ensuring that the service remains affordable and accessible. Until the app is fully functional, passengers can hire the pink autos directly from designated auto stands across Chennai. The fare structure for the pink autos will be similar to regular yellow autos, with meters installed to ensure transparent and fair pricing for passengers. This initiative is a crucial part of Tamil Nadu's broader efforts to improve women's safety in public transport, aiming to create a safer and more accessible environment for women across the state. By empowering women drivers and providing a safe travel option, the state hopes to set a precedent for other regions to follow.

Sri Lankan Navy Arrests Indian Fishermen in Latest Operation

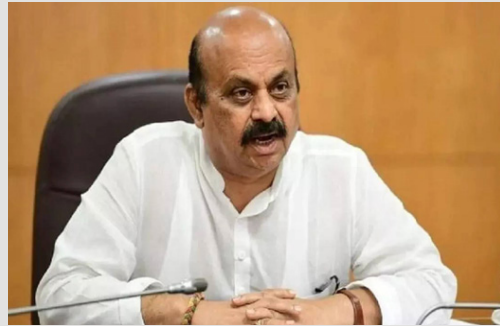
TPN Correspondent | Colombo

The Sri Lankan Navy arrested a group of Indian fishermen during a special operation conducted on Thursday night in the sea area south of Mannar. The fishermen, along with their seized boat, were brought to Talpattu Pier in Mannar. They will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Mannar for further legal action, as stated by the Navy in an official release. The Navy's ongoing patrols and operations in Sri Lankan waters aim to curb the illegal fishing practices by foreign fishing boats, which have significantly impacted the livelihoods of local Sri Lankan fishermen. These actions are part of Sri Lanka's efforts to protect its maritime resources and ensure the sustainability of its fishing industry. This arrest follows a similar incident on February 23, when Sri Lankan authorities detained 32 Indian fishermen and seized five boats for allegedly entering Sri Lankan territorial

waters. So far, the Sri Lankan Navy has arrested over 140 Indian fishermen this year for alleged illegal fishing in its waters. In 2024, the Sri Lankan Navy reported that it had arrested more than 550 Indian fishermen in a series of operations. The fishermen issue remains a sensitive topic between India and Sri Lanka, with frequent incidents of confrontations at sea. On several occasions, Sri Lankan Navy personnel have fired at Indian fishing boats in the Palk Strait and seized their vessels for illegally crossing into Sri Lankan waters. The ongoing disputes highlight the growing tensions over fishing rights and territorial waters between the two countries, with Indian fishermen often accusing Sri Lankan authorities of excessive force and arbitrary arrests. Despite these tensions, both nations continue to grapple with finding a lasting solution to the issue that balances the interests of their respective fishing communities.

Karnataka Budget Imposes Financial Burden on People: Former CM Basavaraj

- CM Siddaramaiah presents his 16th budget
- Rs. 7,000 crore grant to BBMP announced
- Opposition calls budget anti-people, development-deficient



TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru
Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented his record 16th state budget on Friday, emphasizing the implementation of the government's five guarantee schemes and targeting the Union government for the state's ongoing fiscal challenges. He said the state is expecting revenue receipts of Rs. 4,08,647 crore for the upcoming financial year from commercial tax, excise, and central grants. The budget made significant allocations for health infrastructure, with the Chief Minister announcing a special health

mission aimed at reducing preventable maternal mortality to zero. In addition, a special grant of Rs. 7,000 crore was allocated to the BBMP, focusing on improving Bengaluru's civic amenities and infrastructure projects. While the ruling government highlighted the budget's focus on social welfare and urban development, the opposition BJP and JD(S) strongly criticized it. Former Chief Minister Basavaraj Somappa Bommai termed the budget anti-people, accusing the government of imposing financial burdens on citizens. Basavaraj Somappa Bommai alleged that

the state's total debt has now crossed Rs. 7.65 lakh crore, which he described as proof of economic mismanagement and financial bankruptcy under the current administration. Leader of the Opposition Basavaraj Somappa Bommai also described the budget as lacking vision and development plans, accusing the government of neglecting crucial sectors like agriculture, industry, and employment generation. The JD(S) also criticized the budget, particularly condemning the decision to rename Bangalore University to Dr. Manmohan Singh University, calling it unnecessary and politically motivated. However, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar defended the budget, stating that it was designed with a vision for all-round development and ensuring inclusive growth across all sectors. He emphasized that the government remains committed to strengthening welfare programs while managing fiscal responsibility.

Hike in food allowance for police personnel deployed on special duty in Karnataka

TPN Correspondent | Karnataka

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced an increase in the food allowance for police officers and personnel deployed on special duty, raising it from ₹200 to ₹300 per day. This decision aims to address concerns regarding the quality of food provided to law enforcement personnel during high-demand assignments such as elections, festivals, and special events. The proposal to raise the allowance was moved by the State Home Department earlier this year, recognizing the challenges faced in ensuring quality meals for police units. A senior official revealed that the rise in food costs had created difficulties in maintaining acceptable standards, impacting the beneficiaries' well-being. The proposal was submitted in January and has now been approved to help mitigate rising food prices. A key issue that prompted the allowance increase was the poor quality of food served to police personnel, highlighted during the February 10 Aero India show in Yelahanka. Police filed a First Information Report (FIR) against a private

caterer after officers complained about finding insects in the food provided. This wasn't an isolated incident; earlier, police had reported finding cockroaches in their food. Complaints indicated that the caterer failed to meet cleanliness standards and used subpar ingredients. To rectify the situation, senior police officials visited the event and shared meals with the officers to ensure food quality and boost morale. They also arranged alternative meals from a reputable hotel. In addition to food quality concerns, the process of reimbursing food bills has posed challenges. Officials must submit GST bills with TIN numbers to the Khajane portal for reimbursement, a process that often causes delays or rejections. In remote areas, food is sourced from local vendors, with payments often made on credit. This has led to a situation where many officers pay for food out of pocket, leading to potential corruption and delays in claims. The increase in food allowances aims to address these ongoing issues while improving conditions for police personnel on duty.

Gold smuggling case: Actress Ranya Rao remanded to 3 days in DRI custody

- DRI probing her links to an international smuggling network
- Used IPS officer stepfather's name to bypass airport security

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Kannada film actress Ranya Rao, 33, was arrested on Monday at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) for allegedly smuggling gold and has been remanded in the custody of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) for three days. The actress, who is accused of being a mule for the smuggling operation, maintained that she received payments for every trip she made to Dubai. However, the DRI's investigation, which included analyzing call records and her contacts, suggests that Rao may be part of an international gold smuggling racket. Authorities believe that securing her custody is essential to uncover the individuals she was working for and to identify other potential participants in the illegal operation. Ranya Rao is the stepdaughter of K. Ramachandra Rao,

a senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer who serves as the Director-General of Police at the Karnataka State Police Housing Corporation. Investigators noted that Rao used her stepfather's name to access the protocol facility at the airport, which helped her bypass security checks. The DRI had been monitoring her travel history and closely watched her upon her arrival at KIA from Dubai. Officials have cited national security concerns regarding the case and revealed that certain sensitive information could not be disclosed publicly, as doing so might jeopardize the ongoing investigation. However, the DRI has stated that it will submit crucial evidence and details of the probe in a sealed cover to the court. As the investigation continues, authorities are working to understand the full scope of the smuggling operation and to identify others potentially involved. The case remains under intense scrutiny, with implications not only for the accused but also for national security.

24-Hour Avalanche Warning Issued for Uttarakhand and Surrounding Regions

TPN Correspondent | Dehradun

A 24-hour avalanche warning has been issued for high-altitude areas above 3,000 meters in Uttarakhand's Chamoli, Rudrapur, and Pithoragarh districts. The warning, issued by the Chandigarh-based Defence Geoinformatics Research Establishment (DGRE), includes an 'orange' alert for these three districts and a 'yellow' alert for Uttarkashi district, which borders both Chamoli and Rudrapur. In addition, neighboring districts in Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba, Lahaul Spiti, and Kullu Kinnaur, are also under an 'orange' alert. Areas in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, such as Ganderbal, Baramulla, Kupwara, Rajouri, and Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Kargil in Ladakh, have been issued a 'yellow' alert due to the potential for avalanches in these regions as well. The warning follows the tragic incident last week when an av-

alanche buried a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) laborers' camp in Chamoli, claiming the lives of eight workers. The camp was located at an altitude of 3,200 meters, where temperatures dropped as low as -12°C, complicating rescue and recovery operations. A total of 33 workers were rescued by February 28, with another 17 found on March 1. The harsh weather and snow depths of over three feet continue to pose significant challenges in the region, which is near the Tibet border. The area is also strategically significant, with the Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) maintaining border outposts in Chamoli, Rudrapur, and Pithoragarh, further increasing the risk of avalanches. Given these conditions, authorities are urging residents, travelers, and workers in the affected regions to stay alert and take necessary precautions to ensure their safety during this critical period.



Ooha sees change beyond the system, TRANSFORMS ADIVASI LIVES



The Point Desk

In a world where success is often measured by power and prestige, just 27 years old, Visakhapatnam's youth Dr. Ooha Mahanathi chose a different path, one defined by service and social justice. Once aspiring to join the civil services, she realised that true transformation happens not behind a desk but at the grassroots level. As the Director of the Rural Development Welfare Society (RDWS), she has dedicated her life to uplifting Adivasi women and children in north coastal Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha.

Founded in 1991 by her grandfather, a philanthropist and former Sarpanch of Garudabilli village in Vizianagaram district, Mahanathi Ganapathi Rao, RDWS embodies his vision of rural development. Inspired by his legacy, Dr. Ooha expanded it into a force for justice. Initially drawn to policymaking, she realized true change required direct engagement. "I chose to work on the ground, understand their

struggles, and fight for their rights of Adivasi girls and women," she said.

Under her leadership, RDWS with 276 volunteers has prevented over 261 child marriages, reintegrated 6,489 child laborers into education so far, and conducted large-scale health awareness programs on HIV/AIDS, menstrual hygiene, and maternal health. She has led anti-human trafficking initiatives, rescuing vulnerable individuals from exploitation, and provided shelter and relief to families displaced by natural disasters and abandoned elderly individuals in need of care.

Dr. Ooha advocates for education, land rights, healthcare, and economic opportunities for Adivasi communities across Alluri Sitarama Raju, Vizianagaram, Parvathipuram Manyam, Anakapalli, and Visakhapatnam's urban slums. Through skill development, she empowers tribal women with financial independence via vocational training and entrepreneurship. She also creates safe spaces for

girls to learn, grow, and lead while ensuring healthcare reaches remote villages.

Her efforts earned her the International Wonder Book of Records Award, presented by Odisha Governor Kambhampati Hari Babu. She also received Honorary Doctorates in Social Work from Global International Foundation and Manam Foundation International. Her advocacy spans national and international platforms, addressing gender equality, tribal rights, and rural development.

The journey, however, has not been easy. "Working in remote forest regions was never easy. The lack of proper roads, communication barriers, and deep-seated social challenges made every step a test of resilience," Dr. Ooha reflected. "Winning the trust of Adivasi communities was the hardest part, as they had been let down by outsiders for generations. I had to prove my sincerity through actions, not words."

Isolation, poor healthcare, child marriages, trafficking, and bureaucratic delays hindered welfare access, requiring persistence to educate girls and secure aid. Despite these struggles, Dr. Ooha never backed down. She walked through dense forests, crossed rivers, and stayed in villages for days to understand their problems firsthand.

She credits her strength to her family, father Suresh Mahanathi, mother Sudha, and brother Vardhan. Her father, Suresh Mahanathi, said, "I hoped she'd become an IAS officer to serve the poor, but I respect her choice of a path closer to those in need."

Though her path differs from her father's vision, Dr. Ooha remains committed to uplifting disadvantaged communities. "My goal is the same, to empower them for a better future," she said. She noted that women now use menstrual pads comfortably. "Seeing this change makes my hard work worthwhile," she added.





Omar Abdullah Presents Jammu and Kashmir's First Budget Post-Article 370 Abrogation

TPN Correspondent | Patna

On March 7, 2025, Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, presented the Union Territory's first budget since the abrogation of Article 370, marking a significant step in the region's governance post-reorganization. Abdullah described the budget as a catalyst for a new era of peace and prosperity, highlighting the gradual return of normalcy after more than three decades of unrest.

In his budget speech, Abdullah expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for their support in various sectors, acknowledging their role in the region's development.

The last budget session for the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir took place in 2018, under the PDP-BJP coalition government. After the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was reorganized into a Union Territory, with Ladakh being carved out as a separate UT.

Key highlights of the 2025-26 budget include a focus on youth and women empowerment, addressing regional disparities, and working towards the restoration of statehood. One of the major announcements was an allocation of ₹815 crore for the agriculture sector, aimed at generating 2.88 lakh jobs. Abdullah emphasized the promotion of a two-crop pattern in agriculture, alongside a strong push to expand the horticulture industry. Additionally, he proposed boosting the wool processing and leather tanning industries, which are expected to bolster the local economy.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of various development projects in Silvassa

- Inaugurates ₹2,587 crore projects in Silvassa
- 450-bed NAMO Hospital launched to boost tribal healthcare
- Infrastructure, job creation, and welfare schemes prioritized

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation for several development projects worth ₹2,587 crore in Silvassa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, on Friday, March 7, 2025. These projects aim to significantly enhance the infrastructure, healthcare, and public welfare in the Union Territory.

During his visit, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the first phase of the NAMO Hospital, a 450-bed facility built at a cost of over ₹460 crore. This hospital will serve as a major healthcare hub, providing advanced medical care, particularly to the tribal communities in the region. Modi's focus on improving healthcare facilities across the country aligns with his broader goal to strengthen medical services in underserved areas.

In addition to the healthcare projects, PM Modi laid the foundation for various infrastructure initiatives, including village roads, educational institutions, health and wellness centers, and water supply and sewage systems. These projects are aimed at improving connectivity, promoting industrial growth, boosting tourism, and creating job opportunities in the region. At the event, the administra-



tor of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Praful K Patel, felicitated PM Modi to mark the inauguration and foundation-laying of these key projects. The projects also include the construction of Panchayat and administrative buildings, Anganwadi centers, and other essential infrastructure to promote regional development.

The Prime Minister also distributed appointment letters under the Rozgar Mela and extended benefits to various beneficiaries under government schemes, including PM Awas Yoja-

na-Urban, Gir Adarsh Aajeevika Yojana, and Sylvan Didi scheme. The Gir Adarsh Aajeevika Yojana is aimed at empowering women from marginalized communities by supporting small dairy farms, contributing to their economic upliftment.

Following his visit to Silvassa, PM Modi is scheduled to travel to Surat at 5 p.m. to launch the Surat Food Security Saturation Campaign. On March 8, 2025, he will travel to Navsari for interactions and the launch of various other development schemes.



India Can Show Way To World By Virtue Of Its Cultural Heritage": RSS Chief

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday emphasized that India's rich cultural heritage positions the country to guide the world in various aspects of life. He made these remarks in Supaul district of north Bihar after inaugurating a new building for the Saraswati Vidya Mandir school.

"Our civilization is ancient, and Bharat symbolizes values and a cultural heritage that can show the way (margdarshan) to the entire world," Bhagwat stated, underlining India's potential to be a beacon of knowledge and wisdom on the global stage. He also pointed out that Vidya Bharati, the RSS's educational wing, is committed to imparting both "knowledge and values" (gyan aur sanskar), urging parents to consider enrolling their children in schools run by the organization.

In his speech, Bhagwat recalled his personal connection with Bihar, mentioning his six years as a 'kshetriya pracharak' in the state. "Whenever I visit Bihar, I wish I could see more places, but time constraints often limit my ability," he said.

The RSS chief also lauded the people of Bihar, praising their hard work and dedication. He cited the example of Dashrath Manjhi, the famed "mountain man" from Gaya, who carved a path through a mountain over many years, showcasing the resilience and perseverance of the people of Bihar.

The event was attended by senior BJP leader and Bihar minister Neeraj Singh Bablu, among others. Bhagwat's visit to Bihar highlighted the importance of education, values, and dedication, reaffirming the RSS's ongoing mission to contribute to the cultural and educational development of the nation.

Railways Introduce Enhanced Crowd Control Measures at 60 Stations Across India

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Ministry of Railways has announced a new set of crowd control measures at 60 stations across the country, drawing on lessons learned from past experiences during events like the Maha Kumbh and festive seasons. The initiative, which was approved during a high-level meeting chaired by Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, aims to better manage overcrowding and ensure smoother passenger flow at key stations.

One of the key features of the plan is the creation of permanent waiting areas outside stations, where passengers will be allowed onto platforms only when their train arrives. This is expected to prevent crowding in station premises. Pilot projects are already underway at New Delhi, Anand Vihar, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Patna



stations, serving as test cases for this new system. Additionally, the railways will implement strict access control measures, permitting only passengers with confirmed reserved tickets to enter platforms. Unauthorized entry points will be sealed to ensure that only legitimate passengers are allowed

to access the train boarding areas. As part of improving crowd management, the ministry will also install new foot overbridges (FOBs) at stations. These FOBs will be 12 meters (40 feet) and 6 meters (20 feet) wide and will be equipped with ramps to improve movement.

MK Stalin Raises Stakes Over Delimitation, Calls 7 State Leaders To Chennai

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has called on seven state counterparts, including Bengal's Mamata Banerjee and Odisha's Mohan Chandra Majhi, to join a joint action committee to oppose the Centre's proposed delimitation exercise. Stalin has invited Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan, Karnataka's Siddaramaiah, Telangana's Revanth Reddy, Andhra Pradesh's Chandrababu Naidu, and Puducherry's N Rangaswamy to a meeting in Chennai on March 22 to form a collective strategy.

In his letter, Stalin criticized the Centre's proposal, calling it an attack on federalism. He emphasized that the delimitation exercise would unfairly penalize states, like Tamil Nadu, that have successfully controlled population growth. The exercise, according to Stalin, would reduce the voice of states that have implemented effective population control measures while benefiting regions with rapidly growing populations, such as BJP-



ruled northern states.

The issue of delimitation is particularly sensitive in Tamil Nadu as the state has been a strong proponent of limiting population growth. Stalin warned that the new exercise, based on current census data, could lead to a reduction in Tamil Nadu's represen-

tation in the Lok Sabha, despite the state's long-standing efforts to manage population control. He cited the 2002 amendment, which froze changes to the number of Lok Sabha seats until at least 2026, and called for this freeze to continue.

Stalin also dismissed Union Home

Minister Amit Shah's assurances that southern states would not lose seats, pointing out that the minister did not address the possibility of northern states gaining more seats. The Chief Minister stressed that Tamil Nadu should not be penalized for its success in controlling population growth. The meeting planned for March 22 aims

to unite political leaders across the country to challenge the delimitation process, which Stalin argues could undermine the federal structure and negatively impact Tamil Nadu's interests. The controversy surrounding the exercise is expected to intensify as the state heads toward elections next year.

India, China Ties Made Positive Strides After PM Modi-Xi Meet

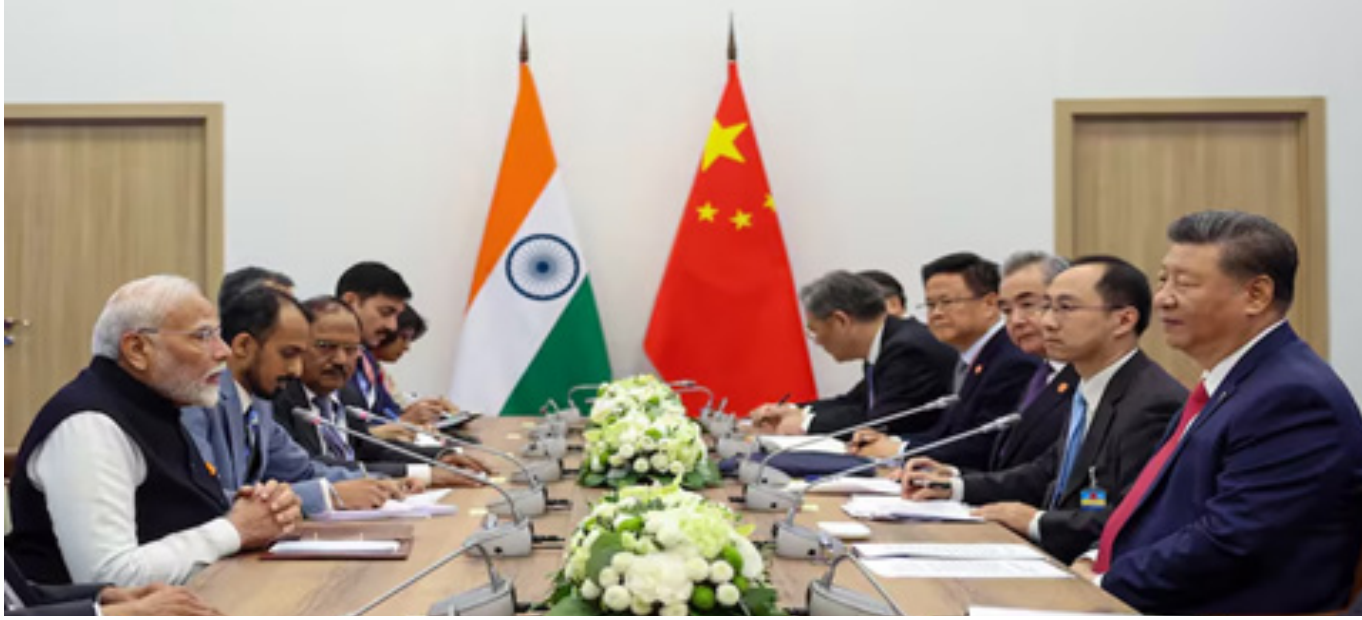
- China hails progress in India-China relations post-Ladakh resolution
- Wang Yi credits Modi-Xi talks for improved bilateral ties
- Calls for cooperation over competition between 'dragon and elephant'

TPN Correspondent | Beijing

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday highlighted the positive progress in India-China relations, noting a series of encouraging developments since the breakthrough agreement last year that ended a four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Wang shared these remarks during his annual press conference, addressing questions about the trajectory of bilateral relations following the resolution of the prolonged standoff. He credited the successful meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in Kazan, Russia, for providing strategic guidance to improve ties.

"China-India relations have made positive strides over the past year," said Wang, emphasizing that both countries had strengthened exchanges and cooperation at all levels, achieving significant outcomes. The breakthrough in Ladakh followed a pact that facilitated the withdrawal of troops from the last remaining friction points, Depsang and Demchok, marking the conclu-



sion of years of military tension.

Following the agreement, talks between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi in October 2023 led to the revival of various dialogue mechanisms. This was followed by key meetings between National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Wang in December, and a subsequent meeting in January between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Chinese officials in Beijing. Wang reiterated that while border issues

were important, they should not define or hinder the overall relationship between the two nations. "As two ancient civilizations, we have enough wisdom to maintain peace and tranquility along the border while seeking a fair and reasonable solution," Wang stated.

He further emphasized that both countries, as large neighbors, should be partners in each other's success, advocating for cooperation instead of competition. "A co-

operative partnership between the dragon and the elephant is the only right choice," he said, adding that both countries should work together to oppose hegemonism and power politics, particularly in the context of global affairs.

Looking ahead, Wang expressed China's readiness to work with India to further strengthen diplomatic ties, especially as 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

Saudi Arabia to Host US-Ukraine Talks in Jeddah Next Week



TPN Correspondent | Saudi

Saudi Arabia has expressed its readiness to host a meeting between US and Ukrainian officials in Jeddah next week, reaffirming the kingdom's commitment to facilitating peace efforts in the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict. The announcement came on Friday from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighting the kingdom's continued efforts to achieve a lasting resolution to the crisis.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed his visit to Saudi Arabia on Thursday, where he will meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday. Following this, talks between US officials and Ukrainian representatives are scheduled for later in the week. The meeting will take place in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, a key diplomatic hub for the region.

A brief statement from Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry underscored the kingdom's commitment to helping resolve the Ukrainian crisis. "The foreign ministry confirms the kingdom's continued efforts to achieve lasting peace to end the Ukrainian crisis," the statement read.

Earlier, Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, announced that he was in discussions with Ukraine for a potential deal framework to end the war with Russia. He indicated that a meeting with Ukrainian officials would be held next week in Saudi Arabia. This comes after a meeting hosted by Riyadh in February between US and Russian officials to explore possible peace talks, though Ukraine was not involved, raising concerns in Kyiv and among its European allies.

Zelenskyy had previously met with Trump at the White House on February 28, but the encounter took a tense turn, with both leaders clashing over their peacemaking approaches. The fallout from this meeting resulted in Trump suspending military aid and intelligence-sharing with Ukraine.

Meanwhile, on Friday, Russian forces carried out a missile strike on Ukrainian energy and gas infrastructure, marking the first major attack on vital infrastructure since Trump's policy changes. This attack further escalates tensions, underscoring the urgency of continued diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Trump Criticizes India's High Tariffs, Announces Reciprocal Tariffs Starting April 2

TPN Correspondent | Washington

US President Donald Trump has once again criticized India for its high tariffs, reiterating that reciprocal tariffs on countries imposing levies on American goods will begin on April 2. In an Oval Office address on Thursday, Trump highlighted India as a "very high tariff nation" and emphasized that countries like China and Canada also impose hefty tariffs on US products. Trump expressed his frustration with Canada's trade practices, particularly the 250% tariff on American milk products and lumber. He noted that despite such tariffs, the US doesn't rely on Canadian lumber, claiming that the country has more lumber resources than Canada. Trump's remarks came as he signed executive orders in the Oval Office, ahead of the upcoming



tariffs.

Trump clarified that the current tariffs are temporary and relatively small but warned that the new reciprocal tariffs, which will take effect on April 2, will be "a big game changer" for the US. He stressed that under

his administration, the US would no longer allow countries to charge high tariffs while the US charges little to nothing in return. "Whatever they charge us, we're going to charge them," he said, signaling a shift in the US's trade approach.

This is the second time in as many days that Trump has criticized India's tariff policies. During his address to the joint session of Congress, Trump singled out India, calling the high tariffs imposed on US goods "very unfair." He also mentioned that countries like the European Union, China, Brazil, Mexico, and Canada charge the US significantly higher tariffs than what the US imposes on them. Trump has previously labeled India a "tariff king" and a "big abuser." He also noted that India's high auto tariffs are over 100%, making it difficult for American products to enter the Indian market. Last month, during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump acknowledged India's strength on tariffs but hinted at potential trade negotiations to address these issues.

Court orders South Korean President Yoon released from jail for his criminal trial over martial law

TPN Correspondent | SEOUL, South Korea

On March 7, 2025, a South Korean court ordered the release of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol from jail, more than a month after his arrest and indictment for his controversial declaration of martial law. The Seoul Central District Court ruled that Yoon should stand trial while not being physically detained, a significant development in his legal battle.

Yoon's impeachment trial hearings concluded in late February, and the court is expected to rule soon on whether to formally remove him from office or reinstate him. The court accepted Yoon's request for release, noting that the legal period of his arrest had expired before his indictment in late January. The court also stated that the investigative agency that detained Yoon before his formal arrest did not have legal grounds to investigate the criminal rebellion charges against him. Yoon's defense team welcomed the ruling and called for



his immediate release. However, South Korean law allows prosecutors to hold a suspect temporarily while they pursue an appeal. Investigators accuse Yoon of inciting rebellion with his martial law decree, which involved deploying troops to the National Assembly. If convicted, Yoon faces severe penalties, including the death penalty or life imprisonment.

The decree, which lasted only six hours, was overturned after enough lawmakers managed to convene and vote against it. The incident has sparked memories of past military rule, which many

South Koreans associate with oppression. Yoon defended his actions, arguing that the decree was intended to highlight the threat posed by the opposition Democratic Party, which had undermined his policies and impeached key officials.

If the Constitutional Court upholds Yoon's impeachment, he will be officially removed from office, and a national election will be held within two months to select his successor. The ongoing legal proceedings and massive public rallies, both for and against Yoon, are intensifying South Korea's already deep political divisions.

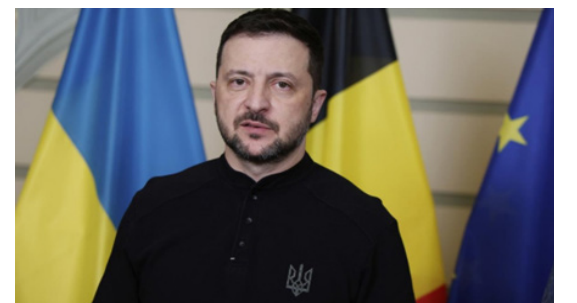
Ukrainian President Zelenskyy to Visit Saudi Arabia for Talks on Ending War with Russia

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is set to visit Saudi Arabia next Monday, March 10, 2025, ahead of planned talks between senior Ukrainian and U.S. officials aimed at seeking a resolution to the ongoing war with Russia.

During his visit, President Zelenskyy will meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The discussions are expected to focus on peace efforts amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Following the meeting, Zelenskyy's team will remain in Saudi Arabia to collaborate with American officials on further diplomatic steps.

Zelenskyy emphasized Ukraine's strong desire for peace, stating that the visit would be crucial in advancing discussions that could lead to the end of the war. The diplomatic efforts are part of Ukraine's broader strategy to gain international support and seek peaceful solutions to the ongoing conflict, which has been devastating for the country and the region.

The talks in Saudi Arabia are expected to involve high-level discussions on various aspects of the war, with the aim of de-escalating tensions and exploring potential pathways for a peaceful resolution. The



meeting will also highlight the growing international involvement in the conflict, with Ukraine looking to strengthen its alliances and garner support from key global players like the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The visit comes at a critical time as both Ukraine and the U.S. continue to explore diplomatic options to end the war, which has seen widespread devastation in Ukraine since it began. The discussions are likely to have significant implications for the future of the conflict and the broader geopolitical landscape.

Zelenskyy's visit to Saudi Arabia underscores Ukraine's commitment to pursuing peace while strengthening its relationships with influential international partners in the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the war with Russia.

Rupee falls 6 paise to settle at 87.12 against U.S. dollar



The Indian rupee ended its three-day rally on Thursday, March 6, 2025, with a loss of 6 paise, settling at 87.12 (provisional) against the U.S. dollar. The decline was attributed to uncertainty surrounding trade tariffs and persistent foreign fund outflows, which caused cautious investor sentiment. Forex traders noted that market participants were waiting for key data, including the U.S. weekly unemployment claims and the European Central Bank's monetary policy decision.

Despite the loss, the local currency was supported by a positive equity market, a weaker U.S. dollar in international markets, and easing crude oil prices. Initially, the rupee gained momentum following news that the U.S. had delayed implementing higher tariffs on Canada and Mexico. Additionally, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to infuse ₹1.9 trillion liquidity into the banking system further bolstered the currency.

During the day, the rupee opened at 86.96 and touched a high of 86.88 against the dollar. However, it became volatile and dropped to a low of 87.16 before settling at 87.12. On Wednesday, March 5, 2025, the rupee had registered its third consecutive gain, closing 13 paise higher at 87.06.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, explained that the rupee's early gains were eroded due to selling pressure by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs). He also noted that the U.S. dollar had fallen to a four-month low, following the U.S. decision to delay higher tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico. Choudhary added that the rupee is expected to trade within the range of 86.80 to 87.25, with positive domestic markets and U.S. dollar weakness providing support, but FII outflows could cap significant gains.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.15% at 104.12, while Brent crude rose slightly by 0.39% to \$69.57 per barrel.

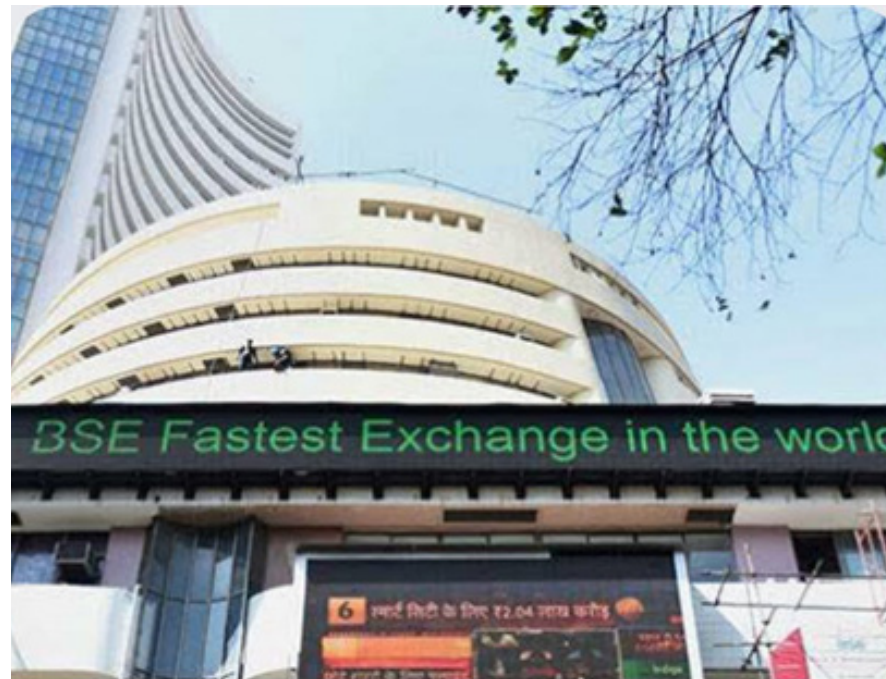
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded ₹2,895.04 crore in equities on March 5, 2025, continuing a trend of net outflows. Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy and its measures to ensure liquidity in the system remain crucial for stabilizing the rupee.

"Markets End Flat: Range-Bound Rally, Sector Strength, and Rupee Recovery Amid Mixed Global Cues"

Domestic stock markets ended flat today. They moved in a range-bound pattern throughout Friday. The markets initially fell due to mixed signals from global markets and investors acting cautiously. Then, they reached highs as sentiment strengthened. Finally, they settled at yesterday's levels due to profit booking. Maintaining consecutive gains for two days is a good sign. Media, Oil and Gas, and Metals indices stood firm. Overall, Nifty settled at 22,552 (7), Sensex settled at 74,332 (-7).

The BSE Sensex, which closed at 74,340 in the previous session, opened at 74,347 on Friday. It touched an intraday low of 74,038. It reached an intraday high of 74,586. It ended at 74,332, down 7 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,508, touched a low of 22,464 and a high of 22,633. It rose 7 points to close at 22,552. The Nifty Bank lost 130 points to settle at 48,497.

In the Nifty50, 20 companies gained and 30 lost. Media, oil and gas, metals, commodities, infra,



auto, energy stocks rose. Realty, consumer durables, IT, PSE, consumption, bank, pharma stocks lost. Reliance, Nestle, Bajaj Auto, BEL, Hindalco were the top gainers. IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Shriram Finance, Infosys, HCL Tech rose the most.



Market breadth on NSE today is in favor of buyers. Out of 2988 stocks traded, 1818 gained. 1093 lost. 17 stocks reached 52-week highs. 37 shares reached 52-week lows. A total of 229 shares touched the upper circuit.

Rupee strengthened by 23 paise to settle at 86.88 against the dollar. Citi has announced that Phoenix Mill is its top pick in real estate. Citi has given a buy rating to Inter-globe Aviation with a target price of Rs. 5200. Nuama has maintained a buy rating for Zee Entertainment with a target price of Rs. 185. Goldman Sachs maintains buy rating on Adani Port with a target price of Rs 1400. Shares tumbled for the third consecutive day after Macquarie gave an outperform rating to Reliance with a target price of Rs 1500. Quality Power acquired 51% stake in Mehru for Rs 120 crore. Laurus Labs board approved an investment of Rs 83.3 crore in KRKA Pharma. JPMorgan gave an overweight rating to BEL with a target price of Rs 343. Data Patterns share price jumped 12.24% today, the highest in 18 weeks. Inox Wind received an order of 153 million watts from Tamil Nadu. Kalpataru Projects won orders worth Rs 2306 crore. Uday chief Neelakanta Mishra said that a ministry like Bharat Dose is needed. Biocon signs strategic partnership with Civica.

India's Inflation to Ease to 4.1% in February 2025, But Food Prices May Remain High

India's consumer price inflation (CPI) is forecasted to decrease to 4.1% in February 2025, according to a report by Bank of Baroda (BoB). However, the report cautioned that certain factors, including rising global edible oil prices, inflationary tariff policies, and an anticipated hotter summer, could keep food prices elevated.

The BoB report predicts a CPI of 4.1% but also warned of potential upward pressure on food inflation. It noted that global edible oil prices remain volatile and could contribute to increased food prices.

The BoB Essential Commodity Index (ECI), which tracks key household goods, showed a slowdown in February 2025, with the index moderating to 2.4% year-on-year. This decline was largely driven by falling prices of vegetables like tomatoes and potatoes. Additionally, inflation in pulses remained under control, thanks to better supply conditions, while a recent reduction in milk prices further contributed to easing inflation.

Despite these positive trends, several risks remain. Global asset price volatility, particularly in gold and base metals, has yet to significantly impact inflation. Energy prices have remained relatively low, but tariffs on metals could increase prices in the coming months. In February, rising demand pushed up prices for metals like copper and zinc.

A major concern highlighted in the report is the persistent rise in edible oil prices, which could



further drive food inflation. Moreover, extreme heat conditions, which have already been recorded in states like Maharashtra, Odisha, and Bihar—major producers of onions, tomatoes, and potatoes—could lead to supply disruptions for key crops.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has noted above-normal temperatures in various states, raising concerns about the impact

on wheat crops. However, government measures aimed at improving logistics and stabilizing prices for perishable goods are expected to provide some relief.

While inflation is projected to moderate, uncertainties related to global commodity prices and weather conditions could still influence price trends in the coming months.

India's Crude Oil Imports from Russia Decline Amid U.S. Sanctions



India's crude oil imports from Russia have dropped to their lowest level in over two years, reflecting the impact of recent U.S. sanctions targeting Russia's oil trade. The sanctions, announced by the Biden administration in January before its departure, have begun to hinder the flow of Russian crude to India. As a result, Indian refiners are being forced to diversify their sources of crude oil, turning to smaller suppliers from regions such as Africa and Latin America to make up for the lost Russian volumes, according to vessel tracking data.

The U.S. sanctions specifically targeted 183 tankers involved in the transport of Russian oil, a significant portion of what is known as the "shadow fleet," which had helped Russia continue its oil exports. Additionally, two Russian oil giants and several insurance companies linked to the Russian oil trade were also sanctioned. These moves have made it increasingly difficult for Indian refiners to

secure the necessary Russian crude cargoes, pushing them to find alternative suppliers.

Apart from Russia, India's key West Asian suppliers—Saudi Arabia and the UAE—also saw a sequential decline in their crude oil exports to India. However, Iraq, which remains India's second-largest crude supplier, did not follow this trend, maintaining a steady supply. This shift in sourcing is part of a broader strategy by Indian refiners to reduce reliance on Russian oil amidst the ongoing sanctions.

In response to the reduced Russian crude volumes, Indian refiners are exploring new avenues and seeking out supplies from less traditional sources, including nations in Africa and Latin America. The move highlights India's growing need to secure its energy supply amidst shifting global dynamics and the effects of international sanctions on Russia's oil industry.

Bengaluru Restaurant's "No Real Estate, Political Discussions" Rule Goes Viral

A Bengaluru restaurant's unusual rule banning discussions on real estate and politics has gone viral on social media, sparking mixed reactions among users. The rule, displayed on a board inside the eatery, urges diners to refrain from engaging in lengthy conversations about real estate or politics while they dine. "This facility is only for dine-in purposes, not for real estate/political discussions. Please understand and cooperate," the board reads.

The image was shared on X (formerly Twitter) by user Farrago Metiquirke, and it quickly caught the attention of social media users, amassing over 40,000 views and numerous likes. Many users in the comments pointed out that this rule is not unique to this particular restaurant, with several Bengaluru eateries reportedly displaying similar signs discouraging such discussions.

Some users expressed that these discussions, particularly around real estate and politics, can lead to diners lingering for hours, occupying tables without ordering enough food. "Very common sight in Bangalore restaurants," one user wrote, while another added, "Real estate is thriving, but giving restaurants only one-by-two business!!"

Others shared their personal experiences, with one user humorously noting that political discussions tend to drag on for hours, preventing others from finding a place to sit. "Typical BLR restaurant. No real estate discussion as people use it freely as an office..."



They bring parties, lawyers, and lots of papers and sit for hours sipping a Rs. 20 tea," another commented.

Despite the widespread support for the rule, some users disagreed, questioning why a restaurant should monitor what people discuss. One user asked, "Why does he have to police what people are talking? They are paying for the food they eat, no?" In response, the original poster explained that such discussions can become heated and lead to prolonged table occupancy, which can negatively impact business.

While the rule has sparked debate, it highlights a growing concern for restaurant owners in Bengaluru about balancing customer satisfaction with operational efficiency.

iPhone 17 Pro: Features and Design Changes

As the iPhone 17 series gears up for its official release later this year, the rumor mill is already buzzing with details about what Apple's upcoming flagship phones will bring to the table. While Apple has yet to confirm specifics, leaks and speculations have given us a glimpse into what we can expect from the iPhone 17 Pro.

One of the most significant changes expected is the iPhone 17 Pro's design. Apple has largely stuck to a similar design language since the iPhone 11 launch in 2020, but that could be set to change. According to well-known Apple tipster Jon Prosser, the iPhone 17 Pro will feature a larger camera island that spans the entire width of the device. This change marks a noticeable departure from previous models and could give the device a unique and distinctive look.

The new camera island will also feature rounded corners, which should provide a sleek and modern appearance. As for the camera setup itself, the iPhone 17 Pro will likely include three cameras on the left side of the island. On the right side, users can expect to find an LED flash, a LiDAR scanner, and a microphone. These upgrades are expected to further enhance the phone's photography and videography capabilities, which have been a hallmark of the iPhone lineup in recent years.



In terms of performance, the iPhone 17 Pro is expected to be powered by the A19 Pro chipset. While no official details have been confirmed, the A19 Pro is rumored to offer significant improvements in processing power and efficiency, making it a strong contender for handling the most demanding applications and tasks.

While we'll have to wait a few more months for the official launch, the iPhone 17 Pro is shaping up to be one of the most exciting upgrades in Apple's recent history. With potential design changes, an upgraded camera system, and enhanced performance, it looks like the iPhone 17 Pro will offer a more refined and capable experience for users.

Reddit Launches New Tools to Enhance Engagement and Content Performance



On Thursday, Reddit introduced a set of new tools designed to help users better adhere to community rules and gain a deeper understanding of content performance. This move is part of Reddit's ongoing efforts to improve user engagement and create a more informed user experience on the platform.

The announcement comes on the heels of a recent slowdown in Reddit's quarterly user growth, which was largely attributed to changes in Google's search algorithm. These changes had a significant impact on the traffic coming from the search engine. However, according to Reddit CEO Steve Huffman, the platform has since seen a recovery in traffic from Google, suggesting that the impact of the algorithm shift may have been temporary.

The new tools aim to address two main concerns: content moderation and content performance. For community rules, Reddit users will now have improved visibility into why certain content may be flagged or removed, allowing them to better understand and follow the platform's guidelines. This feature is particularly helpful for

new users or those unfamiliar with specific subreddit rules.

Additionally, the new tools will offer enhanced analytics for users, giving them insights into how their posts are performing across the platform. This feature will enable content creators to track engagement metrics such as upvotes, comments, and shares, helping them refine their content strategy to increase visibility and interaction with their posts.

These updates reflect Reddit's commitment to fostering a healthy and engaged community while also providing users with the tools they need to succeed. By focusing on both content moderation and performance metrics, Reddit hopes to encourage more active participation and ensure that content is in line with community standards.

Overall, this initiative highlights Reddit's dedication to improving user experience and engagement, especially in light of the recent challenges related to traffic fluctuations. As the platform continues to evolve, these tools may prove vital in sustaining long-term growth and user retention.

Would You Pay Rs 77 Lakh For A Cheeto? Someone Just Did!

In the world of collectible items, some enthusiasts go after rare Pokémon cards or vintage toys, but one lucky bidder has just secured a truly unique treasure—a Flamin' Hot Cheeto shaped like Charizard. The snack, dubbed "Cheetozard," attracted an astonishing \$88,000 (around 77 lakhs) at an auction, setting off a bidding frenzy that left many amazed.

This rare Cheeto was sold at the February 2025 Pop Culture Elite Auction hosted by Goldin, an online marketplace for rare collectibles. The auction began on February 10 with a modest starting bid of \$250. As the days progressed, the bidding war intensified, and by Sunday, March 2, the price had reached \$72,000. With the addition of Goldin's buyer's premium, the final price soared to \$87,840.



Measuring only three inches in length, the Cheetozard snack stood out for its bizarre dragon-shaped appearance, strikingly similar to the popular Pokémon Charizard. To further enhance its collect-

ability, the snack came with a custom Pokémon card.

The journey of this quirky item began between 2018 and 2022 when it was discovered and preserved by 1st & Goal Collectibles, a shop based in Holly Springs, Georgia. The shop specializes in curating rare and unusual items, and Cheetozard quickly gained popularity online, capturing the imagination of pop culture enthusiasts. Its online fame turned it into a unique piece of history, eventually becoming the subject of the auction that led to its hefty price tag.

While some may question the allure of a Cheeto commanding such a large sum, the Cheetozard's sale is proof that in the world of collectibles, anything—even a snack—can turn into a valuable and coveted item.

Karnataka bodybuilder flaunts muscles in bridal photoshoot, internet impressed

Karnataka-based bodybuilder and fitness trainer Chitra Purushotham has taken the internet by storm with a stunning bridal photoshoot video. While many initially assumed it was an announcement of her wedding, it was later revealed that the viral moment was simply a creative photoshoot.

In the video that has since gone viral, Purushotham elegantly combined fitness and tradition in a striking yellow and blue Kanjivaram saree. In a bold move, she chose to skip the blouse, allowing her toned physique to take center stage. She completed her bridal look with gold jewelry, including a kamar bandh, maang tikka, earrings, and bangles. Her makeup featured bold winged eyeliner and a deep red lip-



stick, while her hair was neatly plaited and adorned with fragrant jasmine flowers.

Purushotham shared the clip on Instagram, captioning it, "Mindset is everything," a phrase that resonates deeply with her audience. The video quickly gained traction, amassing over 7.5 million

views. Social media users flooded the comments, showering her with admiration for her unique fusion of strength and elegance.

One user praised her by saying, "Strength and beauty in perfect harmony—absolutely stunning!" Another commented, "A bride like no other! This is empowerment at

its finest." A third user remarked, "You've redefined elegance. Who says muscles and grace can't go together?"

While many were impressed by her distinctive take on a bridal look, some were initially surprised, with one person saying, "I genuinely thought this was a wedding announcement! You rocked it." Others applauded her confidence, with one user adding, "This is proof that a woman can be both powerful and graceful at the same time."

Purushotham's photoshoot has become a viral sensation, with people across the internet admiring her confidence, strength, and beauty—showcasing that a woman can embrace both power and grace effortlessly.



India Ready for Champions Trophy Final Against New Zealand

India, led by Rohit Sharma, is on fire heading into the 2025 Champions Trophy final against New Zealand, after an unbeaten run in the tournament despite losing four consecutive tosses. The team has excelled in all departments, with the bat, Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli in exceptional form, while the bowlers, led by Mohammed Shami and Varun Chakra-

varthy, have been impressive.

However, New Zealand, with their history of defeating India in past ICC knockouts, poses a strong challenge, especially with key players like Mitchell Santner, Kane Williamson, and Rachin Ravindra in form. India's chance to win their first Champions Trophy since 2013 will also be a sig-

nificant achievement for coach Gautam Gambhir, and a win will bolster their preparations for the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Yet, the threat of New Zealand's spinners, including Santner and Bracewell, alongside a potential fit Matt Henry, could prove to be pivotal in India's quest for the trophy.

Gill, Smith, Phillips Nominated for ICC Player of the Month

The ICC has shortlisted Australian batter Steve Smith, Indian opener Shubman Gill, and New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for February 2025.

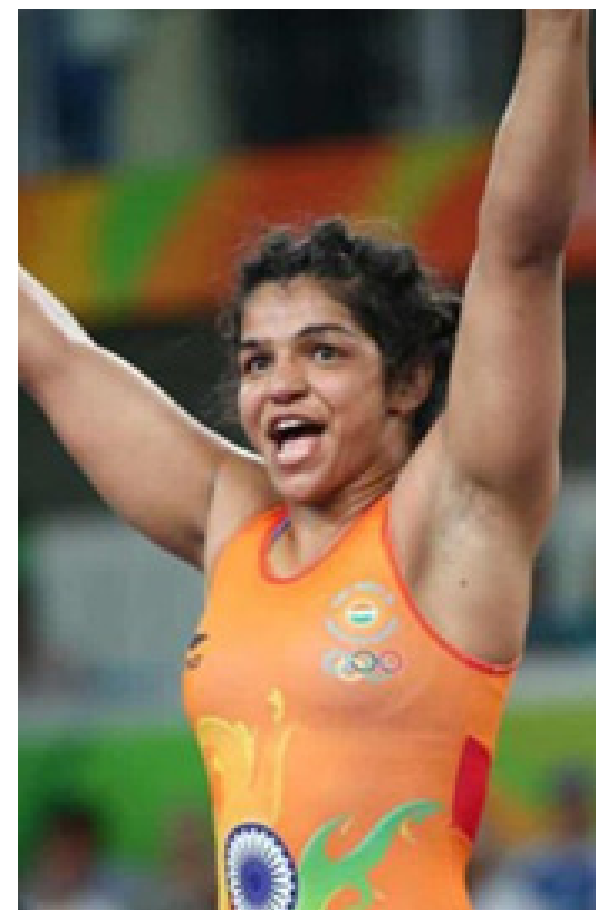


Smith's stellar performances during the Test series against Sri Lanka, including two centuries, earned him Player of the Series honors. Gill made a significant impact with 406 runs in five ODIs, including three crucial knocks against England, which helped him claim the number one spot in the

ICC ODI rankings. Phillips, known for his brilliance in the field, contributed 236 runs at a strike rate of 124.21 in the tri-series in Pakistan and the ICC Champions Trophy. The nominations highlight their exceptional contributions across various international formats.

Sakshi Malik's Empowering Message: "No Fear, Just Give Your Best"

Ahead of International Women's Day, Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik shared an inspiring message on the resilience and strength of women. Reflecting on her own journey, from wrestling with limited facilities to becoming India's first female Olympic medalist in 2016, she stressed that women's achievements should be celebrated every day, not just on March 8.



Sakshi, now a mother and railway employee, emphasized that determination, focus, and discipline are key for women to break barriers. She also highlighted the progress in Haryana, where attitudes towards girls have changed, thanks to her success. Concluding, she urged women to embrace their struggles, giving their best in every field, and revealed her plans to stay connected to sports by teaching wrestling to children.

Record-Breaking Indian Contingent at WTT Star Contender Chennai 2025

The WTT Star Contender Chennai 2025 is set to feature a record-breaking 13 Indian players, marking the country's strongest-ever presence in the tournament. Scheduled to begin on March 25, the event will see India represented by top players like Sharath Kamal, Manika Batra, Sathiyan Gnanasekaran, and Sreeja Akula, among others. This marks a historic achievement for Indian

table tennis, with players earning direct entry into both men's and women's singles main draws. In-ternational stars like Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto and Hina Hayata will headline the tournament, which offers a prize pool of USD 275,000 and 600 ranking points for the champions. The competition promises an electrifying clash of talent as the Olympic year approaches.



Paralympic Champions Lead India's Charge at World Para Athletics Grand Prix New Delhi



India's top Paralympic champions, including Praveen Kumar, Navdeep Singh, and Dharambir, will headline the World Para Athletics Grand Prix in New Delhi from March 11 to 13 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The three-day event will feature over 90 competitions, with participation from over 250 athletes representing 20 countries. Praveen Kumar (Paris Paralympics gold medalist in High Jump, T64), Navdeep Singh

(Javelin, F41), and Dharambir (Club Throw, F51) will lead India's campaign. The event marks a significant milestone for para-athletics in India, as it hosts one of the largest gatherings of para-athletes, including 145 Indian and 105 international competitors. Praveen expressed excitement about competing at home, looking forward to a stellar performance for Indian fans.

"Indian Shooters are Brilliant, We Must Keep Focus": Manu Bhaker on Life After Olympic Glory

Manu Bhaker, reflecting on life after her historic double-bronze achievement at the Paris Olympics, shared her insights on the journey ahead. Speaking at the Trailblazers 3.0 Conclave in Kolkata, Manu emphasized the importance of maintaining focus, stating, "Indian shooters are brilliant. We are right there at the top, naturally good and



sharp mentally." Despite a longing for a third medal, Manu remains realistic, acknowledging the difficulty of finishing fourth. From her early setbacks at the Tokyo 2021 Olympics to making history in Paris, Manu's journey embodies resilience and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Her message is clear: stay focused and keep striving for greatness.

Harmanpreet Kaur Fined for Dissent in WPL 2025 Match

Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur has been fined 10% of her match fee for breaching the WPL Code of Conduct after showing dissent at an umpire's decision during the match against UP Warriorz. The incident occurred in the final over when MI was penalized for a slow over rate, enforcing fielding restrictions. Harmanpreet confronted umpire Ajitesh Argal, visibly displeased with the

call. This led to a heated exchange between her and England's Sophie Ecclestone. The situation was quickly de-escalated by the umpires. Harmanpreet admitted to the Level 1 offense under Article 2.8, which relates to showing dissent. Despite the incident, MI secured a six-wicket victory, with Amelia Kerr's five-wicket haul and Hayley Mathews' fiery 68 leading the charge.





Special Poster Released on Janhvi Kapoor's Birthday for RC16

On March 6, marking Janhvi Kapoor's birthday, the team of RC16 released a special behind-the-scenes poster featuring the actress alongside global star Ram Charan. Directed by Buchi Babu Sana, the film has already generated excitement with its star-studded cast, including Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu, and Divyendu from Mirzapur. The poster, clicked during the first

schedule in Mysore, is not an official look but a casual shot from the set. Janhvi is set to continue filming the movie in Hyderabad, where key scenes will be shot over the next 12 days. Music by AR Rahman and visuals by cinematographer Ratnavelu are adding to the anticipation. RC16 is produced by Venkata Satish Kilari under the banner of Vrudhi Cinemas.

Movie Review: Baapu - A Tale of Family, Struggles, and Greed

Release Date: March 7, 2025

Platform: Jio Hotstar
Rating: 2.5/5

Baapu explores the dynamics of a rural family entangled in financial struggles and greed. Directed by Daya, the film is set in a village, where Mallanna (Brahmaji) and his wife Saroj (Aamani)



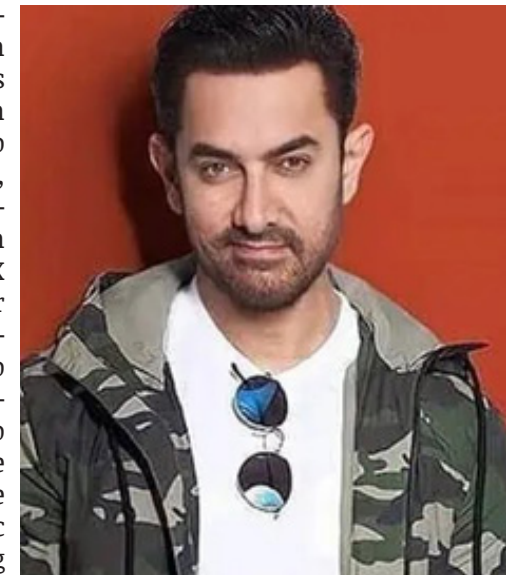
face dire circumstances. Mallanna contemplates a desperate act after accumulating debt, with his wife's suggestion leading them down a dark path. Meanwhile, the discovery of an ancient gold statue creates complications.

The film touches on themes of sacrifice, desperation, and the lengths one would go to for financial relief. Although the golden statue plot loses steam halfway, the family drama and the father's moral dilemma are compelling. Strong performances by Brahmaji and Aamani elevate the narrative. The film's portrayal of rural life and human emotions is commendable. However, the pacing and structure could have been better. Baapu is a thoughtful commentary on modern society's greed, though it may not resonate with everyone.

Verdict: A film about love, loss, and the darkness of greed, Baapu succeeds in some areas but falters in others. It's a reflective watch but lacks the depth to leave a lasting impact.

Aamir Khan to Be Honored with Special Film Festival on His 60th Birthday

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan will celebrate his 60th birthday on March 14, and to mark this milestone, a special film festival will be held in his honor. PVR INOX is presenting "Aamir Khan: Cinema Ka Jadugar," a tribute to the actor's remarkable contributions to Indian cinema. The festival will feature some of his iconic films, showcasing his impactful journey in the industry.



marked.

Ajay Bijli, MD of PVR INOX, praised Aamir for his courage in choosing bold scripts and shaping the modern film industry. "Aamir's films convey powerful messages, and his success at the box office has set new benchmarks," he re-

Khan will also host a star-studded birthday party, with close friends Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, and other A-list celebrities. This marks Aamir's first large-scale celebration of his career.

L2: Empuraan Gets U/A Certificate Ahead of March 27 Release



The much-awaited political thriller L2: Empuraan, starring Mohanlal and directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran, has received a U/A certificate from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The sequel to the hit film Lucifer, Empuraan delves deeper into the complex world of crime and power, expanding on the characters

and locations introduced in the first film. With Prithviraj reprising his role as Zayed Masood, the film is set to hit theatres on March 27. Produced by Antony Perumbavoor and Subaskaran, the film also features a screenplay by Murali Gopy, music by Deepak Dev, and cinematography by Sujith Vaassudev.

Rajinikanth's 'Jailer 2' Set to Begin Production Next Week

The highly anticipated sequel to the blockbuster Jailer, featuring Rajinikanth, is all set to kick off production next week. Directed by Nelson, Jailer 2 has created immense buzz, with rumors suggesting that the shooting will begin in Chennai, followed by locations in Goa and Theni.

There are also speculations about the involvement of Kannada superstar Dr. Shiva Rajkumar and Malayalam icon Mohanlal,

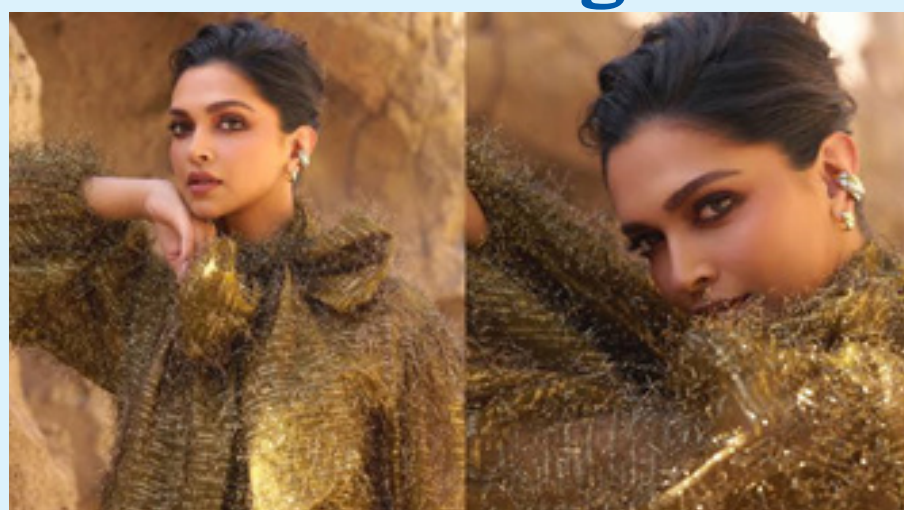
though no official confirmation has been made. The film's expectations have soared following the massive success of Jailer, which grossed around Rs 650 crores.

The excitement reached new heights when Sun Pictures released an intriguing teaser, blending humor with explosive action, and featuring a glimpse of Rajinikanth's iconic entrance. Fans are eagerly awaiting the next chapter of this thrilling saga.



Ranveer Singh Praises Deepika Padukone's Stunning Golden Look

Bollywood's power couple, Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone, have always shared adorable moments on social media, delighting their fans. Deepika recently posted a series of glamorous pictures, donning an oversized golden shimmery dress with black boots and subtle golden accessories. Her minimal makeup completed the striking look.



and 'Golden Energy.' Some even said, "Face card never declines, Mother," and "She came, she saw, she conquered."

The couple, who welcomed their daughter Dua in September 2024, are back to their work schedules. Deepika recently made an appearance at Sabyasachi's 25th Anniversary gala and starred in Kalki 2898

Ranveer couldn't hold back his admiration and com-

mented, "Phew!" Fans quickly joined the conversa-

tion, praising Deepika with titles like 'Empress,' 'Queen,'

currently working on Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar.